

Sample Standing Rules for Sessional and Mission Church Records

CHAPTER 14 - SESSIONAL RECORDS AND MISSION CHURCH RECORDS

14.1 The Stated Clerk shall annually notify each organized church to submit records for review according to the system of rotation adopted by the Presbytery.

14.2 The Clerk of Session shall keep a permanent consecutive record apart from the minutes of:

1. Members: when and how enrolled, when and how dropped from the roll
2. Baptisms: infant and adult
3. Deaths of members

14.3 The Session shall meet at least once each quarter (*BCO* 12-6).

14.4 Mission churches shall present records to presbytery at least every six months for review. Mission churches shall keep a roll of all communicant and non-communicant members. Each Mission church shall keep basic statistics on members, baptisms, weddings and funerals and brief minutes of meetings showing significant motions. The Mission church shall present a quarterly report to Presbytery's MNA Committee. Copies of the PCA Annual Statistical Report shall also be included at the end of each year to verify membership totals and financial records.

14.5 Guidelines for keeping church minutes:

Minutes shall be kept by the Clerk of Session, must be typed or legibly handwritten in ink, on pages numbered consecutively. Erasures, inserts and footnotes shall be avoided as much as possible. Since the record must last for many years, minutes shall be kept in a bound or lock-type book, not a loose-leaf binder, because pages can get lost.

1. To conform to *BCO* requirements and Presbytery rules, minutes shall specify kind of meeting (stated or called). Also show name of church, date, time and place of meeting and who opened and closed the meeting with prayer.
2. List names of moderator, elders present and absent, plus any visitors. Care should be taken that a quorum is present. If Clerk of Session was absent, show name of Clerk Pro-Tem.

3. Show that minutes were approved, not later than the next stated meeting, and date approved. *Robert's Rules* suggest this format: MINUTES APPROVED, DATE_____, Clerk's initials _____.
4. Show actions, motions adopted, business transacted. Names of mover may be recorded but seconder of motions should not be shown. Lost motions need not be recorded.
5. Clerk shall sign minutes. Moderator need not sign unless minutes are for a trial.
6. Names of commissioners to Presbytery and General Assembly shall be shown, with their brief report after attending.
7. Clerk shall keep an accurate record of baptisms, communicant members received and dismissed, deaths, removals, names of members transferred in or out. The minister shall keep a record of names of people he marries.
9. Minutes shall be approved before review by Presbytery.
10. At end of each year, a copy of the Statistical Report to General Assembly shall be inserted, plus a summary of actions taken at congregational meetings, unless minutes include congregational meetings.

14.6 Guidelines for examination of sessional records:

Church Name and City _____

Date of Review _____ Reviewer's Name _____

Reviewer shall fill out two copies of form provided by Clerk of Presbytery: One for Clerk of Presbytery, and the other to be inserted in Session's book (*BCO* 40-3). On last page of minutes reviewed, Presbytery should mark the book with date of review and whether it approves or disapproves the records with Notations or Exceptions. List any comments on the report below:

1. The following should be present: date, time, place of meeting, and kind of meeting: stated or called.
2. Session should meet at least quarterly (*BCO* 12-6).
3. The names of members present, and members absent with and without excuse and visitors should be recorded. Minutes should show a quorum is present, either by the list of attendees or by a statement (*BCO* 12-1).
4. The meeting should be opened and closed with prayer (*BCO* 10-5, 12-9).
5.
 - a. The Minutes should include approval of records of past proceedings.
 - b. The Minutes should include a record of communication and supporting documents deemed necessary by the session.
 - c. The Minutes should include all committee reports and supporting documents deemed necessary by the session.
6. Minutes should show actions, motions adopted, business transacted.
7. The Minutes should include the names of members received and dismissed, together with the names of baptized children of parents received or dismissed. The Minutes should record baptisms, Lord's Supper, marriages and deaths in the congregation. The church should keep a consecutive roll of all communicant members and their baptized children including dates members were received, and whether by profession, reaffirmation of faith, or transfer.
8. The Minutes should include the election of representatives to Presbytery and General Assembly and whether attended and reported afterwards.
9. Session examines, ordains, and installs ruling elders and deacons (*BCO* 12-5).

10. The Minutes should include the calling of congregational meetings.
11. The Minutes should include annual statistical reports to Presbytery.
12. The Session should maintain a separate compilation of minutes and records of congregational meetings or if incorporated in the regular record, should be plainly so labeled.
13. Deacons should regularly submit minutes and financial records to Session (*BCO* 9-4).
14. The Session approves and adopts the church budget (*BCO* 12-5).
15. Minutes should include the signature of the clerk and moderator of the meeting.
16. The Minutes shall be kept in compliance to all related rules in the *Book of Church Order*, including submitting of minutes for review once a year (*BCO* 12-7).
17. The Minutes shall be kept in a bound or lock-type book with numbered pages; not a loose leaf binder, because pages can get lost.
18. This checklist shall be maintained with the sessional minutes as a guide for the clerk of session.