

**PASTORS & CLERKS OF SESSION  
PRESBYTERY OF COASTAL CAROLINA**

**FROM ONE  
CLERK  
TO ANOTHER  
2006**

**COMMITTEE ON SESSIONAL RECORDS**

**(UPDATED 2006)**

FROM ONE CLERK TO ANOTHER

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\*Credit goes to Nancy Harper, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Ohio Valley for the basic layout and content of this workbook.

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## FROM ONE CLERK TO ANOTHER

To you has been given a great honor, the honor of serving the Lord and your church as Clerk of Session in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

If you are a new clerk, welcome. We hope you will enjoy this new position. Do not hesitate to call the Moderator of the Committee on Sessional Records, any member of this committee, another clerk in a nearby church, or the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk & Treasurer. We will all help.

The capital letters in your title denote a position of authority and a great deal of work. Don't let anyone tell you that being Clerk of Session is an easy job. At times the work may seem overwhelming, but it can be an exciting job with many challenges and rewards. The intent of this publication is to make your work easier.

Being Clerk of Session is to hold a multifaceted position. Historically, the Clerk of Session has been the person who maintains accurate records for the session and the congregation. As you read through your church records, they communicate the story and the history of your church, its information, its life and growth, and its mission in the community, the presbytery, and the denomination.

Our church records have many uses. They keep the church alert to its current status. As you know, each year the General Assembly requires a summary in the form of an annual statistical report. Much of that report comes from your good record keeping. Your records may be used for civil affairs in tracing families who happen your way. That's why names and dates are of vital importance.

But - recording keeping is only a small part of your job, even though it takes much space in this manual. You are also the parliamentarian, the moderator's right hand, secretary to the session, resource person for the session and the congregation, and in general, you help to set the tone of all official meetings in your church family.

At times, you may feel this is a thankless task. **On behalf of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, I would personally like to thank you for your diligence and your endeavors in the work of the Lord, the Presbytery, the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).**

### ON WHAT BASIS DO WE DO WHAT WE DO? (and just a little bit of why)

Although no church order is clearly set forth in Scripture, the Bible does reveal the nature of God, our relationship to God, and our relationship to the fellowship of believers. It gives us the experience of the early church and the beginnings of some form of church order.

Out of the Reformation came a specific form of Protestant church government - Presbyterian - government by elders. In fact, the word "Presbytery" is the Greek term for elder. Elders are considered to be chosen and are ordained to serve in their respective positions of leadership. You are called by God and by your congregation to this position of service and leadership.

As elders, you are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather as a session collectively to

seek to find and to represent the will of Christ. As an elder you are to be a leader of and a listener to the congregation. You are responsible not to the congregation, but to Christ for the decisions you make.

### **A LITTLE BIT ABOUT A PRESBYTERY**

Without churches, there is no presbytery. The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina exists to serve the people in a given geographic location - the southeastern quadrant of North Carolina. The relationship between sessions and presbytery is defined in the Book of Order.

The minister is not a member of a church, but rather a member of presbytery. Each year and preferably for two or three years, you elect commissioners to presbytery. Elder commissioners as well as minister commissioners have voice and vote. In the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, we meet four times per year in the months of February, June, October and December. Because of our large geographic size, we meet in locations that are mutually inconvenient for someone throughout the year!

Each commissioner is required by the Form of Government/Book of Order to report to their session. Some of the items your commissioner may want to report are: significant actions taken, a summary of issues deliberated, policy decisions made and the implications to the congregation, opportunities open to the congregation, presbytery committee assistance available, and an awareness of our connectedness in Jesus Christ.

I try to make your report easier by mailing a "digest" of presbytery happenings immediately following the meeting. This digest is not only to the session, but also for the congregation.

### **MORE REFERENCES AND RESOURCES – and A Few Comments**

The three sections of the Book of Order that specifically govern the life of the congregation include: "The Directory for Worship of God," "The Form of Government," and "The Rules of Church Discipline."

Every Clerk of Session should have a new Book of Order each year. Notations such as (G-1.0500) are specific references in the Book of Order, and can easily be found by looking at the denoted sections.

A word about wording. When the word "shall" is used, it is not permissive. "Shall" is imperative or mandatory. (See Directory of Worship: Preface, "b".)

The Book of Order may be considered our denomination's bylaws as well as its standing rules. It is essential for the Clerk of Session to study the Book of Order because it contains the fundamentals for working within the Church.

The Form of Government may be seen as the how and when - how and when we function within these beliefs. It explains thoroughly and usually clearly the polity or orderly workings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We turn to the Form of Government to find answers to our frequent questions, and

it is one of the standards under which the Church makes decisions.

**The Book of Confessions:** This book contains our historic Christian Confessions which are basic to the theology of the Church. All ordained church officers are to affirm that they will be instructed by these Confessions; therefore it is essential that this book be available for individual and group study as well to be used at times of ordination and installation of officers. While officers are not required to agree with everything in these Confessions, they are required to "receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed Faith as expressed in the Confessions of our Church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and to be instructed and led by those confessions as they lead the people of God." (G-14.0207c) Through the Book of Confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declares to its members and to the world the who, what and why of our beliefs.

**The Rules of Discipline:** This book contains information regarding the nature and discipline of the church. In it you will find judicial process, how to file dissents and protests, administrative review, jurisdiction and process of permanent judicial commissions, procedural safeguards and much, much more.

The Preamble to the Rules of Discipline reminds us that Church discipline is for the building up of Christ's Church, not for tearing it down, and for restoration to wholeness of the offender. Church discipline is never taken lightly.

PRESBYTERIAN POLITY FOR CHURCH OFFICERS (John Knox Press) by the Reverends Joan Gray and Joyce Tucker is considered exceptional reading. This inexpensive paperback is the Book of Order in simple terms. I would strongly suggest that you consider purchasing it, studying it, and keeping it handy for reference. It is also considered an excellent study guide for sessions.

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER is mandated for use by the Book of Order. Parliamentary law is common sense and politeness put into practice in meetings. It is a body of conventions and customs which aids decision making, a model for conflict resolution and works for the protection of individual rights. In the church, it is always "out of order" to make parliamentary gamesmanship more important than our search for the truth. Many shortened versions of Robert's Rules are available. Keep one with your Book of Order for easy reference.

Finally, when in doubt or when questions arise, do not hesitate to contact me concerning the matter.  
[(910) 862-8300]

### **AUTHORITY OF THE SESSION**

"The session of a particular church consists of the pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor, and elders in active service. All members of the session are entitled to vote." (G-10.0101)

"The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church." (G-10.0102). Specific responsibilities and power (duties) are enumerated in Chapter X, "The Session", and should be studied on a regular basis by all active elders.

Although most churches hold session meets at least monthly, "the session shall hold stated meetings

at least quarterly." (G-10.0201)

Open or closed meetings. Frequently the question is asked - are session meetings opened or closed to the congregation. Our Book of Order notes: "The session may invite members of the congregation to attend and observe its meetings if it so desires, without restricting its right to meet in executive session..." (G-10.0201) This statement is interpreted to mean, session meetings are closed except to active elders and the moderator, but others may be invited into a particular meeting or portion of a meeting.

