

REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK
Presbytery of Geneva
November 12, 2016
First Presbyterian Church, Corning, NY

Stated Clerk Action Items

The stated clerk moves that the presbytery:

(Minutes, May 21, 2016 & August 2, 2016)

1. **Approve** the Minutes of the September 27, 2016 stated meeting of the Presbytery of Geneva, held at Camp Whitman on Seneca Lake, Dresden, NY.

(Report of 2016 Review of Session Minutes)

2. **Receive** the report of the 2016 Review of Session Minutes:

REPORT OF 2016 SESSION MINUTES REVIEW

The 2016 review of session minutes was the first in three years. The review was coordinated by the Polity & Review Committee of the presbytery. The reviews were scheduled regionally, with five reading sessions. Each of the sessions was led by the presbytery's stated clerk. The following report lists the churches whose minutes were reviewed, by reading session, and include Exceptions, Advice, and Commendations for each particular church.

At the beginning of the reading sessions, the stated clerk acknowledged that the advance notice of the reading sessions was rather short, and that three years of minutes was a lot to review in such a short time. With regard to the reading sessions, the clerk suggested that the main focus of readers should be the previous year to eighteen months. After three (in a few cases, four) years to not having minutes reviewed, the stated clerk suggested we are doing the equivalent of a "computer reset."

Saturday September 25 at the United Church of Hornell

Hornell (Jim Varner, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Advice: none

Commendations: The whole minutes book is inspiring! Beautiful!

Andover (Dorothy Hyde, clerk)

Exceptions:

No Sexual Misconduct Policy

No Child Protection Policy

Advice:

Difficult format to follow

Should have presbytery report following each presbytery meeting.

Need to record the annual insurance review.

Don't put annual corporate report in minutes

It would be helpful to cross-reference items that refer to prior actions or decisions

Commendations:

Voted to put someone on the inactive roll (which I hadn't done)

All financial matters were voted on correctly.

A good job of following the General Form & Procedures, except for not approving the agenda.

Roll book updated and in good order

Arkport (Lorraine Glidden, clerk)

Exceptions:

Session did not authorize a service for communion

Session needs to approve a Manual of Administrative Operations

Advice:

Include budget in the minutes

Annual review of insurance coverage needs to be reported

Commendations:

Minutes are clearly written and provide an accurate record of session actions

Impressive list of in-house activities and projects that serve the community

Handling of selling the manse was done very well

Canisteo (Diane Miller, Clerk)

Exceptions:

No Child Protection Policy

Advice:

Quorum not always listed as being present

Cross-reference items that refer to prior actions or decisions
Be sure to report the review of session records (grace given, because it has been three years)
Education of newly elected elders?

Commendations:
Format is easy to read, and clearly written
Easy to see how many reports are given

Saturday October 1 at First Presbyterian Church, Bath

Weston (Mia Clemens, clerk)

Exceptions:
No listing of the budget
Advice: none
Commendations:
I liked how the minutes are presented.
The order of the minutes was easy to follow

Jasper (Nickie Adams, clerk)

Exceptions:
Extra pages were inserted
Minutes do not have consecutive page numbers
Advice:
Quorum should be stated
Need to note that the agenda was approved
Helps to use formatted page for taking notes; this helps to remind not to forget anything
Commendations:
Neat
Liked reading about happenings

Addison (Connie McCarrick, clerk)

Exceptions: none
Advice: none
Commendations:
Very legible, and excellent to read

Pulteney (Rosanna Bates, clerk)

Exceptions: none
Advice: None
Commendations:
Having an off-site get together with friends of the church to discuss the church and its future
Minutes very legible, complete, and contained all information

Hammondsport (Lyn Chadwick, clerk)

Exceptions:
When previous action of the session is referred to, page number is not mentioned
No Child Protection Policy
No Annual Statistical Report included
No Manual of Administrative Operations
Advice: none
Commendations:
The minutes are well-organized and easy to read
The church has a busy and innovative mission project that supplies diapers for free twice/month
Highlighting of details is very helpful

Seneca #9 (Pam Ormsby, clerk)

Exceptions:
Names of attendees not listed
Minister at communion not listed
Agenda never approved
No references to previous actions
Income / expense not reported
Advice: none
Commendations:
Prayer Shawl and Lap Afghan ministry
Some minutes joint with Bellona Memorial and Seneca #9 more clear

Saturday October 8 at Park Presbyterian Church, Newark

Phelps (Marsha Gibbs, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Shortsville (Donna Williams, clerk)

Exceptions: none

East Palmyra (Debbie & Josh McCrossan, co-clerks)

Exceptions:

Session needs to elect the Treasurer (and for a specified term)

Oaks Corners (Mae Schweikhard, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Palmyra, Western (Janet Maketelow, clerk)

Exceptions:

