

STANDARDS FOR SESSION RECORDS

Prepared in 1983 by Stated Clerk David E. Rule (Updated by Rule in 1986)

Updated by Stated Clerk William M. Reed in 1999

Updated by Stated Clerk Jerry L. Utt, II in 2018, 2025

Note that these standards are not intended to be a recitation of the duties of the clerk. It is the clerk's duty to record what happens, not necessarily the clerk's duty to ensure that everything happens. Obviously, the clerk should make appropriate suggestions to the Moderator on how to proceed with the Session's business such that these standards are followed to the greatest degree possible.

The permanent records of a Session are basically of two kinds, Rolls/Registers and Minutes. The Rolls/Registers should be kept together in the same volume, which is generally called the Church Register. The Minutes and the Rolls/Registers may or may not be contained in the same volume, according to a Session's discretion. These records are subject to review by the Presbytery (F-3.0206). In the review of records, five things are to be noted (G-3.0108):

- (1) The proceedings have been correctly recorded;
- (2) The proceedings have been regular and in accordance with the *Constitution*;
- (3) The proceedings have been prudent and equitable;
- (4) The proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole church;
- (5) The lawful injunctions of a higher governing body have been obeyed.

The following standards are provided for the guidance and the direction of the clerks and moderators of Sessions within Transylvania Presbytery. If you have specific questions or concerns, please contact the stated clerk at statedclerk@transyby.org.

I. CHURCH ROLLS/REGISTERS

The name of the church should appear in a prominent place on the outside of the Church Register. The following up-to-date, accurate and complete membership rolls shall be a part of the Register (G-1.04; G-3.0204a):

All active members
All affiliate members

All baptized members

In addition, there shall be an up-to-date, accurate and complete register in the same volume of the following (G-3.0204b):

All baptisms, infant and adult, authorized by the Session
All installed pastors, ruling elders, and deacons, with dates of active service

Although not required, registers of trustees, marriages, funerals, and deaths may be kept, if the Session deems it necessary and desirable.

II. MINUTE BOOKS

A. GENERAL

1. The name of the church shall appear prominently on the outside of the minute book.
2. The pages shall be numbered consecutively with no blank pages.
3. The Session shall meet at least quarterly. (G-3.0203)
4. The Session shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission. (G-3.0106)
5. The Session shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. (G.3-0106)
6. The session shall ensure that elders receive boundary training at least every thirty-six months on the topics of sexual misconduct and child sexual abuse prevention training. (G-3.0106) The clerk should record in the minutes the names of elders trained and the date of training.
7. The Session shall obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers. (G-3.0112)
8. The Session shall prepare and adopt an annual budget. (G-3.0113)
9. The Session shall conduct an annual full financial review of all financial books and records and a report of this audit should be copied into the minutes. (G-3.0113)

B. FOR EACH MEETING OF THE SESSION

10. Record the date, time, and place of the meeting.
11. Specify the type of meeting (stated, special/called). If it is a special/called meeting, indicate how it was called, for what purpose, and that reasonable notice was given. (G-3.0203)
12. Record that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer. (G-3.0105)
13. Record the full name of the moderator and of ruling elders present, excused or absent.
14. Record the reading and approval of the minutes at the close of the current meeting or the next stated meeting.
15. Record whether or not a quorum is present. Note that no business - except to fix the time to adjourn, to adjourn, to recess, or to take measures to obtain a quorum - may be transacted in the absence of a quorum.
16. The minutes are to be signed by the moderator of the meeting or the clerk of session.
17. Care should be taken to ensure that the minutes are neat and present a professional appearance. Reports and other communications should be copied into the minutes and not inserted between pages.
18. All meetings shall be constitutionally moderated. The session shall not meet without the pastor or designated moderator. (G-3.0201)

C. ANNUALLY

19. The minutes of the Session shall be submitted at least once every year to the Presbytery for review at the time and place indicated for such submission. (G-3.0108a)
20. The minutes shall reflect that there has been during the year at least one joint meeting with the Board of Deacons, when there is such a board. (G-2.0202)