### **MODERATOR OF SESSION**

"The pastor of the church shall be the moderator of the session and the session shall not meet without the pastor except as hereunder provided. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the session. When it may appear advisable for prudential reasons that some minister other than the pastor should preside, the pastor may, with the concurrence of the session, invite a minister of the same presbytery to do so." "In the case of the sickness or absence of the pastor the same expedient may be adopted; or the session after having obtained the approval of the pastor, may convene and elect another of its own members to preside." (G-10.0103a)

"In addition, the moderator of the session of a church with a vacant pulpit may request an elder who is a member of the presbytery's committee on ministry, the stated clerk, executive presbyter, or associate executive presbyter, to preside, such elder may not moderate the session of the church of which that elder is a member." (G-10.0103a)

"When without a pastor, the moderator of session shall be the minister appointed for that purpose by the presbytery, or a minister of the same presbytery invited by the session to preside on a particular occasion. When it is impossible for such a minister to attend, the session may elect one of its own members to preside." (G-10.0103b) These statements are to be used only under extreme necessity.

### **ROBERT'S RULES, THE GOLDEN RULE & COMMON SENSE**

#### **What is Parliamentary Law?**

Parliamentary law is not really law as such, but a body of conventions or customs used in decision making. It encompasses common sense and courtesy, is a model for effective conflict resolution and when used correctly will provide accuracy, efficiency, impartiality, objectivity and uniformity. It helps us to transact our business, decently and in order.

Especially in the Church, it is always out of order to use parliamentary procedure as a game to subvert the will of the Holy Spirit as our guide as we seek the truth.

#### **Some Basic Assumptions to Consider**

"The Unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it." (G-4.0201) As Presbyterians, we covenant to work with one another as visible expressions of the Body of Christ and as representatives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

One of the historic principles of our Church is that we are to seek to know the will of God for our lives, yet we should exercise forbearance toward each other, understanding that "God alone is Lord of conscience..." (G-1.0100+) We are to seek unity, yet encourage diversity, and understand that through discussion and prayer we can more clearly discern God's will and direction.

As a presbytery and as a denomination we believe "That the several different congregations of believers, constituting one Church of Christ, called emphatically the Church that a larger part of the Church or a representation of it, should govern or determine matters of controversy.....that the majority shall govern... (G-1.0400)

In other words, in all assemblies we must strive for a balance of expression of individual conscience and the will of the majority. As individuals, we have several rights: the right to know what is going on and why; the right to speak and to be heard under the rules of debate; the right to vote; and the right to hold office.

Serious conflict does arise from premature resolution of an issue without regard to members' rights. Care must be taken within our polity and parliamentary practice to assure the rights of the minority as well as the majority are protected.

Our call is to seek the truth, not win a battle. In parliamentary procedure, there is no battle, but there will be open debate.

Similarly, a vocal minority can not bring back the same issue upon which the assembly has spoken, except through the rules of motions to reconsider or rescind. It is always out of order for an assembly at the same session to renew debate and to vote again on an issue, unless a person who voted with the majority moves to reconsider the issue. The moderator will ask if you voted with the majority.

Even though there is no battle, our polity carries the rights of the minority further with the right to dissent and protest as outlined in the Rules of Discipline (D-2.000)

### **On Making Motions**

As an active elder on session or a commissioner to the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, you have the right to make a motion. During your session meetings you may be seated, but to make a motion in presbytery, rise from your seat if possible, wait until the moderator recognizes you, state your name and affiliation, then simply and clearly state: "Mr/Ms Moderator, I move the following motion and if seconded will speak to it." State your motion. It is not discussion time yet. If seconded you may then speak for your motion. As the maker of the motion, you have the right to speak first. All motions of any length must be given in writing to the Stated Clerk. This is imperative if debate is lengthy. Only one motion will be considered at a time.

A motion should briefly but clearly state: what is the motion, who is affected, when it is to be done, how it will be done and why it will be done.

### **Motions**

Main Motion: Any motion which proposes an action to be taken by the governing body. Main motions are debatable.

To Amend: A motion to amend is to perfect the main motion; therefore an amendment contrary to the intent of the main motion is out of order. A motion to amend a motion takes precedence over the main motion. It must be adopted or rejected before the main motion is considered. If adopted, it becomes a part of the main motion. It is debatable.

To Substitute: A motion to substitute is a form of amendment. It takes precedence over a main motion. If approved, it replaces the main motion.

To Lay on the table: The motion to lay on the table enables the assembly to lay the pending question aside temporarily when something else of immediate urgency has arisen.

To Postpone Indefinitely: This is a motion to kill consideration. It is debatable.

To Postpone Definitely: This motion includes a specific time and/or date on which this motion will be presented to the deliberative body.

To Commit or Refer: A motion to refer must include the body to which this action is referred. It is debatable.

To Reconsider: Once a question has been decided, it must not be reconsidered again at the same assembly, unless a motion to reconsider is made by a person who voted with the majority. It is debatable.

To Move the Previous Question: This is a motion to close debate and to bring the issue to vote. It requires 2/3 vote and should not be used to close off debate or opposition prematurely. This motion requires a second and is not debatable.

### **ON KEEPING OF ACCURATE & COMPLETE RECORDS**

The completing and preserving of all church records, including session minutes, is a vital responsibility of the Clerk of Session. This is more than a secretarial skill - it is the preserving of your church's history.

Minutes serve at least two functions:

1. current records of actions by session and therefore, essential to its operation;
2. history of the congregation and the session.

In both instances it is important to have clear, concise documentation of the life of the congregation.

Session minutes are to be kept in a book designated solely for that purpose. This book should be a loose-leaf binder of good, heavy quality with the best quality paper available and numbered pages.

Although this sounds and is expensive, when you consider the alternative of your history's crumbling on lightweight paper, it is well worth the investment.

In the front of this permanent record, write the full name of the church and the location represented, as well as the date opened and closed. This makes for quick identification, especially when the book is sent to presbytery for approval.

Additionally, record in the front of this currently used permanent record, where previous records can be found.

According to ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER, the record of the proceedings of a deliberative assembly is usually called the minutes. In ordinary society, unless the minutes are to be published, they should contain mainly a record of what was done, "not" what was said by the members. Using the journalistic approach of reporting who, what, where, when, how and why is suggested for accurate accountability.

According to your Stated Clerk, the minutes should not be overly wordy, but should be interesting with enough information, so that your grandchildren will know what happened in this church fifty years ago.

Additionally, the minutes of a meeting should never reflect the clerk's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done.

Who receives or has access to the minutes? The moderator and all active elders should receive and approve the minutes of all session meetings. The Book of Order as well as Robert's Rules of Order specify ownership of these records resides with the body which constitutes them - in other words, the session has ownership and clerk of session has responsibility of preserving these records.

I encourage you to prepare a synopsis of the highlights to share with the congregation either through a newsletter or as a bulletin insert. I believe this recommendation can serve several purposes including: improving the connectedness or sense of ownership of individual members in their church and its activities; informed persons make better decisions; informed, connected persons feel comfortable asking questions and volunteering to help.

