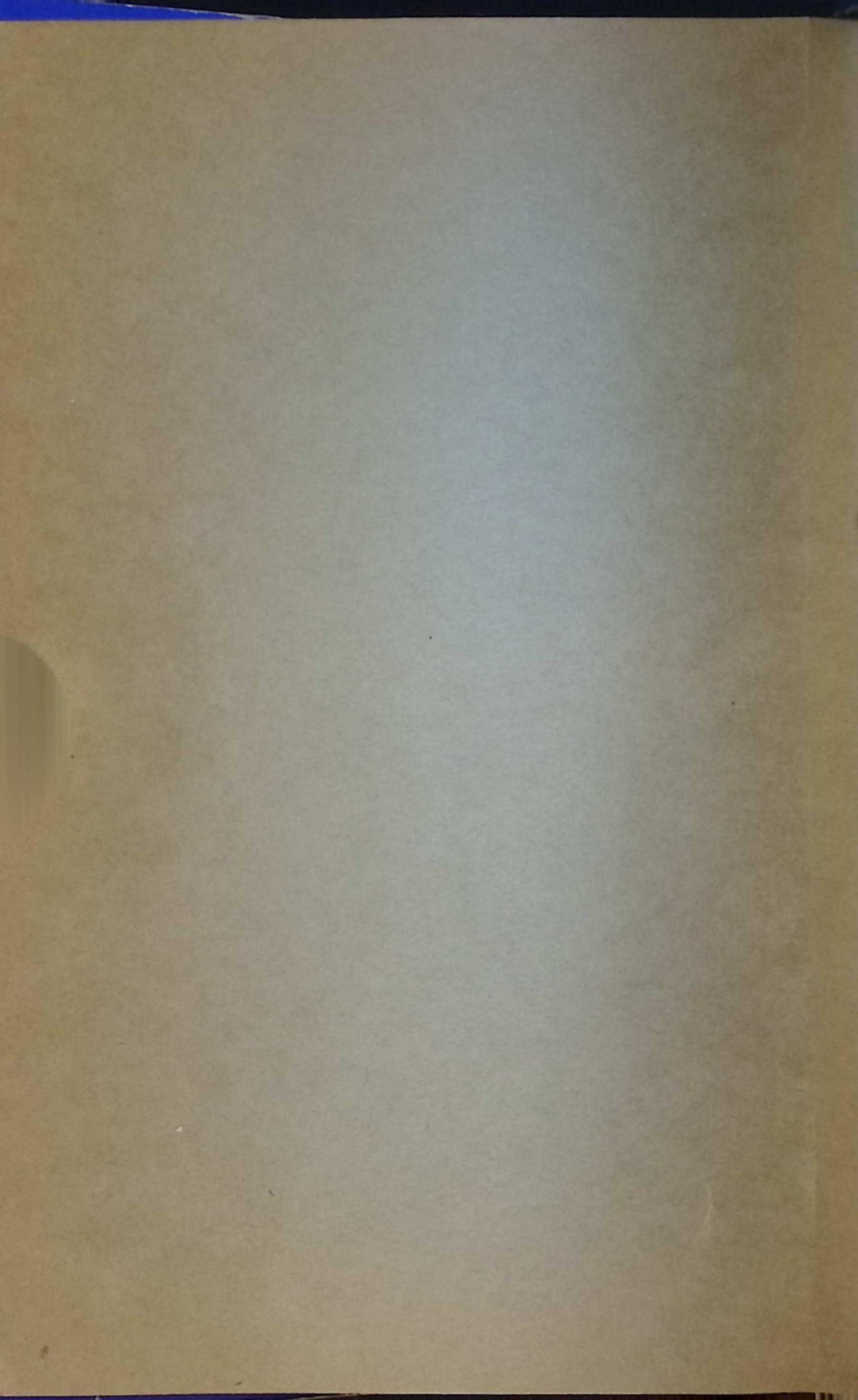


A
READY REFERENCE MANUAL
FOR
Church Officers and Courts
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in the
United States



By
J. D. LESLIE, D. D.
*Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
of the
Presbyterian Church in the United States*

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INTRODUCTION

Our Presbyterian Church is a highly organized body of the representative or republican type of government and its Book of Church Order sets forth its governmental principles with numerous details of their application. In the course of years the General Assembly, its highest court, has had frequent occasion to interpret this Book of Church Order and to add many administrative details, which are to be found in the annual Minutes of the Assembly. The more important of these are gathered into a volume called "The Digest," of which the last edition was published a few months ago.

