HANDBOOK

FOR

CLERKS OF SESSION

IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

(U.S.A.)

Table of Contents

C. Adviser

Appendix (In separate file)

I. Election and Duties

The clerk of session is elected by the session. (BoO G-3.0104) The length of the term is determined by the session; no limitation is set by the *Book of Order* with regard to the length of the term. The clerk must be a ruling elder but does not need to be an active member of the session.

The primary duties of the clerk (BoO G-3.0104) are to

- record the minutes of the session

- keep rolls of membership and attendance of the session

- preserve the records of the session

- furnish extracts to other governing bodies when required

Other responsibilities are given to the clerk by the *Book of Order.*

- The clerk is responsible for the preservation of the minutes of both the session and the congregation. This means not only recording the minutes but also seeing that they are approved, signed, and placed into the official Minutes Book. Once each year, the minutes are to be submitted to presbytery for their review. The stated clerk of presbytery or the appropriate presbytery committee will notify the clerk of the arrangements.

- The session is responsible for maintaining rolls (see Section III) and in practical terms this usually means the clerk is responsible. When a new member is received by letter of transfer, the clerk should write to the transferring church requesting the letter (See Appendix A and Section IV). When a member transfers to another church, the clerk should verify the membership, obtain session approval, and issue the letter of transfer. Forms are available from Cokesbury for this as shown in Appendix B.

- The clerk of session serves as secretary of congregational meetings (see Section V). (BoO G-1.0505)

There are other responsibilities that show up in the *Book of Order* indirectly or by inference. Additional duties can be assigned or negotiated (see Section VII).

Each year the presbytery is required to file a statistical report with the General Assembly.[5] The presbytery gathers this information by asking each session to fill out the relevant forms. The stated clerk of presbytery then compiles this information and sends it to General Assembly. Additional information is in Section VI.

II. Minutes of Meetings

Minutes of Session Meetings

The *Book of Order* requires that a session keep "full and accurate record of its proceedings". (BoO G-3.0107) No guidelines are given regarding the details for doing this. In the absence of parliamentary procedures in the *Book of Order,* the instructions from *Robert's Rules of Order* are to be followed. (BoO G-3.0105) The following is a summary of what has become the norm for session minutes. This is rooted both in the *Book of Order* and in *Robert's Rules of Order* and is to ensure that the important information is included and that the proper procedures have been followed.

A. Essential Parts

Every set of minutes should contain the following information.

- The name of the church

- The date, time, and place of the meeting

- Whether the meeting is called or stated

- The names of the moderator, elders, and others who are present

- The opening with prayer

- Attesting that a quorum is present

- Adoption of an agenda

- Approval of minutes of previous meetings

- All main motions, except those withdrawn, and whether the motions pass or fail Significant portions of reports

- The time of the meeting's closing

- Closing with prayer

- Attesting by the moderator and the clerk by their signatures

The name of the church should be specific and include the city and state. Why? For example, within a presbytery, there are probably lots of "First Presbyterian Church" congregations.

The place of the meeting should be specific such as "The sanctuary" or "Room A of the church".

When motions are passed unanimously, it is not necessary to state the unanimity. When motions have dissenting votes, the vote could be recorded by terms such as "by

majority" or "with 1 exception". Persons casting dissenting votes may request that their vote be recorded by name or that the fact of dissenting votes be recorded. It is neither necessary nor advisable to record the whole discussion prior to a vote; the record should be a very brief summary of any important aspects of the issues brought forward. The record should make sense to someone reading it at sometime in the future. For example: At one of the first congregational meetings of my own previous church, there was a motion passed of no confidence in the session. There was no indication of the reason for this. More than fifty years later (now), it might be interesting to know the reason (or maybe we are better off not knowing).

The reports presented can be recorded as "received" which indicates the report has been read or heard but does not necessarily indicate agreement with all aspects of the report. The minutes should contain, in addition to any actions taken, only those aspects that might be important to future readers of the minutes. For example: The membership committee reports it is planning a New Member Luncheon. Then, later, they report back on the results. In the future (5 years or so) it could be of some help to a committee to know this was done and whether or not it was successful.