21. The minutes will show that the records of the Board of Deacons, of the Board of Trustees, and of the organizations of the Church have been reviewed at least annually or, in the case of other organizations, that an annual report was received. (G-3.0201c)
22. Once each year, the Session shall cause all books and records relating to finances to be audited in accordance with the provisions of the *Book of Order*, and there shall be copied or noted in the minutes the report concerning this audit. (G-3.0113; G-3.0205)
23. The minutes shall show that the annual statistical report has been approved and submitted to the General Assembly website, and the report shall be copied into the minutes of the meeting at which it is approved. (G-3.0202f)
24. The minutes shall show that the Session has reviewed at least annually the roll of members. (G-3.0201c)
25. The minutes shall state the composition of the session and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation. (G-3.0103)
26. When there is a pastor, the minutes shall indicate that the Session reviewed the pastor's terms of call prior to the adoption of the budget for the ensuing year, and that the terms meet or exceed Presbytery minimums. (G-2.0804)

D. THE SACRAMENTS

27. Include the full names of all persons to whom baptism is administered and for children, the names of both parents. This record shall be made at the time of the baptism or at the next stated meeting. Such entry should be made in both the minutes and the Church Register. (G-3.0201b; W-2.3000)
28. The minutes should record that the Lord's Supper is celebrated at least quarterly and that services are held in accordance with the Directory for Worship. The minutes should also record that certain persons were authorized to help the pastor (or other person authorized to administer the sacrament) serve communion to the sick or others isolated from public worship. Note: it would be appropriate for the Session to authorize all church members to assist in the service of communion. (G-3.0201b; W-2.4000)

E. CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

29. Record the full name of persons received into church membership. This information should appear in both the Minutes and the Church Register. (G-3.0204a)
30. Record method of the reception of each member.
 - a. By profession of faith,
 - b. By certificate of transfer,
 - c. By reaffirmation of faith. (G-1.0303)
31. Record the full name of persons being dismissed, the name of the church to which such persons are dismissed, and the effective date of the dismissal if different from the date of the meeting at which the action was taken. For deceased members, the date of death should be recorded. For members deleted from the roll, the effective date should be noted as well as any reason for such action (moved away, inactive, etc.). (G-3.0204a)

F. OTHER OCCASIONS

32. The minutes shall clearly state the purpose for which meetings of the congregation are called, and the time and place of such meetings. (G-3.0203)
33. If the Session appoints an administrative commission, it shall show in its minutes the names of those appointed, the purpose(s) for which appointed, and a written record of its work after completion. (G-3.0109)
34. Record the election of a commissioner (or commissioners) to attend meetings of the Presbytery, indicating the exact period of time for which elected. Also record a report on the meeting(s) attended or a statement of reason for non-attendance. (G-3.0202a)
35. The session should nominate to Presbytery ruling elders from the congregation who may be considered for election to higher councils of the church and serve on commissions or committees. (G-3.0202b)
36. When the congregation has elected persons to the office of ruling elder or deacon, the record in the minutes shall show that the Session conferred with them concerning their willingness to serve and that they were prepared for office and examined by the Session in those areas specified by the *Book of Order*. Record shall also be made of the day appointed for their ordination and/or installation. (G-2.0402)
37. Record changes in pastors in the appropriate Session register. (G.3.0204b)
38. When the Session of a church finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the Form of Government and the Church Discipline sections of the *Book of Order* should be carefully studied. If discipline is administered, the minutes of the Session must contain a full record of the proceedings.

G. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

38. The minutes shall show evidence of an annual meeting of the congregation. (G.1.0501)
39. The minutes of all meetings of the congregation shall be entered in the minute book of the Session. (G-1.0505)
40. The minutes of the meeting shall record that adequate notice of the meeting was given. (G-1.0502)
41. The minutes shall state whether a quorum was present. In the absence of a quorum, no business may be conducted except to: fix a time to adjourn, to adjourn, to recess, or to take measures to obtain a quorum. (G.3.0203)
42. The minutes of special meetings shall show the purpose(s) for which they were called. No business other than that specified in the call may be transacted. (G-3.0203)
43. The congregation shall annually elect church officers. (G-2.0401; G-2.0403; G-2.0404)
44. The minutes of all meetings of the congregation shall indicate that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer. (Note: If the meeting follows a worship service, an opening prayer is assumed, and the minutes should reflect that the meeting followed worship.) (G-3.0105)
45. The minutes of all meetings of the congregation should reflect constitutional moderating thereof. (G-1.0504)