

Session Records Review Guidelines
Office of the Stated Clerk
National Capital Presbytery

The following guidelines are to assist clerks of session in preparing for the annual session records review that is required by the Book of Order (G-3.0108a). They can be read in conjunction with the “Checklist for the Annual Review of Session Records.”

How Should a Clerk Prepare for the Records Review?

- a. Read the Checklist early in the year and review it periodically to make sure your session will take all necessary actions in time for the records review.
- b. Pay particular attention to items on the Checklist with an “E” or Exception. Those items are specifically required by the Book of Order.
- c. Fill out the Checklist with page numbers where an item is located or a “Yes” or “No” as appropriate prior to coming to the records review.
- d. Bring your current minutes book, your rolls and registers, and the Checklist to the records review.

What Happens at the Records Review?

When you arrive at the records review you will be paired up with another clerk and you will review each other’s minutes, rolls, and registers using the checklist and two (one for minutes, one for rolls and registers) Session Records Committee Review Sheets that you will be given when you arrive. To review the records, verify the items on the checklist and check yes, no, or ok as appropriate. If any items with an “E” on the Checklist are missing, so indicate on the Session Records Committee Review Sheets.

General Information Concerning Recordkeeping ¹

The Book of Order requires maintenance of minutes, rolls and registers. Although creating and maintaining an access copy of the records in electronic form is permissible, the official copy must be in a “permanent and unchanging medium.” Permanent records should be on acid-free paper and printed on a laser printer or photocopier, not on an inkjet printer (which is not sufficiently durable for archival purposes).

Minutes can be printed on 8.5 x 11 acid-free paper. The pages must be numbered with blank pages or open spaces marked (usually by a diagonal line). The minutes should be kept in a binder, folder or box. You may wish to keep them temporarily in a three-ring binder or a box and it is strongly recommended that you have them bound at the end of each year which can be done at an office supply store.

¹ Much of this information is from Item 3-10, On Maintenance and Reporting for Session Membership Rolls and Registers, 217th General Assembly.

Rolls and registers can be kept similarly to minutes. But, if they are kept electronically they should be printed out on acid-free paper every six months or so. The Office of General Assembly suggests that churches use an all-purpose database program (e.g., Excel or Access) rather than a church database because the church databases are often from small companies that tend to have a short lifespan and do not provide sufficient customer support.

Book of Order References for Checklist

Session Meeting Minutes

1. Date, time, place, moderator, attendance, stated or called, quorum (E for moderator or quorum – G-1.0504, G-3.0203)
2. Meeting opened and closed with prayer – G-3.0105
3. Minutes of last meeting approved – G-3.0105 (Robert's)
4. Clerk signed minutes
5. Meetings at least quarterly – G-3.0203
6. Authorization of the Lord's Supper (which should be celebrated at least quarterly)– G-3.0201b
7. Authorization of administration of Baptism – G-3.0201b
8. Receipt of new members, how received (profession, reaffirmation, transfer) – G-1.0303
9. Annual Review of the roll of active members – G-3.0201c
10. Deletion or dismissal of members from Active roll, reason for deletion – G-3.0204a
11. Election of Commissioners to Presbytery – G-3.0202a
12. Election and term of Clerk of Session – G-3.0104
13. Election and term of Treasurer – G-3.0205
14. Preparation and examination of elected elders and deacons – G-2.0402
15. Ordination and installation of elders and deacons, with class – G-2.0403
16. Review of minutes or work of the Board of Trustees (if separate from session) – G-3.0201c
17. Review of minutes or work of the Board of Deacons – G-3.0201c
18. Confirmation that church has property and liability insurance coverage – G-3.0112
19. Confirmation of annual review of and recommendations for change in terms of call of installed pastors – G-2.0804
20. Confirmation that copy of terms of call/contracts with pastoral staff have been submitted to the presbytery's COM Administrator – G-2.0804
21. Confirmation of annual full financial review of all books and records – G-3.0113
22. Copy of membership and financial figures in summary form from Annual Statistical Report – G-3.0202f
23. Copy of annual budget or a summary – G-3.0113

Congregational Meeting Minutes

24. Date, time, place, moderator, call in order, quorum – G-1.0501, G-1.0502
25. Meeting opened and closed with prayer
26. Minutes of last meeting approved (can be done by session)
27. Secretary signed minutes
28. Election and class of elders, deacons, and trustees (if separate from session) – G-2.0404, G-4.0101
29. Election of members of Nominating Committee – G-2.0401
30. Approval of terms of call of pastors (for installed pastors) – G-1.0503c
31. Record of all other actions taken by congregation – G-1.0503

Rolls and Registers

32. Rolls – Active member, affiliate member, baptized – G-3.0204a
33. Registers – Baptisms – G-3.0204b
34. Registers – Deacons, elders, pastors with dates of service – G-3.0204b

Other

35. Manual of Administrative Operations – G-3.0106
36. Sexual Misconduct Policy – G-3.0106
37. Child and Youth Protection Policy -- G-3.0106