After the minutes have been approved by the session, they should be placed in the official *Minute Book* and signed by the moderator and the clerk. In this electronic age it is not necessary that minutes actually be typed into the *Minute Book.* Previously printed pages can be photocopied onto the *Minute Book* pages. Electronic storage, in place of paper storage, might not be acceptable because there is no way to attest by signature to the accuracy and correctness of the documents and due to long term storage problems (See Section VIII). The *Minute Book* needs to be kept in a secure fireproof environment.

Motions from a committee do not require a second. The minutes should record who makes a motion (when made by an individual) but not necessarily who seconds the motion.

B. As Needed

There are some session actions and reports that should be included in the minutes that may or may not occur every month. Those actions or reports that normally occur every month that are to be recorded in the minutes include the following.

- The celebration of the Lord's Supper. (BoO W-3.109 - W-3.3619) The dates and occurrences should be recorded in the minutes subsequent to the celebration.

- Attendance at worship. The number of persons attending each worship service should be recorded. This will permit calculation of average attendance per week for the Session Annual Statistical Report. The attendance at Sunday School could also be included.

- Financial report. Session should receive the financial report. A summary of the report could be included, if desired. Normally financial reports are received, not approved, because the session has no way of knowing for certain that the report is correct. That aspect is up to the auditors.

Those actions or reports that normally occur less frequently than every month that are to

be recorded in the minutes include the following.

- Authorization to celebrate the Lord's Supper at times other than normal. (BoO W-3.6204) Session normally has a continuing approval for authorization at regular times such as the first Sunday of every month. The celebration of the Lord's Supper at other times, such as at a church retreat, needs special approval.

- Session action in receiving and dismissing members. (BoO G-3.0201c) The record should include the full name of the persons and family relationships where appropriate. For those transferring, the name, city, and state of the transferring church should be included. The method of reception (transfer, affirmation of faith, or reaffirmation of faith) should be recorded.

- Session action in removing members from the active roll. Active members should not be removed from the roll until inactivity has been for a period of at least two years. (BoO G-3.0204a) Note that there is no longer the category of inactive member. Some church unofficially retain such a roll as a means of tracking people who have been removed from the active roll.

- Approval of guest ministers or others to conduct the worship service. At times when the pastor is not present for a worship service, such as during vacation time, the person to conduct the worship service and to preach the Word should be approved by session.

- Authorization and recording of baptisms. (BoO W-2.3011) The authorization of session is needed for all baptisms. After the baptism, the occurrence should be recorded. The full name, birthdate, and place of birth of the person being baptized and the full name(s) of parents(s) for infant baptisms should be recorded.

- Deaths. (BoO G-3.0204) The death of any member should be recorded including date of death and participation of pastor in either funeral or memorial service.

- Weddings.[11] Any wedding taking place in the church and weddings performed by the pastor either at the church or elsewhere should be recorded. Full names and date should be included for historical and legal purposes. A separate register is provided in the *Minute Book*.

- Commissioners to presbytery/ (BoO G-3.0301) The election of commissioners to presbytery and the receiving of the commissioners' report to the session after the presbytery meeting should be in the minutes.

C. Annually

Once each year the following items should be approved by session and included in the minutes.

- Annual Statistical Report. (BoO G-3.0302e) This report must be approved by session and included in the minutes. See Section VI.

- Annual budget. (BoO G-3.0205) Session is responsible for the budget and

expenditures of the church. The budget requires approval by session and should be included, at least in summary form, in the minutes.

- Election of the church treasurer. (BoO G-3.0205) The treasurer's term is as specified by the session (formerly one year).

- Church Nominating Committee. (BoO G-2.0401) Session needs to appoint its representatives to this committee, one of whom is designated as moderator, and to set the date for the congregational meeting for the election. In many churches this election is held at the annual congregational meeting but some churches operate the session on a July through June calendar.