WORDS TO THE WISE - I am often asked, "can anyone read the session minutes?" Usually this question arises when there is difficulty within the congregation and specifically when there is a matter of trust. Elders are the servants of the congregation as well as the leaders. Why would you not want the congregation fully informed as to what's in the minutes? I encourage you to make these minutes available to any member who asks, but also be prepared to discuss and explain any actions questioned. In the Church, we have no room for mistrust.

### **SESSION AGENDAS**

The agenda for a session meeting can be the responsibility of either the clerk in consultation with the pastor, or the pastor in consultation with the clerk. Your input and frequent contact with other session members is invaluable. In case of a pastoral vacancy, the moderator named by the presbytery often

will rely on the Clerk of Session to formulate the docket.

Session agendas should be made available to session members prior to meetings so that the elders may be prepared to do the business of the church. Included in this printed packet are the date, time, location, agenda or order of business, financial data, and other pertinent information as needed and available.

The value of the agenda is at least threefold:

- (1) provides for an orderly process in the handling of session business;
- (2) informs the members of issues to be discussed;
- (3) serves as a reminder of the necessary preparation for a meeting. The Clerk of Session can take this opportunity to assist the pastor/moderator in handling administrative details and sharing in the ministry of the Church.

### **A SAMPLE AGENDA FOR SESSION MINUTES**

As noted, the agenda of business for session meetings should be prepared by the clerk and/or the clerk in conjunction with the pastor/moderator. The following form is suggested and contains the more important items of business likely to come before a session, except those connected with judicial process. It may and should be modified to suit specific needs of a particular meeting.

1. Opening prayer
2. Calling of roll and attest to a quorum
3. Reading and approval of minutes of previous meeting
4. Communications from the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly
5. Report of the pastor/moderator
6. Report of the clerk
7. Report of the treasurer
8. Report of permanent committees
9. Report of special committees or task forces
10. Examination and reception of members
11. Transfer of members
12. Arrangements for Lord's Supper when necessary
13. Report to presbytery when in order
14. Report of commissioner to presbytery or synod. In the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, a "Digest of Presbytery" is prepared by the Clerk and sent to each clerk of session following a presbytery assembly. This is to be read in total at or by the session and can be reprinted for the congregation as it is bet bulletin style.
15. Unfinished business
16. New and miscellaneous business
17. Statement of adjournment to next meeting
18. Adjournment with prayer
19. Clerk and Moderator should sign minutes after approval

### **CONTENTS OF THE MINUTES**

The first paragraph of the minutes should contain the following information:

1. the type of meeting - regular, special (called), adjourned regular, or adjourned special (called)
2. the name of the assembly - session of church
3. the date, time and location
4. who was present, excused, absent, attest to a quorum
5. who opened with prayer
6. whether minutes of previous meeting were approved as read, amended and approved, etc.

The body of the minutes should contain a separate paragraph for each subject matter and should show:

1. all motions to bring a main question before the meeting, except those which were withdrawn by the maker, prior to the vote. Careful attention to exact wording of the maker of motion is required. Make no assumptions.
2. by name, who made the motion, whether motion was seconded and approved or otherwise disposed of, including if it was temporarily disposed of by being referred to a particular committee. Although the maker of the motion by name is not required by Robert's Rules, persons reviewing these records years from now may appreciate it.
3. all points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, together with the reasons given by the chair for the ruling.

### **SAMPLE - MEETING MINUTES**

Because session minutes are unique to various churches and clerks of sessions, the following is used only as a sample or guideline.

The Session of the (name of church) Presbyterian Church of (location) held a (stated or called) meeting on (month, day, year) at (time) a.m./p.m. The meeting was opened with prayer by (name).

The following were present: (list names)                      Excused were: (list names)

Absent were: (list names)

A quorum was established.

A quorum of the session shall be the pastor or other presiding officer and one third of the elders but no fewer than two, except for the reception and dismissal of members, when the quorum shall be the moderator and two members of the session, the session may fix its own quorum at any higher number. (G-10.0202)

The minutes of the meeting of (month, date and year) were read and (approved or approved with the following corrections):

Call for New Business

Adoption of Docket

The report of the treasurer, was approved as presented:

Beginning balance  
Expenditures

Receipts  
Balance

The following report was presented by the pastor, the Reverend (name) and received by the session: (This information may include the pastor's work between session meetings: weddings, baptisms, funerals, communion, visitations, upcoming events, etc.)

The Clerk of Session, reported that since our last meeting the following information has been received: correspondence, letters of transfer request, the Digest of Presbytery meetings, etc.

A statement regarding composition of session and membership by age, (under 21, 21-35, 35-50, 50-65, and over 65), sex, racial ethnic mix, disabled, etc. is to be listed in your minutes annually.

Committee Reports - need to be approved, but approval does not require a second.

Reports of Boards - need to be approved, but approval does not require a second.

Reports of Special Committees and Task Forces - need to be approved, but approval does not require a second

Unfinished Business

New Business

Announcements, including time and place of next meeting

Adjournment with prayer

\_\_\_\_\_, Moderator \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk of Session

All minutes should be signed by the Moderator and Clerk of Session after being approved by the session at the next meeting.

### **MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION/CORPORATION**

In addition to the minutes of the session, the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the congregation, annual corporate meeting and all other congregational meetings should be printed in the Session Record or Minute Book. One of the duties of the Clerk of Session is to serve as secretary for all congregational meetings; therefore, all your minutes are to be recorded in one book.

The quorum for meetings of the congregation shall be no less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the active membership. (G-7.0305)

The congregation shall hold an annual meeting and may hold other meetings as necessary. At the Annual Meeting, the congregation must review the adequacy of the compensation of the pastor upon report of a prior review by the session. Special meetings may be called by the Session or Presbytery, when requested.

An annual meeting of the corporation is required by North Carolina Statues to received, hold, encumber, manage, and transfer real and personal property for the church; to accept and execute deeds of title of such property; to hold and defend title to such property, and manage any permanent

special funds for the furtherance of the purpose of the church, all subject to the authority of the session. (G-7.0402)

The business to be transacted shall be limited to items specifically listed in the publicly announced call for the meeting. No other business may be transacted at this meeting.

Business to be transacted at meeting of a congregation may be of two kinds - ecclesiastical and corporate. Whenever permitted by civil law, both kinds of business may be conducted at the same congregational meeting. In other words the annual meeting of the corporation and a regular annual meeting can be held on the same day.

Business of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation shall be limited to the following: (G-7.0304)

1. matters related to the election of elders, deacons and trustees,
2. matters related to the calling of a pastor or pastors,
3. matters related to the pastoral relationship, such as changing the call, or requesting or consenting or declining to consent to dissolution,
4. matters related to buying, mortgaging or selling real property,
5. matters related to the permissive powers of a congregation, such as the desire to lodge all administrative responsibility in the session, or to request to presbytery for exemption from one or more requirements because of limited size.