No review of insurance coverage

Newark, Park (Carrie Taylor, clerk)

Exceptions:

No record of electing a clerk (and for a specified term)

No record of electing a treasurer (and for a specified term)

Saturday October 15 at Geneva Presbyterian Church, Geneva

Lodi (Amanda McGonigal, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Hector (Sue Russell, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Ovid (Janet Lynch, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Geneva (Bette Schubert, clerk)

Exceptions:

No annual approval of Lord's Supper

West Fayette (Bonnie Saunders, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Junius (Christy Ward, clerk)

Exceptions:

No full financial review, and report

This reading session was attended by two pastors: Jim Yao (Hector / Lodi, and a member of the Polity & Review Committee) and Rob Mellgard (Ovid). Their presence was **most** helpful!

Saturday October 22 at First Presbyterian Church, Elmira

Penn Yan (Rob Anderson, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Advice:

Need minutes from annual / congregational meetings

Need to "x" out significant blank spaces

Election of Treasurer needs to be noted

Annual statistical report needs to be included

Commendations:

I like the Mission Statement in the minutes of each meeting

Elder Rob Anderson was selected as Commissioner to the 222nd General Assembly (2016)\

Watkins Glen (Karen Rhodes, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Advice: none

Commendations:

Records very well written and complete

Good job done by a longtime faithful clerk and church member. Best of luck with your retirement from clerking!

Canandaigua (Karen VanBargen, clerk)

Exceptions:

Record administration of Lord's Supper and completed baptisms

Record authorization and occurrence of marriages

Record deaths of members in minutes, not just annual reports

Record ordination and installation of officers

Record full budget information

Advice:

If moderator can't be present, please note moderator who was appointed

Record annual review/voting of sexual and child protection policies

If actions of prior session meetings are referred to, note references

Make clear the reviews of active members

Note racial-ethnic composition of session

Commendations:

Amended practice to note agenda approval, Feb. 2016

Improved recording of correspondence

Excellent recording of reports

Excellent recording of church life, actions of board

Corning, First (Peggy Scheckers, clerk)

Exceptions:

Statistical report last included was for 2013
Treasurer report summary not included when mentioned
Manual of Administrative Operations not approved
Child Protection Policy not approved

Advice: none

Commendations:

Thank you for all your consistency through all the changes in leadership!
Beautifully readable minutes and well-organized. Thank you!

Sodus (reviewed by Val Fowler)

Exceptions:

Baptisms are approved, but not reported as having occurred
No report of the full financial review/audit is included in the minutes
No report of the installation/ordination of officers
No annual review of the adequacy of insurance coverage
No election of Church Treasurer, nor term
No acknowledgement or adoption date of Sexual Misconduct or Child Protection policies

Advice:

Re: communion – it is important to note who presided, even if it is the pastor
Re: new members – please include all the information noted in the checklist
Don't forget to include this report in the minutes

Commendations:

The record of the call and the quorum of the Annual Congregational Meeting is VERY well done
The minutes are well-written and easy to read
The congregation has a strong church fellowship ministry: very active and very consistent
The congregation has many ministries to the community, and supports community mission programs
Greater than average number of adult baptisms: outstanding!

Moreland (Laurie Fursman, clerk)

Exceptions:

Approval of agenda is not recorded

Advice:

The clerk and treasurer are elected, but it does not specify term limits, so maybe throw that into the next election.
There are large blank spaces that could use lines drawn through them.

Commendations:

I enjoyed what Rev. Winters said on pages 195-196, about not relying on a minister to grow a church, but on ministry.
Thanks for including that!

Elmira, Westminster (Mildred Bradley, clerk)

Exceptions: none

Advice:

Quite a few of the minutes did not show closing with prayer, so make sure to note that.
Quite a few of the minutes did not show approval of the agenda, so make sure to note that.

Commendations:

I believe the clerk does a good job with the minute-taking for a small congregation.
Westminster seems to be involved in many activities in and away from the church

Spencer (reviewed by Peggy Scheckers)

Exceptions:

While the annual Full Financial Review was completed, the report was not included in the minutes Advice:
Would suggest using last names (e.g. Elder Bossard, or Elder Kerm Bossard) rather than just
first names.
Would be helpful if it was noted who the moderator is each time rather than just saying, "Pastor"
The approval of the agenda should be noted.

Commendations:

The minutes follow the same format each time; they are so easy to read and to learn about the church
Great job lining up pulpit supply!