- Annual congregational meeting. (BoO G-1.0501) Session needs to set the date and time for an annual congregational meeting. If the church is incorporated, this meeting is required by law. Annual reports should be presented at this meeting of the corporation.

- Newly elected elders. (BoO G-2.0402 – G-2.0403) Session needs to arrange for the instruction, examination, ordination (where required), and installation of newly elected elders. This also applies to deacons for churches not under the unicameral system.

- Composition of session and congregation with respect to racial ethnic members, women, men, and age groups. (BoO G-2.0401) These data are to be in the minutes. Since this information is in the Annual Statistical report, including that report in the minutes will fulfill this requirement.

- Pastor's Call. Session needs to call a congregational meeting or include in the agenda of another meeting a review by the congregation of the pastor's call. The pastor's call includes salary, other financial benefits, vacation and study leave. (BoO G-2.0804) Presbytery sets the minimums. Even if there is no change in the terms of call, the congregation needs to approve this.

Minutes of Congregational Meetings

The minutes of congregational meetings follow some of the same format as minutes of session meetings but with some essential differences because of the differences of the groups. The congregation has limited power. (BoO G-1.0503) The power it does have is of utmost importance and it is essential that all of its responsibilities be carried out effectively and responsibly.

The minutes of congregational meetings should contain the following elements.

- The name of the church

- The date, time, and place of the meeting

- Whether the meeting is the Annual Meeting or a Called Meeting

- The name of the moderator and the secretary

The secretary is the Clerk of Session unless the clerk is absent.

- Call to order and opening with prayer

- Attesting that a quorum is present

If it is the Annual Meeting and the congregation is incorporated, then there needs to be a statement that this is also the Annual Meeting of the Corporation.

- Adoption of an agenda. The Session should have recommended an agenda. If this is the Annual Meeting, the congregation can add to the agenda. If this is a Called Meeting, the agenda is as set by the Session and specified in the call and there can be no deviation from it.

- Conduct of the business

The Annual Meeting must include an annual report. If the congregation is incorporated this is extremely important and the report must include a financial report. The presentation of an annual report including a financial report must be noted in the minutes.

At the meeting where the Call of the Pastor is acted on, the *full details* of the call should be in the minutes even if there is no change or if only some aspects are changed. At the meeting where elders and/or deacons are elected, the Chair of the Nominating Committee makes its report and the Moderator (not the committee chair) conducts the election (see Handbook for Congregational Nominating Committees).

The minutes of the meeting may be presented to and approved by the Session or the Secretary may read the minutes at the close of the business (before adjournment) and approved by the congregation.

- Motion to adjourn. If it is a called meeting, the Moderator may declare the meeting adjourned after business is complete.

- Closing with prayer

- Signatures of Moderator and Secretary

D. Other

Each person needs to work out the best ways for handling the preparation of the minutes. One suggestion is to prepare a template for use in taking the minutes during the meeting. This template would include the list of elders' names (to aid in taking the roll) and major category headings with blank spaces for writing in the information. If the meetings do not follow a regular format, the use of a template is limited. Using a template to take minutes may cause some difficulties since it may be difficult to predict how much space to leave. An alternative is to use a checklist. Some people use a template file and a laptop computer and take notes on the computer during the meeting. A good, rather complete agenda makes this approach more feasible. A template is shown in Appendix C.

Either the template or the checklist has an additional benefit in that it will help you and the moderator to remember what needs to be done. This can be carried further by the clerk and the pastor meeting in advance of the session meeting with the purpose of including more details in the template or check list.

When typing the minutes using a computer word processor, it is suggested, again, that a template be established and the information be typed into the appropriate places. This avoids retyping some information such as the list of elders present, and helps ensure that items are not missed.