Keeping a neat, well-organized minute book is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session. Minutes are a ready reference of the ongoing work of the session and serve as an historical record of the congregation's mission and ministry.

Remember that minutes of each meeting of the congregation must be attested to by signature of the moderator and clerk, and must be entered after approval by the session in the session's record or minute book.

### **THE CHURCH ROLLS & REGISTER**

The counterpart of the Session Minute Book is the Church Register. This register contains all vital information on the life of the congregation. Although by some church's tradition, the pastor or church secretary may maintain the Church Register, but it ultimately is the responsibility of the Clerk of Session to ascertain that it is accurately kept up to date. For this reason, you should keep close supervision of the Register, even if someone else maintains it.

The importance of an accurate Church Register emerges when church members request information which has civil as well as ecclesiastical value. Civil officials will usually accept information recorded in the Church Register to fulfill details of birth, marriage and family data. Church bodies occasionally make requests for recorded information. If these records are accurate and properly kept, such requests can be easily facilitated.

According to the Book of Order (G-10-302), the following membership rolls are required:

1. Baptized Member Roll
2. Active Member Roll
3. Inactive Member Roll
4. Affiliate Member Roll

Names of members are to be removed or deleted from the rolls of the church, only by the order of Session, and in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Order (G-10.0102r and G-10.0302).

The Session shall also keep a complete register of:

1. marriages, including marriages of all members of the church, all marriages performed by the ministerial staff of the church, and all marriages performed on church property,
2. ordained elders and deacons, together with the names of churches in which they were ordained, the dates of their ordination, their terms of active service, and records of their death,
3. pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, assistant pastors, designated pastors, interim pastors, stated supply, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service,
4. trustees, church school superintendents, etc.

The church rolls and registers may be maintained on a computer system and printed annually in the session minutes book in place of the separate church register book.

### **BAPTIZED MEMBER ROLL**

The Baptized Member roll shall list the names of those persons baptized in a particular church, who have not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the active members' children, and children of active members or of ministers of the Word and Sacrament related to the particular church, when such children have been baptized elsewhere (G-10.0302a.1) Be certain to record the date of birth, place, date and by whom they were baptized. Record the full names of persons presenting the child for baptism.

When parents transfer their membership to another church, the names of their baptized children should be transferred with them and listed as removed from this roll.

An additional time to note removal from this roll is when a person becomes an active member upon profession of faith. This name is then added to the Active Roll.

### **ACTIVE MEMBER ROLL**

The Active Member Roll actually involves two rolls - the Chronological Roll and the Alphabetical Roll.

The CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL is basic because names are entered as the members are received for membership. As a name is entered it is given a permanent number, which follows in consecutive order. This number can be used with every entry involving that member.

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) there is a particular order of listing the names on the Chronological Roll. The full name is to be listed, with the last name first. In the case of a married woman or widow, the maiden name should appear after the first name, followed by the name of her husband. For example: Harper (married name), Nancy Ann Karen's (maiden name), Mrs. Lester Wayner Harper (husband's name). At the time of marriage, the new married name should be added to the same line. Since some couples are now using both last names in hyphenated form, this notation should be used with both members in the Church Register.

The ALPHABETICAL ROLL is really a duplicate of the Chronological Roll, but it aids in locating names more quickly. Here a name change involves a new listing: however, the permanent number listed in the Chronological Roll remains the same. This roll does not require the membership data which are recorded in the chronological section.

Another important reason for keeping your rolls up to date is the Annual Report due at the end of each year. The number of members on the active member's roll is to be reported to the Office of the General Assembly each year.

### **WHEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER MOVES**

When an active member moves from your community, it is your job to ascertain that somebody knows they moved! You should:

1. fill out a "Member Moved" card and forward it to the Member Referral Service at the Office of the General Assembly. When you need additional cards, contact the Stated Clerk of this Presbytery for the number of General Assembly Member Referral Service.
2. notify a church in their new area. If necessary the Presbytery Stated Clerk can help you with this location. You should notify and encourage those moving to establish a church relationship in their new community.

### **INACTIVE MEMBER ROLL**

The Session has particular responsibilities for members who are placed on the INACTIVE MEMBER ROLL. This roll shall list the names of those who have been removed from Active Member's Roll because of their failure, in the judgement of the session, to participate in the work and worship of the Lord and the church. No member shall be transferred from the Active to the Inactive Roll until that member shall have intentionally failed to participate in the work or worship of a congregation for a period of one year, and until the session has made diligent effort to discover the cause of the member's nonparticipation, and attempted to restore the member to activity in the church's work and worship. Any member whose name is so transferred shall be notified of this action. (G-10.0302)

One helpful note about this roll is to remember that members on the Inactive Roll are not reported in the General Assembly Statistical Report as active members. When removed from the roll, they are noted as "Other Removals".

### **AFFILIATE MEMBER ROLL**

The AFFILIATE MEMBER ROLL shall list the names of those who have been received into affiliate membership by the session and who are active members in the church's work and worship. These persons are not listed on the Active Member Roll. The affiliate membership must be renewed every two years.

When Delete Does Not Mean Delete: Although, you may keep minutes and important church documents on a computer disk, always provide a permanent paper copy for your session minutes and roll books. If you are keeping records and rolls on computer, DO NOT hit the delete key to remove a person from the roll. Simply, write the word "delete" beside the person's name.

### **CERTIFICATES USED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

Certificates are used to denote Baptism, Church Membership, Ordination of Elders and Deacons, Dismissal (transfer of membership), and Marriage. One task of the Clerk of Session is to see that all certificates are properly completed. Correct spelling, dating, etc. are important to the persons receiving them. The information on the certificates should agree with the records in the Session Minute Record Book and the Church Register.

### **AS I LISTEN AROUND THE PRESBYTERY**

After a recent presbytery assembly, I found a note on my table with the following questions: "Do you have a good letter we can send to inactive members?"

The Book of Order defines "inactive members" in (G-5.0203), the session duties noted in (G-5.0400), etc. and how the "session" is directed in (G-10.0302a.3.a) regarding inactive members:

"No member shall be transferred from the active to the inactive roll until that member (1) shall have failed intentionally to participate in the work and worship of the church for a period of one year and (2) until the session shall have made diligent effort to discover the cause of the member's nonparticipation and (3) to restore the member to activity in the church's work and worship. (4) Any member whose name is so transferred shall be notified of this action."

Unfortunately many of our sessions stop with above noted point #1.

But, this was neither the question asked, nor the answer needed. I kept that note on my desk for several weeks. It concerned me.

Did I have such a letter? The simple answer was "no". Still the note bothered me. If I was a member of a church that has become inactive - had quietly slipped out the back door or simply stopped attending - what would I want or expect from my church family, the congregation and pastor? The bottom line is - I would want someone to care; to notice I'm absent, and to let me know they are concerned. Such a simple thing.

Recently the Evangelism & Church Development Ministry Unit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) completed a survey, contacting Presbyterians who once were active and now infrequently are

involved. A friend of mine, Mink Masters, calls these persons "usetabees" (used-to-be Presbyterians). This survey was conducted through 40-minute telephone conversations, trying to elicit feelings, not just answers. This study provided some interesting results, only some of which include:

Why are you not more active: "I'm just exhausted...I ought to get out more on Sunday mornings, but we can't seem to make it."