Naples (Antone Olney, clerk)

Exceptions:

Should include notation of quorum in minutes
Neither communion services nor administration of communion (dates, etc) were noted

Advice:

Corrections should be noted with clerk's initials / large blank spaces need lines through them
Proper binder is needed

Commendations:

Great history / story telling – very informational
Good luck with the Community Garden
Membership committee news is very interesting

Elmira, Lake Street (Barbara Dove, clerk)
Exceptions: none
Advice: none
Commendations:
Minutes are beautifully written

Minutes that were not read (26):

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Almond | Atlanta | Cohocton | Howard | | |
| Bath | Dundee | Prattsburg | Rock Stream | | |
| Huron | Lyons | Marion | Ontario Center | Red Creek | Wolcott |
| Bellona | Romulus | Seneca Falls | Waterloo | | |
| Big Flats | Burdett | Elmira, First | Elmira, North | Ithaca | Horseheads |
| Painted Post | Trumansburg | | | | |

Overall impressions / questions asked by clerks

The response to the reading sessions was positive. The participants acknowledged the value of the opportunity to get together with other clerks, especially for the chance not only to connect with other clerks but also to know that they are not alone in the concerns they have and the desire to serve the church well.

In each session at least one person noted that they did not want to be there, and in fact tried hard not to be. At the end, every one of those persons offered a version of, "I'm really glad I came."

The participants were very glad to have the Checklist, though most of them were overwhelmed a bit by its length and comprehensiveness. They acknowledged that the Checklist will be helpful for:

1. Being able in a gentle way to remind the session of the things that need to be done through the year
2. Tracking the references to the session minutes throughout the year, rather than just prior to the reading
3. The ease of saving the document and using the expanding tables to record page references easily

Suggested Changes to the Checklist

The first section (General Forms and Procedures) will be changed, so that all that needs to be noted is a simple "Yes" or a check-mark. Filling in all the page numbers for such routine items is cumbersome.

The item regarding Triennial Visits will be excised, as the current Form of Government does not mention them, nor require them.

The appointment of a Treasurer by the session is noted as two items. One of them will be removed.

Saving and Archiving Minutes

Every session included questions about this subject. These important developments were shared:

1. **The big binders are no longer required, nor is the heavy paper stock for them.**
All paper sold in places like Office Max and Staples is acid free; the manila folders, as well. Minutes can be printed on such paper and stored in appropriately-marked folders, in a safe—waterproof and fireproof—place. One church uses large ring binders, and uses zip ties to keep the pages connected safely.
2. **The safest place to store past minutes is the Presbyterian Historical Society.** Information is provided in the *Handbook for Clerks of Session*.
3. **There are only four accepted media for archiving records:**
 - Hand-written
 - Laser printing (this is the modern equivalent of lithography)
 - Microfilm
 - Microfiche

Digital storage is only a medium for back-up. Digital storage is **not** considered a permanent retrieval medium. The technology changes (how would you access session minutes stored on a 3 ½ " floppy?). Digital media degrades (CDs will last for up to ten years). Session records should be archived in one of the above four formats. Microfilm and microfiche are expensive; the Presbyterian Historical Society can help the cost of those processes, by sharing the most cost effective companies.

Omnibus Motion: Items for Presbytery's Information

Stated Clerk Information Items

(Ordination Anniversaries)

A. The following are the significant ordination anniversaries of ministers that will occur this year (listed in 5-year increments):

10 years (2006)

The Rev. Kirk Baker (March 12, 2006 – Presbytery of Geneva)

15 years (2001)

The Rev. Jeffrey Ugoretz (July 8, 2001 – Presbytery of West Jersey)

The Rev. Karl Warrington (January 29, 2001 – Elizabeth)

The Rev. Jane Winters (August 19, 2001 – Susquehanna Valley)

20 years (1996)

The Rev. Cynthia Huling Hummel (August 25, 1996 – Presbytery of Elizabeth)

30 years (1986)

The Rev. Susan Otterbacher (September 14, 1986 – Presbytery of Great Rivers)

35 years (1981)

The Rev. Beverly Karr-Lyon (July 19, 1981 – Presbytery of Geneva)

The Rev. Jim Kerr (August 39, 1981– Presbytery of The Western Reserve)

40 years (1976)

The Rev. David Barnard (July 11, 1976– Presbytery of Geneva)

50 years (1966)

The Rev. Jim Hicks (July 29, 1966 – Presbytery of The Western Reserve)

Over 50 years

The Rev. Sam Edwards (**51 years**, May 23, 1965 – Presbytery of Central Washington)

The Rev. Gilmore Creelman (**53 years**, June 18, 1963 – Presbytery of Mahoning)

The Rev. John Valk (**55 years**, October 15, 1961 – Presbytery of Newark)

The Rev. John Elder (**56 years**, May 20, 1960 – Presbytery of Northern New England)

The Rev. Herb Tennes (**57 years**, May 14, 1959)

The Rev. Dean Bemower (**64 years**, June 15, 1952 – Presbytery of Boston)

The Rev. Fred Coffman (**66 years**, July 1, 1950 – Presbytery of Philadelphia)

The Rev. Fred Magley (**68 years**, October 13, 1948 – Presbytery of Newark)