

WINNEBAGO PRESBYTERY

COMMENTARY ON THE SESSION RECORDS REVIEW CHECKLIST

Preface

The Review Checklist is meant to serve as a condensed record of the review process for a particular set of Session Minutes. Because it is brief, it may not always be clear to the reviewer what is expected or meant within Presbytery's guidelines for an accurate and comprehensive set of Minutes. The checklist also does not contain enough information to educate the Clerk of Session or the reviewer of the checklist toward improving the Minutes as records of Session. The following commentary was constructed to serve both the reviewer and the Clerk.

This commentary needs to be read with several notes in mind. Some parts of the checklist are obvious and no explanation is necessary. Some parts will be explained sufficiently by this commentary. Other parts may generate further questions or may not be conducive to short, definitive answers. Such questions should be referred to the Session Records Review Committee of Presbytery or to the Stated Clerk. These questions will improve the checklist, the commentary, and the review process itself. It should be noted further that the review process is a reflection of the oversight and expectations of Presbytery for the records of its constituent churches; so, both these materials and the final interpretation is with Presbytery.

Part A: PROCEDURES

A.2.e. Session Roster:

Use the full name of elders in order to avoid confusion when several generations of a wider family, or unrelated persons with the same last name, are involved in the life of the church. This attendance record is decisive in several areas of parliamentary rule and in judicial inquiry and is, therefore, essential.

A.5. Session Actions:

Record all actions voted by Session, including those made by consensus. You may also record all motions, for the historical record, whether passed or defeated, but you are only required to record the motions which are affirmed. You may record the maker and seconder of motions, but this is not required. If a motion is recorded as affirmatively voted, then it may be assumed that it was appropriately made and seconded.

Minutes are to provide a means to understand and retain the actions and issues before the Session. This requires not only the exact text of actions, carefully recorded, but it may also be helpful to include a brief recital of discussions, questions and issues raised, without reference to persons and without recorder evaluation. A general guideline to keep in mind is what a historian or reader would need in the future in order to understand what was decided.

Part B: MAINTAINING THE RECORD BOOK

B.1. Numbered Pages:

The pages of the minutes book are to be numbered by a machine or mechanism different from the reproduction process, i.e., not typewritten nor printer-numbered, in order to prevent the easy replacement or substitution of pages. Such numbered pages may be purchased or can be easily imprinted using a numbering machine. A numbering machine can be borrowed from the Presbytery Office.

WINNEBAGO PRESBYTERY

COMMENTARY ON THE SESSION RECORDS REVIEW CHECKLIST

B.3. Corrections:

There are to be no erasures, footnotes, or insertion of loose papers. If a correction must be made or an insertion of material, it has to be by majority vote of the governing body and recorded in that meeting's minutes. Corrections in the text itself are to be made as follows: Strike out the erroneous material by drawing a line [permanent ink or printer line] through the incorrect material. Write the correct text between the lines or at the nearest appropriate space, with the signature of the writer and date in the margin. If no space is available or appropriate, cite the location of the corrected text with the signature and date in the margin. Also refer in the margin of the corrected minutes to the minutes of the meeting in which the correction was ordered/approved and record the exact correction in the minutes of that meeting as well.

Do not discard pages which were incorrectly written; leave them in place, indicating that they are obsolete by reference to the minutes of the meeting at which the errors were corrected. Always sign and date such corrections.

B.5. Record of Minutes Review [G-I0.0301]:

Each year the approval/result of the Presbytery review of the previous year's Session Minutes are to be reported to the Session and recorded in that meeting's minutes, including a listing of any exceptions which have been noted by Presbytery and, if necessary, any corrective action ordered by Presbytery.

B.6. Presbytery Exemptions [G-14.0202a(I)]:

This refers to presbytery-approved waivers regarding election of elders and deacons and rotation of terms.

Part C: SESSION RESPONSIBILITIES

C.2. Session Action on Member Rolls [G-10.0302a]:

All changes in the member rolls are to be made by specific Session action.

C.3. Pastor's Report:

This does not have to be a formal report to the Session nor necessarily a separate part of the agenda; there should, however, be some indication that the Pastor(s) is reporting on professional responsibilities for the information and review of the Session.