Obviously it would be very convenient to have a brief manual embracing the essential governmental principles and details with citations of relevant acts of the Assembly and references to "The Digest."

In response to many requests Rev. J. D. Leslie, D. D., Stated Clerk of The Assembly, has undertaken the preparation of a manual of this kind. For this task he is uncommonly well equipped. For years he has been a student of Church government and almost from his ordination has served as Stated Clerk of Presbytery or Synod or of both, was for ten years Permanent Clerk of The Assembly, and has recently been advanced to the office of Stated Clerk. The results of his studies and of his rare administrative experience he has packed into this manual. It will be highly useful to all Church officers and courts but will have special value to the Clerks of Church sessions in giving them guidance in keeping their records and in making up Church reports.

A preceptor of Dr. Leslie in his college days has unusual satisfaction in introducing and warmly commending this contribution of his to the efficiency of our Church which he has served with ardent devotion, fine ability, and eminent success.

CHARLES R. HEMPHILL.

PREFACE

This Manual has been written in response to numerous requests for a book containing simple rules and suggestions for the guidance of church courts and officers in the transaction of business. Many ministers, ruling elders, and deacons have only a limited experience in official work.

Since very few officers of the church have a copy of Alexander's Digest, and are able to find the law of the church in a given instance, just enough of the deliverances of the Assembly in important cases, as found in the Digest, are given here to assist the reader and to create a desire for further study. A copy of the Digest should be in the library of every minister. Sessions would do well to purchase a copy and place it in the hands of the Clerks of Sessions. References will also be made to the Book of Church Order, a copy of which every minister, ruling elder and deacon should own. If this Manual should prove acceptable and useful to those for whom it is designed, the writer will feel amply repaid for the labor expended in its preparation. The abbreviation, A. D., p. 80, means Alexander's Digest, Revised Edition, 1922, page 80.

A Ready Reference Manual

*With Numerous Extracts from the Book of Church Order
Alexander's Digest and Other Works*

Title of the Church

1. The title of the church is: "The Presbyterian Church in the United States." This name was given to the church in 1865 and has never been changed. (The title of our sister church is: "The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.")

Form of Bequest

2. The Form of Bequest is as follows: "I give, devise, and bequeath to (here insert the cause) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (here insert the amount)". Ministers, ruling elders, and deacons having this manual may easily refer to this form when there is a desire for it. The forms of bequest for all the Executive Committees will be found in the Minutes of the General Assembly.

Church Courts

3. The Presbyterian Church has four courts: the Session, the Presbytery, the Synod, and the General Assembly.

Rules of Order

4. The Rules of Parliamentary Order, adopted by the General Assembly in 1866 and printed in the Book of Church Order, embody all the rules ordinarily needed for the guidance of our Church Courts.

Church Clerks

5. Each court has a secretary or clerk who keeps the records of the meetings of the court. The "Clerk of Session" is the name given this officer of the Session. In all the other courts he is called the "Stated Clerk." Dr. J. Aspinwall Hodge gives, in his book, "What Is Presbyterian Law?" the following history of the origin of the name, "Stated Clerk": "The Clerk is called the

Stated Clerk to distinguish him from those appointed to help him. At first the Clerk was able to perform the whole duty required, but after the union of the two Synods of New York and Philadelphia his work so increased that in 1763 he was granted an assistant. They were called the Clerk and his Assistant. At the organization of the Assembly in 1789, the title, 'Stated Clerk' appears in describing the Clerk of that body, and the Clerk of Presbytery, of Synod and of the General Assembly have since been called the Stated Clerk of those judicatories."