E. Preparation for Session Annual Statistical Report/*Church Register*

When it comes time to prepare the Session Annual Statistical Report (see Section VI) or when inserting data into the *Church Register,* being complete in the minutes will help. A list of those items and the details that are needed (some of this is repeated in other contexts of this document) are given in Appendix D. It would help if all this is kept together in the minutes of each meeting such as under "Clerk's Report" and/or "Pastor's Report".

III. Rolls

The session is responsible for maintaining the church rolls. Even if a session committee, a membership secretary, or the church secretary takes on this responsibility, it falls on the clerk to see that the job is done and done correctly. This section deals not only with the maintenance of the rolls but makes some suggestions to make later work easier.

The rolls are to be recorded in the *Church Register,* which provides sections for each of the rolls to be kept. Even if your church maintains rolls using some sort of computer program, there needs to be a permanent written record. The *Church Register* should be kept in a secure fireproof environment.

Arrangements need to be made for providing certificates to all new members, to all persons baptized, and to all persons ordained and/or installed. Appropriate certificates are available for purchase from the Presbyterian Publishing House. Alternatively, a church may print its own certificates if a suitable word processor and printer are available. The circular seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can be downloaded from the world-wide web at http://www.pcusa.org as cirseal.pcx. This is in color, if you have a color printer. Sample certificates designed this way are shown in Appendix J. MSWord copies of these files, and necessary Windows fonts, are available from the author. A copy of cirseal.pcx is also included on the disk.

A. Membership

There are two membership rolls to be kept:

 active members

 baptized members.

Active members, of course, are those who have been received into active membership by the session. After a two-year period of inactivity, the session may delete those people from the inactive roll. Other baptized persons who attend regularly (and who may even participate in church activities) but who have not been received into active membership by the session are called baptized members. The largest percentage of this group will probably be the children of the congregation prior to their participation in a confirmation class.

At the end of each calendar year, the Annual Statistical Report asks for the number of persons in each of these categories. The report also asks for the means by which new members were received into active membership (transfer or reaffirmation/affirmation of faith) and the means by which persons were removed from the active roll (transfer to inactive roll, removal, transfer to another church, death). It is suggested that lists be kept of each membership transaction as the year progresses so that at the end of the year the data will be readily available. Otherwise, it would be necessary to read through all the minutes at the end of the year to compile these lists. Updating the lists after each session meeting reduces the time required and results in fewer errors. If a computer program is used, the information could be entered each month using codes to enable the extraction of the required information at the end of the year.

New members, as received, are to be entered into the *Church Register*. The principle section for this is the Chronological Register. Names are entered and given a membership number. Each number is, of course, one higher than the previous number. The date received by the Session into membership is entered into the proper column depending on how the person is received – by Certificate of Transfer or by Confession/Reaffirmation of Faith. If the person is baptized at the time of reception, that date is entered into the last column of the left page.

The line for the new member continued onto the right page for future use. The first part is for when the person is removed from the Active Member list by entering the date and the Manner of Termination. This manner may be transfer to the Inactive Roll, removal from the roll, transfer to another church, or death. If a person on the Inactive Roll is removed for some reason, that information should be added to the same line in the same columns so do not write too big. Various information can be put into the Remarks column such as change of name due to marriage or divorce, where a husband and wife do not share the same last name, etc.

Once a person is added to the Chronological Roll, the name also needs to go into the Alphabetical Index. The name is added in the section with the letter corresponding with that of the surname following the last entry with the membership number from the Chronological Roll being used as the number. This is the way you find someone in the Chronological Roll without reading through the whole roll. The names under a particular letter are chronological, not by last name, but the hunting is much less than what would be required if there was no alphabetical index. Notice that these pages have double entry columns. When you get to the bottom of the first column, you continue at the top of the right column.

B. Baptisms

It is important to maintain an accurate baptism roll because it can serve as a legal backup for birth certificates, especially for infant baptisms. The information to be entered

includes the person's full name, date and place of birth, names of parents, date and place of baptism, and name of minister performing the baptism. When an adult is baptized upon reception into membership, this information is also part of the membership roll. The *Church Register* has separate sections for children and for adults.