Part D: WORSHIP

D.5. Ordination/Installation of Elders & Deacons [G-10.0102 1]:

The Minutes should reflect that the Session has provided for the instruction and examination as well as the ordination and installation of elders and deacons.

WINNEBAGO PRESBYTERY

COMMENTARY ON THE SESSION RECORDS REVIEW CHECKLIST

Part E: FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

E.2. Record of the Distribution of Offerings [G-10.0102(h)]:

The Session Minutes are to include a full record of how the offerings of the members were distributed in mission, program, and operational endeavors of the Church.

E.3. Approval of Annual Budget [G-10.0102(i)]:

The Minutes are to include the detailed annual budget as approved by the Session, including both operating and mission expenditures in full, and Session action to communicate this information to the whole congregation.

E.5. Annual Financial Review [G-10.0401(d)]:

The Minutes are to record both action to authorize a full financial review in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and the report of that annual review. This does not require a Certified Public Accountant, but it does mean a reviewer who is versed in accounting procedures. The reviewer should not be related to the treasurer, the financial secretary, or anyone else having responsibility for accepting, disbursing, or accounting for the funds of the church.

Part F: ADMINISTRATION

F.1. & F.2. Annual Review of Staff [G-10.0102(n)]:

The Minutes are to record that all staff/employees had the opportunity of performance and compensation evaluation.

F.3. Record of Property Management & Insurance coverage [G-10.0102(o)]:

The Minutes should reflect Session review of changes in church property/facilities and oversight of church facilities. Minutes should also reflect Session's attention to the matter of insurance protection for Church property and personnel and that the Session has reported a summary of such coverage to the presbytery.

F.5. Relations with Other Parts of the Church [G-10.0102(p)]:

The Minutes should reflect how the Session and congregation relates to the other bodies in the Church, e.g., election of presbytery commissioners, participation in the programs of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, observance of decisions or initiatives of the wider Church, and the annual statistical report to presbytery.

Part G: SUPERVISION & LEADERSHIP

G.1. Session Leadership of Congregation [G-10.0102(b)-(g)]:

The Minutes should reflect, although perhaps not in any one report, how the Session leads the congregation in concerns for growth, evangelism, equipping for ministry, education, pastoral care, healing & reconciliation, stewardship, fellowship, worship, and witness as the people of God.

WINNEBAGO PRESBYTERY

COMMENTARY ON THE SESSION RECORDS REVIEW CHECKLIST

G.2. Review of Church Organizations [G-10.0102(m)]:

The Minutes are to record how the Session provides for the "support, report, review, and control" of all organizations in the congregation. The Session should also review those organizations which are co-sponsored, which are directly related to the Church, or which use the Church facilities.

Part H: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

H.4. Receipt of Organizational Reports [G-7.0302]:

The Minutes are to record the submission of reports from all organizations in the church. These reports are to be available to the members of the congregation, usually as part of an annual meeting. The Minutes are to reflect the general nature and substance of the reports and the full reports may be included in the Minutes.

H.7. Record of Congregational Transactions [G-7.0304d]:

The Minutes are to record all actions of the congregation, including the full details of any property transaction or decision, with the full legal description of any real property.

H.8. Actions Appropriate to Congregation [G-7.0304]:

The Minutes of Congregation should reflect only those actions which are authorized by the Form of Government in G-7.0304. All other matters and decisions are reserved to the Session according to the polity and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

H.9. Congregational Meeting Minutes [G-7.0307]:

The Minutes of every congregational meeting are to be attested as accurate by the signature of both the session moderator and the clerk acting as secretary and entered into the Session Minutes record.

I: REGISTERS

I.1. The Clerk of Session is to maintain a membership roll, which distinguishes four types of members: 1) active, 2) inactive, 3) affiliated, and 4) baptized. This may be one register with distinctive notations or four separate registers.

I.4. and I.5. Elders and Deacons may have multiple terms of active service; the registers should reflect all such terms of service.

n.b. The records of Session may be maintained electronically. The permanent archival records should be retained, however, in durable hard copy [paper] form, according to the standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Department of History. The Stated Clerk can assist in this upon request.