

***CLERK'S INFO PAK***

***CLERKS OF SESSION WORKSHOP***

**"A Little of What You Need to Know  
About Being  
a  
Clerk of Session"**

# CLERK OF SESSION MANDATE & MISSION

## **Our Mandate:**

### **G. 16 THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH**

**G. 16-3** "Review and Control: For the orderly process of review and control, each organizational unit shall submit its minutes to the unit above. The Board of Deacons shall submit its minutes at least semi-annually to the Church Session; the Church Session shall submit its minutes to the Presbytery annually; the Presbytery shall submit its minutes to the General Assembly annually. Each court shall review the minutes submitted to it to insure that the lower body has faithfully and diligently fulfilled all duties and responsibilities assigned to each court. It may refer matters back for reconsideration, call attention to omissions, require amendment of actions out of conformity with the Constitution, or otherwise exercise proper review and control of the lower body."

## **Our Mission:**

**G. 16-13** "Minutes: A careful record of the proceedings of the court shall be kept by the Clerk. When the Church Session has approved its minutes, they shall be signed by the Clerk and the Moderator. The Clerk shall submit the minutes to the Presbytery annually. The Clerk shall be careful to record deaths, births, adoptions, baptisms, marriages, reception of members, transfers to the inactive roll, dismissals, and other records required regarding members."

## **Our Methodology:**

**WHAT is the most effective way of fulfilling our mandate AND our mission?**

# **The Clerk**

## **1. As Scribe (see G.16-13, 8-1F)**

***To faithfully, carefully record the actions of Session and, along with other required documents, preserve them for posterity.***

## **2. As Parliamentarian**

***To be familiar with Session's established procedures, policies, practices and with Robert's Rules of Order in order to provide guidance and counsel in questions of required order.***

## **3. As Correspondent**

***To act as the official correspondent re: all local church matters with other judicatories and with non-EPC bodies.***

## **4. As "Town Crier"**

***To publish all announcements authorized and directed by Session to the local church, the community, and Church at large***

## **5. As Source of information**

***To respond to all inquiries and offer accurate, clear information as instructed and required by the Session, church bylaws and/or constitution of the EPC.***

## **6. As "Armor Bearer" (I Samuel 14:1-14)**

***To serve in a support role to the Moderator, providing whatever Scriptural assistance as required and necessary.***

## **DO'S & DON'Ts OF CLERK'S WORK**

**DO** keep an accurate record of **ALL** meetings – Remember, in five weeks or five months or five years from now, "if it wasn't written down, it didn't happen."

**DO** keep minutes of **EXECUTIVE SESSIONS/MEETINGS**. These minutes require special treatment:

- Record in regular minutes any action taken; additional detail is at discretion & instruction of the Session
- **DO NOT** record individual members' comments **UNLESS** the executive session involves a **FORMAL TRIAL** according to the Book of Discipline
- Approve minutes at end of executive session or at the next regular Session meeting
- Keep minutes of executive sessions in separate sealed file from regular minutes
- **DO NOT** reveal contents of minutes of executive session **UNLESS** instructed/ordered to do so by the Session or a higher church court. **EXCEPTION:** In the case of pending/threatened litigation, it is permissible to share relevant information from sealed files to your insurance carrier provided they give you a written assurance of confidentiality.

**DON'T** meet in the absence of the Moderator **UNLESS** he has approved the meeting beforehand (G. 16-11). An "emergency" had better be just that! Otherwise, whatever is decided or done is subject to be declared out of order by Presbytery.

**DO** help the Moderator to begin meetings **ON TIME** – and to end at the agreed upon time.

**DO** file your church's **ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT** by the **DEADLINE** given each year.

**DO** file your Pastor(s)' **ANNUAL CHANGES IN TERMS OF CALL & ANNUAL REVIEW** by the **DEADLINE** – which is now **JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup>**. If your church doesn't approve changes until after January 1<sup>st</sup> **BE SURE TO NOTIFY THE STATED CLERK** of your situation AND WHEN you will send it.

**DO** keep Minutes in a secure, safe place. The official Minutes **SHOULD** be kept in a hard-backed, bound book for permanency. Back-up copies on computers, floppies, CDs are additional safeguards for preservation.

**DON'T FORGET:** Session minutes are **LEGAL DOCUMENTS**, and in many courts, considered to be THE OFFICIAL RECORD of the church/Session.