When asked to describe their work and weekends, these persons were busy seven days a week. "Time is filled with working for a living, shopping, cleaning, dealing with kids, volunteer work, recreation and taking work home on weekends."

Inactive persons tended to hold idealistic images of local congregations, noting that the church and the Church should be the:

1. guardian of social and moral values,
2. enactor and exemplar of these personal and community values,
3. safety net for those in need,
4. helper of the helpless,
5. Swiss Army knife (many parts and pieces) in mission,
6. tool for worship and education, for justice and truth.

The local church and our denomination should:

Work for peace and unity on the community, national and international level. Yet, interestingly these persons gave high priority to removing pornography and low priority to justice issues such as women's rights, minority and racial matters, and they wanted the Church to stop its mission at the water's edge of politics.

What specifically did the respondents want from the local church?

1. activities for all family members,
2. small or middle sized churches where they could feel a part,
3. meaningful worship with biblically-based sermons, applied to every day life (a thought to take home), a service which was intellectually powerful and socially relevant,
4. hymns they could sing.

Why did they stray? Did they get mad and quit? Did they become theologically estranged? NO! They tended to drift away. One point noted repeatedly is, these inactives are not materialistic, angry persons. They are good responsible, social-minded people, raising families, who have gotten out of the habit of attending church functions.

What was the key to their return to active participation?

80% replied - TO BE ASKED!!! It's called friendly persuasion; telling someone that you care.

Now did I write the letter? Yes, I did, but interestingly before reading this study. The letter went

something like this.

Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ and Session of \_\_\_\_\_,

I have thought about your question repeatedly in these past few weeks. Have these persons been contacted by phone or personal visit? I have said this many times over the past few years, it truly amazes me how someone misses more than 2 Sundays and no one contacts them. I have talked with people who have been staying at home, intentionally waiting until they are contacted by another member to say they are missed. That personal contact is vital.

1) Have the session make a list of all those who have not been in the church recently. Take 2 copies and divide among the elders and pastor. That way each person will get at least 2 phone calls or visits.

When you call or visit, just say, "Hi. I've been missing you in church." When you see this person at the grocery store or at a social event, repeat a similar phrase and ask them to sit with you next Sunday.

2) If after these attempts, the person has not responded positively, a letter should be sent signed by the clerk and pastor saying something like:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (first names),

We have been concerned about you since we've not seen you in church lately. May we be of help?

You are currently noted on our active member list and we really don't want to list you as inactive. Please let us know within the next few weeks whether you:

- 1. will be returning to church;
- 2. wish to be placed on the inactive list;
- 3. plan to join another church;
- 4. have joined another church.

We remain concerned.

The Session of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church

The Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ Elder

**PRESERVATION OF RECORDS**  
**Do you know where you old session records are?**

Proper care of church records is essential. If you do not know the answer to the above noted question, find out and write it in the front of your current session record!

Recently a woman in another presbytery had an opportunity to go to Africa for the month. The

problem was, she needed a birth certificate and somehow her birth had never been recorded. She was told a baptismal record would suffice. Unfortunately the church in which she was baptized no longer existed.

By the time she called, she had already checked the county offices and several local churches. She had not contacted local libraries or nearby college libraries yet which might have been another option.

The good news is, I made 2 phone calls - one to the Department of History in Philadelphia and one to Hanover College. The old church records are on microfilm in Philadelphia and the permanent records are stored at Hanover College. So with a stamp, the help of the Lord and both the Department of History and Hanover College, this woman now has 2 copies of her baptismal record and is headed to Africa for a camera safari.

When session records and roll books are no longer in use, they should be sent to the Department of History, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19147 for storage and microfilming. Phone (215) 627-1852.

The Department of History will microfilm them, keep a copy and if you really wish, return the records to the church. (G-9.0406) Although there is a small fee for microfilming, it is a small price to pay for your church's history. If these precious books are returned to you, it is strongly recommended the books be kept in a fireproof safe and your microfilm kept in a bank vault deposit box.

REMEMBER - Your minutes are the history book of the life of your church. Do not let them disappear. They should not be in Aunt Nell's trunk. But, that's another story.

### **PRESBYTERY MINUTES REVIEW**

**(Oh no! Someone is checking my work? Oh yes! We are connected!)**

According to the Book of Order, each year your minutes are to be presented to the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina Committee on Sessional Records. This is a constitutional responsibility of the clerk of session and the presbytery. You are not alone; the presbytery's minutes are reviewed by the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic and the Synod's minutes are reviewed by the General Assembly. Thus, review of minutes is a vital part of the connectional Presbyterian system.

Please review the checklist (Attachment #1). When you have questions, call me.

The session of a church and all committees and organizations within the church must report annually all proceedings and actions to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. The session will review and summarize these reports and incorporate them into the session minutes book. This is your annual report to your congregation.

In addition to the aforementioned checklist, the Committee on Sessional Records is ascertaining the following:

1. that proceedings have been correctly recorded,

2. that proceedings have been regular and in accordance with the Book of Order,
3. that proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the whole church,
4. that proceedings have been prudent and equitable,
5. that lawful injunctions of higher governing bodies (Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly) have been followed.

The Committee on Sessional Records does the reviewing of all records for this Presbytery. Reviewing of minutes is done at each Stated Presbytery Meeting (4 per year). A final review report will be presented at the December Presbytery meeting by the Committee on Sessional Records. (This schedule may be subject to changes in the future.)

### **ANNUAL REPORTS**

Having been an moderator of a session and now the stated clerk of presbytery, I am acutely aware that in the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, you received the dread in December! Those dreaded annual reports, that if not submitted on time, you get a call from me requesting timely submittal. Portions of the Annual Statistical Reports come from the Office of the General Assembly, located in Louisville, Kentucky.

At first glance, this can be overwhelming. Easy there, it's not as bad as it looks. Follow the instructions, ask for help from the church treasurer and committee moderators, and when you have questions, call me. If your minutes are accurate and if your rolls are completed, it should take only an afternoon to complete.

Each year, I get a few calls from clerks, noting that their membership, thus their per capita is not right. Beginning January 1, I keep last year's report on my desk, so that when those few who were late with their reports do call, I can tell them why their figures are not right. If your report is late, we can not input the appropriate data. Last year's data is left in place. Each piece of paper tells where to send the information and by when. Follow the guidelines. (Please!) Send your report in on time, please!

Return the forms to the Presbytery office. Do not send them to the Office of the General Assembly. They will send them back to us.

### **THE PRESBYTERY DIRECTORY**

In March of each year, we distribute the latest version of the Directory. This directory includes all churches, pastors, clerks of sessions, elder commissioners to presbytery committees/divisions and their members, etc. The information is generally correct, except for an occasional finger-slip on the keyboard or if no one tells us it is incorrect. When you get your directory, check the information. If it is incorrect, call us so we can correct it at the next printing.

