

Helpful Guidelines for Sessional Stated Clerks

Nothing in the *BCO* addresses the duties of the Clerk of the Session other than *BCO* 12 (specifically 12-6, 7, 8). *Roberts Rules of Order, 10th Edition*, page 531, "The secretary[clerk] is elected viva voce in the same manner as the chairman. When the secretary has been elected, he should take his seat near the chairman and keep a record of the proceedings."

I. The following information might be helpful:

DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY/CLERK

[from *Roberts Rules of Order, 10th Edition*, page 442-3]

1. To keep a record of all the proceedings of the organization--usually called the *minutes*.
2. To keep on file all committee reports.
3. To keep the organization's official membership roll (unless another officer or staff member has this duty); and to call the roll where it is required.
4. To make the minutes and records available to members upon request (see below).
5. To notify officers, committee members, and delegates of their election or appointment, to furnish committees with whatever documents are required for the performance of their duties, and to have on hand at each meeting a list of all existing committees and their members.
6. To furnish delegates with credentials.
7. To sign all certified copies of acts of the society, unless otherwise specified in the bylaws.
8. To maintain record book(s) in which the bylaws, special rules of order, standing rules, and minutes are entered, with any amendments to these documents properly recorded, and to have the current record book(s) on hand at every meeting. [These Sessional Minute Books can be obtained from the Christian Education Bookstore. They contain acid free paper for archive purposes.]
9. To send out to the membership a notice of each meeting, known as the *call* of the meeting, and to conduct the general correspondence of the organization--that is, correspondence that is not a function proper to other offices or to committees.
10. To prepare, prior to each meeting, an order of business for the use of the presiding officer, showing in their exact order, under the correct headings, all matters known in advance that are due to come up and--if applicable--the times for which they are set.
11. In the absence of the president and vice-president, to call the meeting to order and preside until the immediate election of a chairman pro tem.

II. Guidelines for Keeping and Examining Session Minutes

(from a Presbytery's Manual of Operations)

"Minutes" are a **permanent record** in an **orderly form**.

PERMANENT

1. All minutes should be typed or legibly written in ink.
2. All minutes should be kept in a bound volume for permanent record with the name of the Church appearing on the cover of the volume. (Loose-leaf notebook is acceptable.)

RECORD

3. The Clerk should include the date of celebration of the Lord's Supper, record of baptisms, the manner of reception and dismissal of members. If a member is dropped from the rolls, the Clerk must state the reason and refer to the appropriate article in the *BCO* (*BCO* 12-5).
4. A copy of the annual budget approved by the Session and the annual statistical report should be attached annually (*BCO* 12-5).
5. Joint meetings of the Session and Diaconate should be recorded, keeping in mind that no joint actions can be taken (*BCO* 9-4) and that notations should be made when the Session approves the minutes of the Diaconate (*BCO* 9-4; 12-5).
6. The minutes should include the names of delegates to Presbytery or General Assembly as well as the report they make to the Session after Presbytery or General Assembly (*BCO* 12-5).

ORDERLY

7. Every Session must meet at least once quarterly (*BCO* 12-6) and submit their minutes annually for Presbytery's review (*BCO* 12-7).
8. Parliamentary procedure is to be followed in accordance with *The Book of Church Order* and *Robert's Rules of Order* as approved by the General Assembly.
9. Each action should be put in the form of a motion, with a second and notation of whether the motion passed or failed. In no circumstance should the Clerk write his personal opinion in the minutes, but notes may be made for historical purposes.
10. The minutes of each meeting should be approved at that meeting or at the following meeting. This should be done by way of a motion.
11. Each set of Session minutes must be signed by the Clerk. Congregational meetings' minutes must be included and signed by the Moderator and the elected Clerk.

FORM

12. Opening - At every meeting the Clerk should record the date, time, and place of the meeting, the names of those present, absent, and excused. The names of visitors should be recorded. The Clerk should note whether a given meeting is Stated or Called.
13. Pages should be consecutively numbered, leaving no blank pages between meetings and no records left unattached.
14. The minutes are to show that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer (*BCO* 12-9).
15. Presbytery's Committee to Examine Session Minutes shall report its findings using the terminology employed by the General Assembly in its *Rules for Assembly Operations* (*RAO*), article 14 (exceptions of form and exceptions of substance), and Sessions shall respond to exceptions of substance Presbytery finds by the same procedure specified in the *RAO*.