C. Marriages

This section is also a legal backup as are the minutes of Session meetings and the information should be as complete as possible.

D. Deaths

The *Church Register* provides a section for listing deaths. This information also needs to be recorded in the membership roll.

E. Ordination and Installation

The *Church Register* provides sections for listing all ordinations and installations of elders and deacons. The dates of service are also to be recorded. For persons previously ordained, the date of ordination, if know, is to entered. If a person is elected to consecutive terms, that information can go into the existing entry. If there is a break between terms, there should be a new entry. This method will make the roll close to chronological.

IV. Correspondence

The clerk is usually responsible for only a limited amount of correspondence. One type of letter frequently required is to another church asking that they send a letter of transfer. A sample letter is shown in Appendix A. Upon receipt of the transfer form (shown in Appendix B), the detachable part should be completed and returned. This two-way correspondence ensures that the transfer is complete and that both churches know about the dismissal from the transferring church and the acceptance by the receiving church. When the reverse occurs (when a church writes to request that a letter of transfer be issued), a letter as such is not required; the special form mentioned above is used.

Occasionally the session may ask that a letter of thanks or a letter of appreciation or a letter of congratulations be sent. The form of this letter should fit the personality of both the clerk and the recipient. Whatever the form, the letter should be clear and genuine. Two contrasting letters are shown in Appendix E.

V. Secretary of the Congregation

For congregational meetings, the *Book of Order* specifies that the clerk of session is to be the secretary of the congregation for the meeting. In the absence of the clerk, the congregation is to elect its own secretary for that particular meeting. The secretary is to take the minutes of the meeting. Since the secretary (clerk) is also parliamentarian, it is necessary to be familiar with the whole section of the *Book of Order* related to Meetings of the Congregation. This includes what business can and cannot be transacted and

what constitutes a quorum. Minutes of congregational meetings can be approved by the Session or by the congregation at the next congregational meeting or the minutes can be read to the congregation at the end of the meeting and approved then.

Other information related to meetings of the congregation appears under the election and ordination of elders and deacons. The election of a Nominating Committee requires at least two members of the session, one of whom is to be moderator of the committee. It is good practice for the session to make these appointments in advance of the congregational meeting so that the congregation has this information when it votes on its representatives. The session representatives should be active on the session during the time they serve on the nominating committee. This is only a problem when the term of office on session does not correspond with the term of office on the committee such as when the session terms begin in June or July and the Nominating Committee election is in January.

More information is available in a separate Handbook for Church Nominating Committees.

In the congregational meeting for the election of the Church Nominating Committee after there has been a vote to close nominations, if the number of nominees equals the number of vacancies, the election may be by voice vote or show of hands to elect the slate by unanimous consent (or by acclamation). While the *Book of Order* does not require that nominees give permission for their names to be entered into nomination, it is good practice for the church to have such a requirement written into its bylaws. *Robert's Rules of Order* specify that no person can make more than one nomination and that nominations do not need to be seconded. The *Book of Order* does not require a secret ballot for this type of election when the number of nominees exceeds the number of vacancies but it is good public relations practice to do so. This means that the clerk should have ballots prepared in advance, even if they are nothing more than that shown in Appendix F; the example there assumes that five persons are to be elected.

Note that proxies are not permitted in this election. Only active members who are present may vote. (These requirements hold for all votes.)

The election of elders and deacons is more specifically given. The moderator first asks the congregation "Are you now ready to proceed to the election?" The Nominating Committee makes its report and the moderator opens the floor to further nominations. After there has been a vote to close nominations, if the number of nominees exceeds the number of vacancies, a secret ballot is required. Thus it is recommended that the clerk have a ballot prepared listing the nominees with several blank lines for names to be added as shown in Appendix F; the example there assumes that four persons are to be elected.

Again, proxies are not permitted and only active members who are present may vote.

An annual meeting of the congregation is required for the purposes of receiving reports from the session and to fulfill any legal requirements with respect to the church as a corporation. It is customary, but not required, that the annual review of the pastor's call occurs at this meeting.