**DO** become familiar with **THE BOOK OF ORDER**—especially the **Book of Government!**

## **ESSENTIALS OF SESSION MINUTES**

### *“The Bare Minimum Requirements”*

**For purposes of creating and maintaining an accurate and consistent permanent record of Session meetings and actions taken, certain things need to be included in the minutes taken by the Clerk. Those items are (at least ):**

- **The date, time & place of each meeting**
- **The names of those in attendance: Moderator, REs, others**
- **That prayer was an integral part of all meetings, either beginning, during or at end**
- **Approval by Session of previous minutes & signed by Moderator, Clerk**
- **A record of births, baptisms, marriages, adoptions, deaths of members & members’ family members who are part of the church**
- **A record of members received (with names of minor children living with them)**
- **A record of those transferred to inactive status or dismissed to other churches**
- **Names & dates of those ordained and/or installed as Ruling Elders, Deacons**
- **Action taken by Session on all matters requiring its consideration by motion, recommendation, request, and The Book of Order**

**Additionally, for future reference and for guidance to future leaders, minutes should include**

- **A copy of the annual budget approved by the Session and/or congregation**
- **A copy of the GA Annual Statistical Report**
- **Any communications by higher courts (presbytery, General Assembly) requesting action by the Session (received as information, referred, approved, rejected)**

# *Taking Minutes*

## **1. PREPARATION FOR THE MEETING:**

- A. Have a written agenda with as much detail as possible; include copies of items which Session members need to read ahead of time**
- B. Review the agenda with Moderator PRIOR to the meeting; try to avoid surprises**
- C. Have a consistent methodology: pen & paper, laptop, recording, transcribing**

## **2. CONTENT**

- A. Refer to "Session Minutes Guidelines" to cover all the bases**
- B. Make CLEAR, COMPLETE sentences!**
- C. PERSPECTIVE: Keep in mind that in 10 weeks, years, or decades your record may be the ONLY record of a Session decision, action, consideration! Don't be TOO DETAILED, but don't leave out IMPORTANT DETAILS!**

## **3. CORRECTIONS TO MINUTES**

- A. THE IDEAL: Mail, distribute copies of minutes at least one week BEFORE the next meeting so Session members can have time read, review**
- B. Very few (if any) Sessions read minutes in meetings (as in the old days); yet a good Clerk NEEDS the clear eyes, minds of other Elders to catch typo's, mistakes. Encourage Session members to read, look for needed corrections OR you may have someone else proof-read (volunteer or paid—AS LONG AS they can keep what they read in CONFIDENTIALITY!)**
- C. Enter corrections, additions in NEXT set of minutes in section entitled, "ERRATA"**

## **4. SECURITY**

- A. Once minutes are approved, set a permanent copy with signatures of MODERATOR & YOURSELF aside in a HARD-BOUND MINUTES BOOK.**
- B. Keep a BACKUP set of minutes on CD/diskette/zip in case something happens to your/church files**
- C. Keep permanent minutes book in a SECURE PLACE! Safe from fire, flood, sun damage, heat, theft as much as practical (The car trunk is NOT a good idea!)**
- D. Once a year, send a copy of the previous year's minutes to GA ARCHIVES for their record. Who knows? Someday one of your great-grandchildren may write a history of your church using YOUR minutes!**

## **5. "WHOSE MINUTES?"**

- A. Session minutes are SESSION minutes—and remain the property of the Session unless required by Presbytery, GA (usually whenever the church is dissolved)**
- B. Access to minutes: Determined by the Session! A VARIETY of ways to address this: post/publish full text copies (on website or bulletin board or newsletter), OR a publish a condensed version of meetings, OR a brief synopsis/description of actions taken OR any combination or ALL of the above! It's up to Session to decide what's best for your church.**
- C. Minutes of EXECUTIVE SESSION are not available to anyone UNLESS the Session gives permission; Presbytery, GA may require them in certain cases.**

# **SUGGESTED AGENDA**

**MEETING OF THE SESSION  
1<sup>ST</sup> EPC  
ANYWHERE, USA  
JANUARY 1, 2005  
7:00 p.m.**

**1. Call to order & prayer**

**2. Declaration of quorum**

**PRESENT:**

**(OR)**

**LIST NAMES OF TEs & REs**

**ABSENT:**

**(Check Present or Absent)**

**3. MINUTES READ & APPROVED (Minutes may be distributed prior to meeting)**

**4. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED (OR) CLERK'S REPORT**

- "Communications" = Any correspondence from GA, Presbytery, members, committees, other churches, organizations--ANYTHING which Session needs to know about from outside, inside the church