### **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Although not required by the Book of Order, you are encouraged to establish a Personnel Committee. G-10.0102.m notes session responsibility "to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including employment of nonordained staff . .and the annual review of the adequacy of

compensation . ."

The Personnel Committee is established by and is accountable to the session, composed of three to five members, is chaired by a member of the session, and includes the pastor as an ex-officio member. Core responsibilities include concern for equal employment opportunity and fair employment practices, and conduct an annual performance and compensation review for all employees including the pastor. Additionally, the Personnel Committee should confer regularly with members of the congregation and staff, providing a support group or to hear concerns or complaints. In times of conflict with the pastor, before calling in the Committee on Ministry, the Personnel Committee should attempt to resolve the conflict. I can provide you with a manual for Personnel Committees if you wish to have one.

(This is included as a reminder of the importance of keeping the church's incorporation in force annually and of the absolute necessity to keep the church's insurance coverage up to date.)

**INCORPORATION & PROOF OF INSURANCE**

1) For a number of years, the Book of Order in G-7.0401 has stated:

"Whenever permitted by civil law, each particular church shall cause a corporation to be formed and maintained."

This language is not considered permissive as the word "shall" is used. We believe that most of our churches are or have been incorporated.

Please complete the following either with the number or a check mark in the appropriate blanks.

Incorporation #

I find no record of ever being incorporated

We used to be incorporated but not now

Incorporation # was

I need help with incorporation \_\_\_\_\_.

(If you need help, please contact the President of the Presbytery Corporation or the Stated Clerk.

2) In this presbytery a number of our churches have been damaged by hurricanes and floods, and numerous churches around the country also have been damaged by hurricanes, fires, floods and earthquakes. An overture was approved in 1994 by all presbytery commissioners to change the Book of Order in G-10.0102.n (responsibilities of the session) to read: "to provide for the management of the property of the church, including determination of the appropriate use of the church buildings and facilities, and to obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect the facilities, programs and

officers, including members of the session, staff, board of trustees and deacons."

Please complete the following regarding current insurance coverage:

Name of primary insurance carrier

Agent's Name & Address

Phone

This policy provides the following coverage:

Property \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Contents \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual Misconduct \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Workers' Compensation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Officers & Directors Liability \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Liability \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other coverage includes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

This form completed by

Title

Church

Location

**(G-10.0400) CHURCH FINANCES & FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The session is responsible, either directly or by assignment to the board of deacons or trustees, for management of the congregation's finances, invested funds, buildings and equipment.

**CHURCH FINANCES & FINANCIAL REIEW**

The financial review of books and records may be done by a "committee of members versed in accounting," or by professional auditors. The committee's review should look for clearly defined management practices that provide for separation of functions and rotation of persons performing functions:

- counting offerings
- recording contributions
- preparing deposits
- reconciling deposits with contribution records,
- reconciling the monthly bank statement
- writing checks

Even a very small congregation should be able to divide these functions among at least three different persons and rotate the assignments from time to time to protect against embezzlement.

A thorough audit committee will also look for"

Separate accounts maintained for major funds with clear definition of purpose and the authority for expending.

Endowment funds and trust funds accounted for, held securely and the income expended for the intended purposes.

Independent evidence of each fund should be available to the auditors, in the form of bank statements, and certificates.

Contributions acknowledged regularly, conforming to federal reporting requirements, with request for variances to be reported promptly to the session or the audit committee.

Income recorded and deposited in a bank promptly. A paper trail is kept to enable offerings, deposits, bank statement and contributions journal to be reconciled.

Funds contributed for an announced purpose, and designated gifts are recorded and disbursed for the purpose.

Discretionary funds in the hands of the minister or other individuals have defined purposes and the accounts are subject to audit.

Expenditures are made only upon written vouchers, statements or receipts from vendors submitted by authorized persons or in response to a recorded action of session or group.

A paper trail from voucher to check to bank statement and fund account is reconciled regularly.

## **RESOURCES**

The most active publisher of legal and tax resources is Christian Ministry Resources, PO Box 2301, Matthews, NC 28106. Telephone orders: 1-800-222-1840. Their current publication list offers titles on a variety of subjects, including "Risk Management for churches - A Self-Directed Audit."

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH TREASURER, Thomas E. McLeod, Judson Press was available on the shelf in a local religious bookstore.

Large churches and presbyteries may find help in GUIDEBOOK FOR DIRECTORS OF NONPROFIT CORPORATIONS, American Bar Association, Section of Business Law.

### **WHEN MISHANDLING OR EMBEZZLEMENT IS SUSPECTED**

If the audit committee discovers evidence of mishandling, the matter should be carefully and thoroughly investigated by the same or another small committee appointed by the session. An accounting firm should be engaged to do a thorough examination of the funds. The church's insurer should be notified immediately. Coverage may be voided if reporting is delayed.

The person or persons suspected should have a fair opportunity to explain discrepancies, and to offer to make good any missing funds. At the same time the session should be aware that embezzlement is a serious breach of trust in any organization and especially in the faithful community. If a large amount of money is found missing the police should be notified and the person responsible should be removed from the position of trust that enabled the embezzlement to occur.

"PCUSA POLITY WEEKLY" NOTE 152 February 15, 1996.  
The Reverend C. Fred Jenkins, Office of the General  
Assembly Constitutional Services

### **WHY & WHEN CHURCHES NEED TO BE IN CONTACT WITH THE BOARD OF PENSIONS OF THE CORPORATION OF THE PRESBYTERY OF COASTAL CAROLINA**

As apart of our connectional s system, the Board of Directors of the Corporation of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina are to be of assistance to you and to be your partner when your church property is being changed in some way.

According to our Book of Order (G-8.0201), "All property held by or for a particular church, a presbytery, synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).....is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." In fact, all of chapter VIII deals with the church and its property. Specifically, (G-8.0500) notes: "A particular church shall not sell, mortgage or otherwise encumber any of its real property and it shall not acquire real property.....without permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the particular church." If you filed for Chapter VIII Exemption this does not apply to your congregation. But, basically what it means is when you are buying, selling or mortgaging church property including church edifice, manse, assorted buildings or cemetery, you should inform the Presbytery of the matter.

When it is your wish to borrow money to enhance a church owned building but intend to seek funds locally, do you need to contact the presbytery? YES, but not just because of the Book of Order requirements. The Presbytery is aware of finances through the Synod and General Assembly that could save you many dollars in lower interest rates. When you seek Synod or General Assembly loans, we become your partners in this request and are financially liable if you default. Additionally we can help you to reach the decision-makers in our higher governing bodies.

What if you intend to make major changes to a church owned building, but do not intend to encumber the property, do you still need to notify the Presbytery? YES, even though you are not planning to borrow money for a project, by keeping the Presbytery apprised of your plans, if the need to borrow arises, the Presbytery can move more quickly to assist, if they are aware of your project. Information including location, building or renovation plans, money available, and known financial options should be forwarded to the Presbytery office and copies to the Stated Clerk.

Believe it or not, this question was raised recently. If we sell property, will the presbytery take the money? NO absolutely not, but you will be encouraged to invest or use this money wisely, and to be good stewards of these funds.