Matters related to capital expenditures that may or will result in a church mortgage require

congregational approval and eventually presbytery approval.

Other less frequent actions of the congregation may require that the clerk to take a leading role. These include the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, the formation of a pastor nominating committee,[32] and the subsequent election of a pastor. All of these actions require consultation with and/or approval by presbytery. Early discussion with the presbytery committee on ministry (or its equivalent) is encouraged. Secret ballots should be used. Again, proxies are not permitted and only active members who are present may vote.

The Session may, in advance of the congregational meeting, specify that a vote should be by secret ballot. According to *Robert's Rules of Order* secret ballots are used when specified by the constitution or by-laws or when specifically voted on (by majority vote) by the congregation.

A vote by ballot where the actual motion may not be known in advance can be handled by the use of a generic ballot as shown in Appendix F.

VI. Annual Statistical Report

A. Introduction

The presbytery must make an annual report to the General Assembly. The type of information in that report are specified by the General Assembly. Much of the information is gathered from local congregations by means of the "Session Annual Statistical Report".

The data entered need not be perfect. The information is used to keep track of trends and much is expected to be subjective. Both the total active membership and the financial data for recent years are available on the General Assembly's web site (www.pcusa.org) for all churches that complete the Report.

Some of the information requested can be difficult to obtain accurately (such as ages of members) and some information related to the budget may be requested in different categories than your bookkeeper has used. The report form comes with a workbook, which provides explanations of each item and provides a place to do a draft before transferring the figures to the final form itself.

Suggestions are made here to try to make the process easier. As with most jobs, keeping up on a monthly basis rather than waiting until the end of the year makes it easier. In addition, keeping up makes the total time spent less.

The form is divided into two main parts: A. Membership and B. Finances. For this discussion, part A will be considered in two parts: (1) active members and (2) other data. In order to collect the data, it is suggested that it be done regularly (each month) rather than waiting until the end of the year.

When serving as clerk, the author kept a notebook with pages labeled for various categories. The information was entered into the notebook after each Session meeting. This could also be done using Excel or setting up a table in MSWord.

Those pages were:

New members received by profession or reaffirmation of faith: 17 & Under

New members received by profession or reaffirmation of faith: 18 & Over

New members received by certificate (letter of transfer)

Other additions: Correction to make Total correct; etc.

Active Members transferred to other churches (certificate)

Active Members lost due to death

Other losses: Correction to make Total correct; etc.

Baptisms: children (17 & Under)

Baptisms: adult

B. Active Members

The report gives the number of active members at the beginning of the reporting period. Places are given for active members added in two major categories. A third category is given (All other gains) which also allows for corrections. Places are given for losses in active membership in two major categories plus the All other losses category, which would include transfer to the inactive roll as well as corrections. The result of this portion gives the total number of active members at the end of the reporting period.

Two lines follow for number of persons on the inactive roll and the number of baptized members. A baptized member defined as "a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether in this congregation or elsewhere, and who has been enrolled as a baptized member by the session but who has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior" (BoO G-1.0401).

The sum of Active Members and Baptized Members is called Total Adherents.

C. Other Membership Data

These data will need to be collected from a variety of sources. These include:

Number of female members

Age distribution of members

Average attendance at Sunday worship

Church school
enrollment
Baptisms

Sex distribution of elders and deacons

Number of persons with disabilities

Racial ethnic composition of congregation, session, and deacons

If you are using some sort of computer membership system such as, PowerChurch Plus or Ease, it is possible to keep track of some of these items through the proper use of the system. Years of birth of all members may not be known so you will need to make educated guesses in order to determine age distribution.

Note that it requests Church School *enrollment* not *attendance.* This includes groups that meet other than on Sunday Morning such as "The Tuesday Bible Study".