- May be received as information or may be docketed for Session's consideration at this or a future meeting (Clerk & Moderator decide which is best & Session ok's)

**5. REPORTS:** May be from Treasurer, standing committees, teams, huddles, action teams, task force(s), Diaconate, Pastor(s)

**6. OLD/UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** Carry-over items from previous meeting(s)

**7. NEW BUSINESS:** Clerk AND Moderator notified BEFORE the meeting in order to docket for consideration

**8. ANNOUNCE NEXT MEETING**

**9. PRAYER & ADJOURNMENT** –Be sure to note TIME of adjournment (*Didn't you note the time the meeting started?*)

(Revised 1/25/05)

## ***SAMPLE IDEAS FROM OTHER CLERKS***

- 1. OMNIBUS MOTIONS – Used to group together routine items which are not considered controversial. Should any member desire to talk about a particular item, you may isolate that item and discuss/vote on it separately.**
- 2. CLERK’S REPORT (At each stated meeting, usually) – Here’s how one Clerk does this:**

|  |
|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CLERK’S REPORT</b><br/><b>Session Meeting of January 1, 2008</b></p> |
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**BIRTHS – Jacob David Jones, son of John and Sue Jones,  
December 10, 2007, Hometown General Hospital**

**- Julia Rachel Smith, daughter of Sam and Barbara  
Smith, November 30, 2007, St. Joseph’s Hospital**

**- George Washington Bush, son of Ralph and Jean Bush,  
December 2, 2007, Hometown General Hospital**

**INFANT BAPTISM - Samuel Eugene Brown, Jr., son of Sam and  
Sara Brown**

**ADULT BAPTISM -**

**WEDDINGS – Alice Sue Mitchell, daughter of Robert and Myrtle  
Myrtle Mitchell, wed to Capt. James Longstreet, US  
Army**

**DEATHS – Harriet T. Bates, November 28, 2007**

- 3. WRITTEN POLICY STATEMENTS ON WEDDINGS, FUNERAL SERVICES, OTHER  
USAGE OF CHURCH BUILDING -- Samples can be secured by contacting  
Administrative Director’s Office**
- 4. YOUR IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS ? ? ?**

**REPORT FOR SESSION MINUTES  
(1/1/07)**

**REPORT ON SESSION MINUTES** of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church

**CLERK OF SESSION:** Please use the blanks to indicate the requested information is/is not provided. ***Include this sheet with your Minutes when it is submitted for examination.***

**PLEASE NOTE:** If your church does NOT have a Board of Deacons, check here \_\_\_\_\_

**BLANKS** after each question are to be answered **YES or NO**

1. Is the time & place of each meeting given? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did Session meet at least once each quarter? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are names of Elders present noted? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Was prayer a part of all meetings? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did Session always approve its own minutes & are they signed by the Moderator and Clerk? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Were Commissioners elected to each meeting of Presbytery? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Did these Commissioners report to Session on their attendance at Presbytery? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Were minutes of the Board of Deacons examined at least annually by the Session? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do minutes record ordination & installation of new Ruling Elders & Deacons, with dates? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did Session approve annual budget of church? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Was GA's Annual Statistical Report approved & included in minutes & forwarded to GA? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do minutes record reception of new members, giving full names, and noting how received? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Were all dismissals & other deletions from the church roll acted on by Session, with reasons given in the minutes? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Did Session make an annual review of the church roll for accuracy: \_\_\_\_\_  
(a) active members  
(b) non-communing members (baptized, under 18)  
(c) inactive members  
(d) affiliate members?

15. Were communications from higher courts read & acted upon by \_\_\_\_\_  
the Session as requested by the sending court?  
(received as information, referred, approved, rejected)

16. Were there any known irregularities or inconsistencies with \_\_\_\_\_  
**The Book of Order** in actions taken by Session?

If YES, explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Clerk of Session \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Church

***PLEASE PRINT:***

Name of Clerk of Session: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_

State : \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**SESSION MINUTES REPORT**