When questions arise do not hesitate to contact the Board of Directors of the Corporation of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina or the stated clerk.

### **WHY PER CAPITA?**

Let's take a closer look at per capita!

Situation: The Session of \_\_\_\_\_ is having a discussion that goes something like this:

"Our per capita is due." "How much is it this time?" **Answer: \$7.72 for 2006.** "Where did that figure come from?" "How come it costs to be a Presbyterian?" "What do they do with that money anyway?" "How do other churches pay per capita?"

Per capita literally means, "by the head." Per capita in the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina for 2002 is \$7.80, multiplied by the number of active members from your 2000 end-of-the-year statistics completed in January 2001. Confusing isn't it?

Although the Church was founded on Jesus Christ and is spiritual in nature, it is very much dictated by human needs and human organization. Organizations require structure. Structure requires people - committees, tons of papers and postage, meeting expenses and employees. No, the Church is not a business, but the Church is about the business of our Lord and it does take money to do this "business."

Historically, part of what makes us Presbyterian is our connectedness. We are governed equally by presbyters, both elders and ministers of the Word, and do believe the Holy Spirit speaks most clearly through prayerful deliberations of our groups of presbyters.

Again, historically the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was established from the local church up - with a

church and session being formed, several churches electing commissioners to form a presbytery, several presbyteries electing commissioners to form a synod and finally all presbyteries electing commissioners to form the General Assembly. We still work from the local level up; therefore, it is "us in the pews," not "them up there" who established the practice of per capita giving.

Our Book of Order lists the responsibilities of active church membership in G-5.0102. One of these noted responsibilities is, "supporting the work of the Church through the giving of money, time and talents."

**The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is required to remit \$2.15 per member to the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic and \$5.57 per member to the General Assembly for 2006, whether or not you pay it.**

You may remember (as I've told this story before) a few months ago, I heard a church member say, "well, we'll reduce our per capita. We just won't take any new members!" That is one way to reduce per capita. It is also a way to raise per capita for next year, but more importantly it is definitely a way to commit congregation suicide. Also heard of a congregation that drops lifetime members who are homebound or in nursing homes! If you are a member of one of these congregations, send me their per capita statement – I will pay it!

We are extremely fortunate in this presbytery that much of the "work" of the Lord and the Church is done voluntarily, without pay. Many other presbyteries in this synod and around the denomination have much higher per capita, because they have more paid staff and do pay additional commissioner or committee expenses. We have ten full time staff – Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk/Treasurer, Associate for Mission, Associate for Outdoor Ministries, Senior Accountant/Business Manager, Accountant/Bookkeeper, Administrative Assistant, Support Staff for Financial Operations & Outdoor Ministries, Receptionist/Secretary, Camp Monroe & Camp Kirkwood Site Managers plus 2 part-time staff – Resource Center Manager and the Associate with Youth Ministries. Please appreciate that all of us who work for you do our best to keep expenses to a minimum.

**Reminder:** If you request quarterly per capita, it is due in the months of January, April, July and October. As always, when you have questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact the office in Elizabethtown.

**Withholding Funds – Pros and Cons and a Little Bit More –**  
**A Message to Sessions, Congregations and Pastors**

Are you confused at times when reading about some "things" going on around the denomination and particularly confused regarding an attempt from some congregations to withhold mission funds or per capita funds? So am I!

When I'm confused, I look to our Book of Order and specifically in this case to the Form of Government to find written guidelines. Usually those guidelines are available and helpful.

Specifically to pastors and sessions, I draw your attention to Chapter 10 – which gives guidelines for responsibilities for sessions.

G-10.0101.b. “to lead the congregation in participation in the mission of the whole Church...”

G-10.0101.f. “to lead the congregation in ministries of personal and social healing and reconciliation in the communities in which the church lives and bears its witness.”

G-10.0101.g. “to challenge the people of God with the privilege and responsible Christian Stewardship of money and time and talents, developing effective ways of encouraging and gathering the offerings of the people and assuring that all offerings are distributed to the objects toward which they were contribute.”

Questions – so based on the above, what if a bequest has been given non-designated, but the session decides to designate the funds? Non-designated funds are still designated – they are designated non-designated and cannot be re-designated without consent from the person who gave the money. What if the person only gave a few dollars, do we still have to go back to them to ask what they want done with the money? YES! Remember the wealthiest person in the Bible is the widow with her mite.

Sessions can not arbitrarily change designations. There have been several cases that have gone all the way to the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission questioning the validity of this one. Each time the decision has stood – if a member makes a contribution to a particular fund or project, the session or the congregation does not have the right to re-designate these funds.

G-10.0101.h. “to establish the annual budget, determine the distribution of the church’s benevolence, and order offerings for Christian purposes, providing full information to the congregation of its decisions in such matters.”

Per Capita is considered benevolence, given freely by congregations in a connectional system. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a connectional system. No one and no church can be forced to pay per capita. But, let’s see what really happens if your church chooses not to remit per capita, and ask ourselves to whom we are sending a message and who really gets hurt.

If your congregation of 150 decides to withhold per capita, you are hurting your neighboring sister churches because the presbytery has no way of gathering per capita except from our churches. Your message is received only by those in the presbytery dealing with budgetary issues. When you withhold funds, per capita goes up proportionally to all other churches in Coastal Carolina. Are these the people to who you are sending a message?

G-0.0404.d. “. . . The presbyteries shall be responsible for raising their own per capita funds, and for raising and timely transmission of per capita funds to their respective synods and to the General Assembly. . . .”

All 171 presbyteries are obligated to submit per capita apportionments to the respective synod and to the General Assembly. For additional information regarding per capita, please see the per capita budget which is distributed and is approved annually by your commissioners to presbytery.

### **More Pros and Cons**

Sometimes it seems we try to send messages and no one hears – do “they”, whoever they are, really not hear, do not heed, or simply disagree – I simply do not know, but I do know a little bit.

1. The practice of withholding is designed to lose, not to win, to create more dissension, not less. There should not be room in our churches for winners or losers of fights. Dissention and fights are not the mission of the Christ-centered church.
2. Withholding funds clouds the issues. Withholding does not clarify issues. It is an ineffective means of protest.
3. Be very careful. If you are trying to send a message, send a clear message to the entity involved with your concerns or write an overture. Withholding funds is simply not the answer – but it is a message. Withholding funds is an ineffective message to the governing body entity, but the message is simple: members of the congregation – if you don’t like what the pastor or the session is doing – withhold your money. Is this the message you want to be sent around your congregation? Not sure this is a message any of us want sent anywhere.
4. Almost finally – Read and Prayerfully Study All Issues before this denomination and particularly before this June’s General Assembly. It’s easy to read one article and decide we know what’s going on.

Let me take four of you to a 4-way stop and place each of you on a different corner. Now, let’s watch a 4-car accident and then talk about it. Each of you will have a different perception of the accident based on your positions, preferences, perceptions and personal belief and attitudes.