The Session

6. The Session is the first court in the order of gradation and has jurisdiction of a particular church. It is composed of the pastor or pastors, if there be any, and the ruling elders of the church.

The Officers of the Church

7. The Book of Church Order, paragraphs 103-105, describe the manner in which elders and deacons are elected. These paragraphs should be read carefully before proceeding to an election.

Quorum of the Session

8. The quorum of the Session is given in the Book of Church Order, paragraph 63. In addition to this, the General Assembly has made a number of decisions, defining a quorum of a Session. (A. D., pp. 81-83). Much confusion would be avoided if the General Assembly should send down to the Presbyteries the amendments to the Book of Church Order presented to the Assembly in 1923 by the Ad Interim Committee on Amendments to the Book of Church Order. They conform in letter and spirit to the Book of Church Order and the decisions of the General Assembly on this subject. We take the liberty of inserting them for information. They are as follows:

9. BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER (§ 63)—"The Church Session consists of the pastor or pastors, if there be any,

and the ruling elders of the church. If there are three or more ruling elders, the pastor and two ruling elders shall constitute a quorum. If there are less than three ruling elders, the pastor and one ruling elder shall constitute a quorum. When a church has no pastor and there are five or more ruling elders, three shall constitute a quorum; if there are less than five ruling elders, two shall constitute a quorum; if there is only one ruling elder, he does not constitute a Session, but he should take spiritual oversight of the Church, should represent it at Presbytery and Synod, should grant letters of dismission, and should report to the Presbytery any matter needing the action of a church court." (This amendment is proposed for the sake of removing doubt as to the Quorum of a Session where there is no pastor.)

10. BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER (§ 64)—"The pastor is, by virtue of his office, the Moderator of the Session. In his absence, if an emergency should arise requiring immediate action, the Session may elect one of its members to preside. Should prudential reasons at any time make it advisable for a minister other than the pastor to preside, the pastor may, with the concurrence of the Session, invite a minister of the same Presbytery to perform this service." (This amendment is proposed in response to an overture from the Synod of South Carolina.)

11. BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER (§ 65)—"When a Church is without a pastor the Moderator of the Session shall be either a minister appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery, or one invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion. When it is inconvenient to procure such a Moderator, the Session may elect one of its own number to preside. In judicial cases the Moderator shall be a member of the Presbytery to which the Church belongs." (This amendment is proposed to make clear the method of procedure when a minister cannot be secured to moderate a meeting of the Session.)

12. Under the provisions of paragraph 65, the session of a vacant church would be able to perform all the duties of a session mentioned in the Book of Church Order, paragraph 67, except in judicial cases as provided for in paragraph 65, above.

Meetings of the Session

13. The Book of Church Order, paragraph 68, gives directions concerning the meetings of the Session. The Session should meet at least quarterly. Paragraph 70 says that every Session shall keep a fair record of baptisms, of those admitted to the Lord's table, of non-communicating members and of the deaths and dismissions of church members.

14. The Assembly has made the following deliverance on paragraph 71 (A. D., p. 88)—“Concerning the word ‘ordinarily’ in connection with the opening and closing of the Session with prayer, the General Assembly leaves the question of the possibility, propriety and necessity of the opening and closing prayer, to the conscientious direction of the Session.”

The Clerk of Session—Duties

15. The Clerk of Session is elected by the Session. In selecting an elder for this responsible office, great care should be taken that he should have special qualifications for the office, such as writing a legible hand, having some clerical ability and experience, and having a deep interest in the work of the church. Usually a man who has had some experience in some business organization can be secured. His training in the business world should be a help to him in the work of the church. He should be at every meeting of the Session to make full notes of the proceedings and record them later in the records of the Session. With regard to those present at each meeting, the record should give the names of all present, including the *initials*. It is important that the record be full and complete. The minutes will be read by future generations.

Reception of Members

16. In recording the reception of members, the record should show how they were received. Members are received in two ways: on *profession* and by *certificate*. The word *letter* is not used in the Book of Church Order.

17. The General Assembly has ruled that when a member is received by a re-statement, the record should be, "received by certificate." (A. D., p. 18).

