

## 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

**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 and Minutes. The Rolls should be kept together in the same volume, which is generally called the Church Register. The Minutes and the Rolls may or may not be contained in the same volume, according to the Session's discretion. These records are subject to review by the Presbytery. The Church Register (when in a separate volume) is sent to the Presbytery in odd numbered years. The Minute Book is sent each year when requested. In the review of the records, five things are to be noted (see G-9.0409a):

- (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.

### I. CHURCH 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 rolls shall be a part of the Register (G-10.0302):

All active members	All baptized members
All inactive members	All affiliate members

In addition, there shall be an up-to-date, accurate and complete register in the same volume of the following (G-10.0302c):

- All baptisms, infant and adult
- All marriages of members, all marriages conducted by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property
- All elders, deacons and pastors (including stated supply and interims)

Although not required, registers of trustees and deaths are recommended.

### 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.
3. The session shall meet at least quarterly. (G-10.0201)

## B. FOR EACH MEETING OF THE SESSION

4. Record the date, time and place of the meeting.
5. Specify the type of meeting (stated, adjourned, called). If it is a called meeting, indicate how it was called and for what purpose(s).
6. Record that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer. (G-9.0301)
7. Record the full name of the Moderator and of the elders present, excused or absent.
8. Record the reading and approval of the minutes at the close of the current meeting or the next stated meeting.
9. 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.
10. The minutes are to be signed by the Moderator of the Meeting or the Clerk of Session.
11. 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.
12. All meetings should be constitutionally moderated. (G-10.0103)

## C. ANNUALLY

13. The minutes of the Session shall be submitted at least once every year to the Presbytery at the time and place indicated for such submission. (G-10.0301)
14. 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-6.0405)
15. 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-6.0404 and G-10.0102m)
16. 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-10.0401)
17. The minutes shall show that the annual statistical report has been approved and forwarded to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery, and the report shall be copied into the minutes of the meeting at which it is approved.
18. The minutes shall show that the Session has reviewed the roll of members. (G-5.0502)
19. The minutes shall state the composition of the session and how this corresponds to the composition of the congregation. (G-10.0301)

20. Where there is a pastor, the minutes shall indicate that the Session reviewed the pastor's compensation prior to the adoption of the budget for the ensuing year. (G-0102n)

#### D. THE SACRAMENTS

21. Include the full names of all persons to whom baptism is administered and 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-10.0203c)
22. The minutes should note that communion services are held in accordance with W.2-4009. The minutes should also note 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. (W2.4010) Note that it would be appropriate for the Session to authorize all church members to assist in the service of communion

#### E. CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

23. Record the full name of persons received into church membership. This information should appear in both the Minutes and the Church Register.
24. Record method of the reception of each member.
  - a. By profession of faith,
  - b. By certificate of transfer,
  - c. By reaffirmation of faith.
25. 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.

All actions relating to membership should be reflected in the Church Register, as well as in the Minutes of the meeting at which actions were taken.

#### F. ON STATED OCCASIONS

26. The minutes shall clearly state the purpose for which meetings of the congregation are called, and the time and place of such meetings. (G-7.0302)
27. 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 it has been completed. (G-9.0500)
28. Record the election of a commissioner 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-10.0102p)
29. When the congregation has elected persons to the office of 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 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-14.0205)

30. Record changes in pastors.
31. In the event that a Session meeting is moderated by someone other than the Pastor or presbytery appointed moderator, care shall be taken that both the Session and pastor (or appointed Moderator) have concurred in this and that there is no violation of the Book of Order. (G-9.0202; G-10.0103)
32. When the Session of a church finds it necessary to exercise discipline, the Form of Government and the Rules of Discipline should be carefully studied. If discipline is administered, the minutes of the Session must contain a record of the proceedings, as will enable the Presbytery to know who were disciplined, why and how.

#### G. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

33. The minutes shall show evidence of an annual meeting of the congregation. (G-7.0302)
34. The minutes of all meetings of the congregation shall be entered in the minute book of the Session. (G-7.0307)
35. The minutes of all meeting of the congregation shall be attested to by both the moderator and the clerk. (G-7.0307)
36. The minutes of the meetings shall show that the meeting was properly announced in advance. (see also 14.0502)
37. The minutes shall state whether a quorum was present. (see G-7.0305 for quorum requirement). In the absence 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.
38. 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.
39. The minutes shall annually reflect the election of church officers.
40. 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 not required, but the minutes should reflect that the meeting followed worship.)
41. The minutes of all meetings of the congregation should reflect constitutional moderating thereof. (G-7.0306)