Look at the workbook for the definition of a person with a disability. This is not the usual definition. The definition is that the disability "substantially limits participation" but the application of the definition is left to you. Just as in age distribution, use of personal knowledge is expected to be applied rather than a formal survey. Data collected with such a vague definition cannot be worth very much so don't worry about this too much; just do your best. A person in a wheel chair may not be "substantially limited". That person can't help set up tables for a church dinner but neither can the 95 year old who lives alone and drives to church each week and serves on a church committee. Both of these describe persons in my own church and neither would consider themselves "substantially limited".

D. Finances

The financial reporting is broken down into broad categories. Note that the values to be reported are for the whole congregation. If there are several accounts in the main finances, all must be included. If groups within the church maintain their own accounts (such as Presbyterian Women, Mariners, Building Fund, and so forth), all of these should be included if there finances are substantial. If these groups monies are small, they can be ignored as long as you do this consistently over the years. The financial reporting is really looking for trends.

Appendix G lists the categories on the form. For each category there is a list of the typical items included in each category. The workbook is reasonably understandable but the Appendix gives some specific examples to help with the application.

VII. Assisting the Pastor

The Clerk should keep the pastor informed and provide information to the pastor as requested. Other assistance will be determined by the relationship between the pastor and the clerk and by the needs of the pastor. In addition, the time commitment of the clerk will determine the extent and the nature of assistance that can be provided. Pastors are busy people so any assistance the clerk can provide with administrative matters will give the pastor more time for pastoral duties.

A. Docket Planning

Unless you have an excellent memory, you might consider making a calendar listing of actions that need to taken by the session and by the congregation. Examples of these

are given in Sections II and V. Prior to each session meeting, this calendar can be used to remind the pastor of actions that need to be on the agenda. Some of these items need to be considered in advance, not just the day of the session meeting, because they may require some homework. An example of this is the election of session representatives to the congregational nominating committee; the pastor may want to sound out some potential nominees.

Planning in advance will make the process smoother and important items will not be overlooked.

B. Parliamentarian

Most pastors are thoroughly familiar with the *Book of Order* and can function as their own parliamentarian. Others need some assistance or an occasional reminder. In the latter case, the clerk should function as parliamentarian or as a resource to the pastor. The relationship between pastor and clerk can work well if both are sensitive, open, and honest.

Some items that are strictly Presbyterian are as follows.

- Motions that come from a committee do not require a second.

- Session minutes are the property of the Session. Members of the congregation (as well as nonmembers) should not have access to the minutes without the permission of the Session. The Clerk of Session should provide a summary of any desired information.

C. Adviser

Pastors frequently need someone to talk to as a sounding board and to check with as they develop policies and as they consider personnel matters. Sometimes this person is the clerk and sometimes it is someone else (and sometimes it is both). This is an area where the clerk can be of great assistance to the pastor but only when the relationship between the pastor and the clerk is such as to make it workable. The clerk should be ready to assist as needed but should not expect that this is a usual duty of the clerk.

VIII. Archiving Records

The Presbyterian Historical Society provides information about establishing a records management program. This is available on the internet at http://www.history.pcusa.org/cong/records/index.html, which serves as the entry page for the entire document.

They suggest first establishing a records inventory. That is, keep a record of the church records. This should include what they are and where they are. It seems logical but it is something that is easily put off until there is more time.

The length of time records should be kept varies with the type of record. The logical statement is that records should be kept for as long as they are needed. Financial records must be kept as long as tax laws require. Administrative records such as the Church Register and Session Minutes must be kept indefinitely. Routine

correspondence, travel arrangements, etc. can be discarded as soon as their need has been met and any reports related to them have been made. Records deemed to have historical value should be referred to the Society for advice.

Inactive records should be stored in a dark, dry place with containers clearly marked as to contents. If possible, they should also be marked with the date on which they can be destroyed.

Important records should be kept on quality paper or on microfilm. Permanent records should never be kept on magnetic media such as computer hard drives, disks, CD-ROMs, etc. Not only are these media subject to gradual deterioration, but also the software or hardware to access the records may no longer be available.