18. It is often the case that a member, received on profession, is baptized either at the meeting of the session or later in the church. Baptism is not a sessional act, but there should be made some record of the baptism. While the record of reception of members is made on the roll of members, this roll is not always accessible. If the mere mention of the fact of baptism, either at the Session meeting or at the regular church service, is made in the records of the Session, it will make the record clear.

Forms of Minutes for the Records of Sessions

19. When a member is received or dismissed the record should read one of the following ways:

".....was examined and received on profession of faith in Christ."

".....was received by certificate from....
.....church."

".....was dismissed at his (or her) request to unite with.....church."

If there are any children, their names should also be recorded,

20. When a Committee is appointed to perform a definite work, the record should be:

"Messrs.....,
and....., were appointed a Committee to.....
.....(here describe the object for which they were appointed.)"

Every record should be full but in simple form and language.

Reports of Sessions to Presbytery

21. The report of every church, no matter how small, is important. Hundreds of small churches make no report. They do not fill out and return a single blank sent them by the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. We wish to emphasize the importance of every church's making some kind of report. If nothing else but returning the blanks is done, this shows the Stated Clerk that there is some one who did receive the blanks.

22. Every Clerk of Session or pastor of the church will receive some time in March of each year a set of blanks from the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. Along with these blanks will be sent a statement of the amount of dues which the church should pay to the Treasurer of the Presbytery. Care should be taken that these blanks are not lost or mislaid. The Stated Clerk may or may not have extra copies. The session should not wait until after the last Sunday in March to begin preparation for making the reports. The Treasurers of all the departments of the church should have their books ready to balance by the last Sunday in March. Immediately after the last Sunday in March the reports for that Sunday should be entered.

23. The Clerk of the Session or the pastor should give notice to the Treasurers at least ten days before the close of the ecclesiastical year, requesting that the reports of all departments be ready by the 1st of April.

24. In the larger churches, a pencil form of the Statistical, Sabbath School, and Church Society blanks should be made and placed in the hands of those who are to make the report for each department. In fact a number of pencil forms is of value. These blanks are printed in full so that all the officers and members who read this manual may know what is embraced in the reports of a church to Presbytery. Let us take up each blank separately.

Statistical, Sabbath School and Church Society Blanks

25. I. THE SABBATH SCHOOL BLANK.—The information gathered by this blank includes :

- A. A report on membership embracing the officers and teachers, scholars, cradle roll, home department, total membership, and pupils added to the communion during the year.
- B. A report on Benevolent Contributions by each Sabbath School, embracing : 1, Foreign Missions ; 2, Assembly Home Missions ; 3, Synod's Home Missions ; 4, Presbytery's Home Missions ; 5, Congregational Home Missions ; 6, Christian Education and Ministerial Relief ; 7, Sunday School Extension and Publication ; 8, Educational Institutions ; 9, Bible Cause ; 10, Orphans' Homes ; 11, Current Expenses of School ; 12, Miscellaneous Contributions ; 13, Total for all purposes.
- C. A report on six important questions concerning the Sabbath School, as follows : 1, Report enrollment by departments in each school as follows—Cradle Roll (up to 3 years) ; Beginners (4-5), Primary (6-8), Junior (9-11), Intermediate (12-14), Senior (15-17), Young People's (18-23), Adult (24 up), Home Department. Total. Have you the following departments: Teacher Training, Missionary, Organized classes? Have you a Workers' or Teachers' Conference regularly held? 2, Is your school under control of Session as defined by General Assembly? 3. What special religious interest has there been in your school during the year? 4. Have you a library? How many months is school open each year? 5. Do you use your own church literature? What other literature is used? 6. Do your pupils memorize the Bible? Hymns? Catechisms?

26. The Secretary of the Sabbath School, perhaps with the assistance of the Superintendent, should prepare the statistics on enrollment in each department. The financial part should be prepared by the treasurer of the Sabbath School. Each item should be entered in the proper column and the totals in their proper place. When only the total is given, it is impossible to know for which item this total has been expended.