5. Finally, if your congregation, including all persons who have contributed to the Bicentennial Fund or any other benevolence, decides to re-designate the funds, remember these funds were given as mission dollars. Do not keep it at home. Designate it to a cause that will honor the original intent of the giver.

STILL WANT TO SEND A MESSAGE? Fine. Please do. That’s a part of the connectional system. Write letters to the appropriate entities. Write an overture. Do something, but do it effectively, decently and in order.

When you have questions and concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. I will be happy to meet with you individually or as a group.

### **PRESBYTERY OF COASTAL CAROLINA GUIDELINES FOR HOSTING A PRESBYTERY MEETING**

Thank you for hosting a meeting of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. This can be an exciting time for your church family. Here are some guidelines, based on the most frequently asked questions.

**How big does the meeting and eating area have to be?** Large enough to seat at least 280 persons comfortably. A meeting can be very long if the commissioners feel crowded.

**Map – send clearly written directions with a map to me at least 6 weeks prior to the meeting.**  
These vital instructions will become a part of the packet sent to each commissioner.

**Food** – One of the most frequent complaints is what goes in the stomach at lunch. Silly I know; fact is quantity is important. The plate should look full. Some of the most appreciated meals include: cold cuts, cheeses, salads and/or soups, plus dessert; meat, 2 vegetables, salad and dessert; multiple salads and dessert. Coffee, tea and water should be provided. Buffet style works best.

**In 2006, the price for lunch has been \$6 - \$8 per person. Please contact me ahead of time if your price is over \$8.**

Plan to feed approximately 260 to 280 persons. Attendance at a meeting is not an absolute figure. For this reason, I do not recommend having lunch catered, unless you make arrangements to pay for only what is eaten. You also will need to have change.

You are responsible for selling lunch tickets and collecting the money. Usually 2 persons from your church are assigned to this task and are located in the registration area.

**Snacks** – Coffee and tea, plus snacks are appreciated in the morning before the meeting. No matter where we meet, someone has driven at least 2 hours or more. This also makes for a good social time, since many of us do not see each other except these 4 times a year.

**Signs** – Use clearly marked signs designating the entrance, parking, restrooms and registration.

**Registration and Information Tables** – no matter how many tables you provide, it is never enough. 10 tables is not an excess. Some of these tables, if necessary, could double later for lunch.

**Sanctuary or meeting room** – should be equipped with a microphone on the pulpit or a stand nearby. If you have 2 microphones, please place at least one in the center of the room for commissioners' use.

A table facing the commissioners with a microphone on it should be placed near the pulpit area for the secretary and Stated Clerk's use.

Again, thank you for hosting the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. When you have questions or concerns, do not hesitate to notify the office in Elizabethtown at 1-800-277-7479 or 910-862-8300.

### **WHEN YOU HAVE PROBLEMS**

Contrary to popular belief and probably what you have been told, Clerks of Sessions do have problems and questions. These questions may come out of meetings or from individual members about our system of government. Finding suitable answers is not always easy, but is always vital.

Step 1 Look to find the answer in the **Book of Order**. This book has evolved over many years and is always your first guideline. In it you will find guidance and potential answers.

The experience of familiarizing yourself with the **Book of Order** will also aid in finding other answers ahead of time.

Step 2 If appropriate, discuss these problems or questions with the pastor or moderator.

Step 3 If you still have a question, do not hesitate to notify the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. He is well acquainted with polity and policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina.

The point is that Clerks of Sessions should seek help when a problem first arises, rather than wait for it to become a detriment to the life and work of your church. Seek guidance and use the tools as noted in this document. It is much easier to invite help when situations first materialize, than to invite presbytery to step in when the problem becomes too great for the session and congregation to manage alone. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) we are all a part of the connectional family.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

This manual explores only some of your responsibilities as the Clerk of Session. It is to be used as a guide. Above all, it has been designed and devised to ease your entry into this challenging and rewarding position. It is a map which charts some of the known territory. As we celebrate our Presbyterian journey in praise of the Lord, let us do it with excitement and thanksgiving for all those who have journeyed before us and express enthusiasm to those who will come after.

CHECK LIST FOR SESSION RECORDS REVIEW
PRESBYTERY OF COASTAL CAROLINA

NAME OF CHURCH: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

This Check List is designed to help the Presbytery fulfill its constitutional responsibility to review the records of the various Sessions within its boundaries. Please complete the Check List prior to the scheduled review. Bring the Check List and ALL the records books necessary to the scheduled review.

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PLEASE CHECK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS "YES" OR "NO" AND SUPPLY OTHER INFORMATION WHERE THE QUESTIONS IS APPLICABLE:

GENERAL MATTERS

Table with 4 columns: Question, YES, NO, COMMENT. Contains 17 questions regarding church meeting procedures and record-keeping.

COMPLETENESS OF RECORDS

Table with 4 columns: Question, YES, NO, COMMENT. Contains 12 questions (18-28a) regarding the completeness and review of church records.

		YES	NO	COMMENT
29.	Did the Session have the books and records relating to finances audited during the year? (G-10.0401d)	_____	_____	
30.	Do the minutes indicate the examination, ordination and/or installation of officers? (G-14.0205-0206)	_____	_____	
31.	Have the proceedings of the Session been prudent, equitable, and faithful to the mission of the whole church? (d-3.0300)	_____	_____	
32.	Has the Session developed and supervised the church school and educational program of the church? (G-10.0102e)	_____	_____	

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

33.	Were minutes of congregational meetings properly attested by Moderator and Clerk?	_____	_____	
34.	Was an annual meeting of the congregation held? (G-7.0302)	_____	_____	
35.	Were congregational meetings properly called? (G-7.0303)	_____	_____	
36.	Was a quorum determined? (G-7.0305)	_____	_____	
37.	Was each meeting conducted by a properly appointed Moderator? (G-7.0306)	_____	_____	
38.	Was a representative Nominating Committee elected by the congregation or chosen by organizations within the church named by the congregation? (G-14.0201b)	_____	_____	

MEMBERSHIP ROLLS AND REGISTERING

39.	Are the following membership rolls maintained? (See G-10.0302)			
	A. Baptized members' roll	_____	_____	
	B. Active members' roll	_____	_____	
	C. Inactive members' roll	_____	_____	
	D. Affiliate members' roll	_____	_____	
40.	Are the following registers maintained? (See G-10.0302)			
	A. Marriages	_____	_____	
	B. Baptisms	_____	_____	
	C. Elders	_____	_____	
	D. Deacons	_____	_____	
	E. Pastors	_____	_____	
41.	Do the minutes of the Session reflect membership changes, i.e. baptisms, marriages, receptions, dismissals, transfers, deletions? (G-10.0203a)	_____	_____	
42.	Has the Session reviewed the rolls of members in the past year? (G-5.0502)	_____	_____	

DISCIPLINE

43.	Was the Session involved in any judicial process during the past year?	_____	_____	
44.	If 'YES' list pages of record book relating to this? .....	_____	_____	

NAMES OF PRESENT CLERK OF SESSION:

ADDRESS OF CLERK:

TELEPHONE:

SIGNATURE OF PERSON COMPLETING THIS REPORT: