

**Presbytery of Riverside Assembly
Handbook for New Chairpersons of Our
Commissions, Committees, and Teams**

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INTRODUCTION

“So, I have been asked to be the Chairperson for one of the formal groups of the Presbytery Assembly, and I have a lot of questions on how to do this job effectively and faithfully.” Does this sound like you? The Presbytery Commission, with assistance from the Records Review and Assistance Team, are here to make your first year simple, fulfilling and fun! Please share this document with the committee’s minutes taker.

General Questions

1. How often does my group need to meet?

That depends on the amount of business you need to conduct. Our rules do not specify how often to meet, most groups meet at least once before each Presbytery Assembly meeting so they can keep the Assembly up to date.

2. With which documents do I need to be familiar?

Each group has a **CHARTER** document, which defines the group and is the basis of its authority to do its job, as given by the Presbytery Assembly. Other handy documents from the Manual of Administrative Operations are 1) any policy documents related to your group; 2) the Organization Chart so you can see how your group relates to other groups; 3) the Conflicts of Interest Policy; 3) the Code of Ethics; 4) the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy; and 5) if your group has “Commission” in its name, the Administrative Commissions document.

3. What is the work of my group?

- My group is called a “Committee” or “Team”

The charter document specifies the mission, composition, necessary quorum requirements, function, and significant relationships with other groups.

- My group is called a “Commission”

If your group is named “Commission” (including New Worshiping Communities Administrative Commission), then in addition to the items above found in the charter document, you will also find a “Powers” section. This means your group has been given the authority to make certain decisions and take actions as if it were voted on the floor of the Presbytery Assembly. The minutes for your meeting must reflect that proper parliamentary procedures were followed in each motion just as they are in the Presbytery Assembly minutes. If you are taking care of business specified under Functions, then it is considered *committee* work. If you are taking care of business under Powers, then it is considered *commission* work.

Remember, all commission work **MUST** be reported to the Stated Clerk and the Presbytery Assembly at the next meeting. The full Assembly has the power to rescind or modify the actions of any prior meeting, including actions approved by a commission.

- My group is called an “Administrative Commission”
Most administrative commissions are temporary in nature, but they still have a charter instructing them what to do and what they are empowered to do on behalf of the Assembly. That charter may be in the form of minutes from the Assembly meeting during which their commission was formed.
- My group is the Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC)
God bless you! Even though you may go for several years with no work to process, if you are called into service, your work may be lengthy and arduous. There is a charter document for the PJC to get you started, and the Stated Clerk is there to help with the many nuances of your Commission. Your work will be based on the entire *Rules of Discipline*, and recommend reading at least the first three chapters for a good overview.

4. The list of Functions and Powers seem to be unclear, incomplete or obsolete. Do we need to ensure each of them is done?

Not necessarily. If there is an obsolete tasking, or it really belongs to an alternate committee, the Presbytery Commission is happy to help you refine the Charter document and bring it to the floor of the Assembly for ratification.

5. Do I need to have minutes of the meeting?

Yes! Minutes are a history of the ministry of the Presbytery. They reflect the record of what was done, decisions which have been made, who attended the meeting, and if there was a quorum. All minutes will be reviewed annually by the Stated Clerk. If your group is called “Commission”, your minutes are subject to being reviewed by the Synod as well, as you likely have made decisions on behalf of the Presbytery Assembly. See the section below on minutes.

6. I get confused as to what parts of our work we can approve on our own, and what parts we need to bring to the Assembly for approval.

This comes up at almost every meeting of a committee or commission. Guidance can be found in your Charter document. Many of the FUNCTION tasks will state what items need higher approval, for example, from the Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission Charter: “*Review and recommend to Presbytery compensation for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament.*” would be approved at the committee level, and also brought to the floor of the Assembly. On the other hand, the task of “*Annually review and approve the pulpit supply list.*” would be approved at the committee level but not at the Assembly level. If the item is unclear, use your judgement, or ask others on the committee for past treatment of that item. Commission decisions do not have to be approved at the Assembly level, but MUST be reported to the Assembly. More on this later.

7. I understand the difference between a committee and a commission. How does a team differ from a committee?

The main difference is how the members are placed there. Committee members must be nominated and elected by the Assembly. Team members are appointed, sometimes with rules as to composition, or rules as to length of service. Both can give reports on the floor of the Assembly, and both can make motions.

8. Can my committee hold e-meetings?

All groups are authorized to conduct their meetings via audio or video conference calls. Please read paragraph 3.05B of our Bylaws for basic rules, as well as the Virtual Meetings section of the Presbytery Assembly Parliamentary Procedures (currently in draft). These meetings are considered full meetings, and as such, minutes are prepared as any other meeting.

Committees and Teams, but not Commissions, may also have a deliberation via email. These are for when a routine decision needs to be made before the next regular meeting, and they are not considered full meetings. Read paragraph 3.05C for the basic rules. The business approved will be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the Committee or Team.

9. Do I have other responsibilities in addition to doing the work of my committee?

Yes.

- a) You, (or co-chair) should plan on attending the meetings of the Presbytery Commission (PC). It generally meets a few weeks before each Presbytery Assembly meeting, and at other times if items of a time-sensitive nature are to be processed. If you cannot attend a particular meeting, please ask a designee to fill in. The PC meetings are lively, many times making decisions where input from all the groups are necessary to hear the Spirit clearly.
- b) It is customary for each group to submit a report of activity since the last meeting of the PC. If the activity was minor, you may report that verbally at the meeting. If your committee is bringing a motion to the PC for its approval, it should be in writing, included in the report to the PC. The requirements of this report are a little less stringent than reports going to the Assembly. Submitting your committee minutes will be sufficient if you prefer. If your group needs to bring a non-routine motion to the floor of the Assembly, it is also customary to let the PC know you are doing that during its meeting.
- c) If you are a Ruling Elder and the chair of a committee or commission, you are also a voting member of the Presbytery Assembly regardless of your commissioner status and should plan on attending the Assembly meetings.

MINUTES REQUIREMENTS

The *Book of Order* requires that an administrative review be conducted of each Presbytery to “determine whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded, have been in accordance with this Constitution, have been prudent and equitable, and have been faithful to the mission of the whole church.” Towards that end, our Synod reviews, among other things, the minutes and records of our Presbytery and the decisions of its Commissions when they took action on behalf of the Assembly. Our Manual of Administrative Operations requires the Stated Clerk, assisted by the Records Review & Assistance Team, to review the minutes of the various committees and commissions of our Presbytery, and to report back to the Assembly.

We have not adopted a parliamentary rule regarding the precise format or content of committee minutes, but towards the goal of having relatively consistent records of our committees’ work, we have prepared certain format and content recommendations and a list of what the reviewers are looking for when your committee’s minutes are being reviewed. As a minimum, your minutes should include these items:

1. Date & time of meeting. If not at the Presbytery office, then state where. If it was an electronic or email meeting, then indicate so.
2. That the meeting was opened with prayer.
3. If the committee chair (and co-chair) is present or not.
4. That the moderator of meeting is identified (not necessarily the chair).
5. Record of committee members present, absent and excused, as well as guests present. We recommend a grid layout, such as in the sample below. Your grid may look different if it serves your needs.
6. A declaration that a quorum is present.
7. Any approval of previous minutes.
8. All motions and result of vote (bold highlighting the motion and/or the outcome is good). The outcome may be approved, passed, accepted, adopted, not approved, failed, etc. Motions which are withdrawn do not need to be documented. Document discussion as you deem necessary.
9. We generally do not require the minutes reflect the person’s name that made a motion, but it is acceptable to do so.
10. That the meeting was closed with prayer and at what time.
11. Minute taker’s name. The “Respectfully submitted” closing is an optional custom, not a requirement.

The next page has a sample format appropriate for committee minutes.

SAMPLE MINUTES FORMAT

Committee / Commission Name
Minutes of Meeting - Date

The meeting was opened with prayer at <time> by _____. <State if held at a place other than the Presbytery office, or if an electronic meeting.>

Name	Present / Excused	Class / Year of Service	Name	Present / Excused	Class / Year of Service
Cmte Chair's Name, Committee Chair	E	2019 / 4	Cmte Member Name 4	P	2019 / 1
Cmte Member Name 1	P	2017 / 3	Cmte Member Name 5	P	2017 / 3
Cmte Member Name 2	E	2018 / 2	Cmte Member Name 6	P	2019 / 1
Cmte Member Name 3	P	2018 / 2	Guest 1	P	

The meeting was moderated by <moderator's name>, as the <cmte chair's name> was excused. A quorum was declared.

The docket was approved with two changes.

The minutes of <date> were approved with one correction.

Agenda item 1: Any relevant description. **Motion** to <carefully worded motion> was made. **The motion was approved.**

Agenda item 2: Any relevant description. **Motion** to <carefully worded motion> was made. **The motion was not approved.**

Agenda item 3: Any relevant description. **Motion to approve** <item> and to recommend approval to the Presbytery Assembly. **The motion was approved.**

The meeting was closed in prayer by _____ at <time>.

Respectfully submitted,

<minute taker's name>

REPORT to the ASSEMBLY REQUIREMENTS

Your group may or may not have anything to report to the full Presbytery Assembly at each meeting. What is normally in your report has not been formally defined. Some groups submit their minutes as their report, others will summarize those minutes into items that the full Assembly needs to know about. **It is vital and required that all Commissions submit a report (or minutes), detailing the decisions they made on behalf of the Assembly since the last Assembly meeting.** Submitting a report to the Assembly does not negate the requirement for properly documented minutes.

A sample report is submitted below. Your report becomes part of the official record of the Assembly meeting. Notice in the report:

1. Action Items
 - Any item which requires approval by the Assembly
2. Commission Decisions < Applicable ONLY to commissions >
 - **If you are a commission, you MUST include all items for which your commission took action on behalf of the Assembly, whether the motion passed or failed.**
3. Information Items
 - Any item you feel is important for the Assembly to know.

SAMPLE REPORT

Presbytery Commission Report to Presbytery November 18, 2018

John Smith, Chair

For Action

1. The Presbytery Commission nominates Brad Burton and Clair Carlton to serve on the Committee on Nominations class of 2021.
2. The Presbytery Commission voted to approve and recommend to the Presbytery Assembly adoption of the proposed budget for 2019. *< Both are Commission FUNCTION items requiring an action by the Assembly >*

Commission Decisions *<Applicable to only Commissions, list here decisions, both approved and not-approved, regarding items which are listed as POWERS granted to the Commission>*

1. The Presbytery Commission voted to approve an update to the Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy, which are applicable to all Presbytery Assembly Commissioners, and members of all Assembly commissions, committees, and teams. *< Commission POWER item, does not need approval by the Presbytery Assembly, but can be rescinded or modified by the Assembly >*

For Information

1. Discussion was held on how to make Presbytery meetings more meaningful. It was agreed that it is important in Presbytery meetings to have worship with insightful preaching of the Word, to build relationships, and to focus on discipleship and mission, starting with examining the elements Vision/Mission Statement and hearing from active witnesses. You will be seeing new formats as we look for ways to implement these goals.