27. II. THE CHURCH SOCIETIES BLANK.—The information gathered in this blank includes:

- A. A report on membership for:
 - 1. Women's Societies.
 - 2. Men's Societies.
 - 3. Young People's Societies.
 - a. Girls.
 - b. Boys.
 - c. Girls and Boys.
- B. A report on Benevolent Contributions similar to that of the Sabbath School mentioned above.
- C. The following questions are asked: Are their objects missionary or general? Are they under control of Session—i. e. has the Session approved their organizations, constitutions and methods of work? Have they a regular plan for cultivating universal, systematic and proportionate giving? Are the Women's Societies affiliated with the Presbyterian Auxiliary, as recommended by the General Assembly?

Where there are a number of societies, duplicate pencil copies should be made of this blank and placed in the hands of each Society, except the Auxiliary Society, which, having its own blank, will make a full report to the Session. The entire report should be just as full and complete as possible. Every question should be answered.

28. III. THE STATISTICAL BLANK.—The information gathered by this blank includes:

- A. A report on membership embracing the following: number of elders, deacons, number added on examination and certificate; number resident, non-resident and whole number members; number of baptisms, infant and adult; total Sabbath School enrollment.
- B. A report of Benevolent Funds collected. It is a summary report, combining the reports of the Sabbath School, Church Societies and the Church all in one. It should embrace all amounts which pass through an authorized treasurer. The combined report embraces funds contributed to the following causes: 1. Foreign Missions; 2. Assembly Home Missions; 3. Synod's Home Missions; 4. Presbytery's Home Missions; 5. Congregational Home Missions; 6. Christian Education and Ministerial Relief; 7. Sunday School Extension and Publication; 8. Educational Institutions, including Assembly's Training School; 9. Bible Cause; 10. Orphans' Homes.
- C. A report on "Other Funds Collected," embracing the following: Current Expenses and Presbyterial Tax; Pastor's Salary Actually Paid; Miscellaneous Contributions.

29. An important note is found just after the item "Specials." (See item 14 under paragraph 30 below.)

Note—"Special Gifts" should be eliminated as far as possible from our Statistics. In almost every instance they can be classified under some one of our regular causes of benevolence. There is a disposition to place more emphasis upon our smaller special gifts than upon our larger regular gifts. It is not so important how these gifts shall appear in our statistics as how do they appear to God. Few of us will remember our gifts very long. God will not forget them.)

30. The instructions adopted by the Assembly for filling the Statistical Blank are as follows:

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.—According to action of the General Assembly of 1921 the roll of communicants should be divided into "Resident" and "Non-Resident," in accordance with Par. 291 (page 132), Book of Church Order, edition of 1922. The number of non-resident communicants should be reported each year. There is now no provision for a roll of *retired* members. (Minutes of General Assembly 1921, page 69).

DEFINITION OF OFFERINGS.—Include contributions from *church, Sabbath school and all church societies.*

1. **FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.**—All contributions to this cause, such as support of special workers, shares in stations, traveling expenses for missionaries, erection of schools, hospitals, homes for missionaries, and offerings for the general fund for Foreign Missions.

2. **FOR ASSEMBLY'S HOME MISSIONS.**—All contributions for the General Assembly's work of organizing and sustaining Mission Stations, Funds for Church and Manse Erection, Evangelistic Work, Colored Evangelization, Mountain Mission Work, Mission Day Schools, Work Among the Indians, Work Among Foreigners in our bounds and work in the West. (Report only funds sent to the Treasurer of the Assembly's Committee of Home Missions at Atlanta, Ga.)

3. **FOR SYNOD'S HOME MISSIONS.**—All contributions for Synod's Home Mission work, including its Evangelistic Work, Church Erection, and aid given to weak and dependent churches.

4. **FOR PRESBYTERY'S HOME MISSIONS.**—All contributions for Presbyterian Evangelistic Work, aid given to weak and dependent churches and Church Erection.

5. **FOR CONGREGATIONAL HOME MISSIONS.**—All contributions for mission work within the bounds of the congregation, including Mission Sunday schools, established and maintained by your church, supplies for mission points, aid given directly to weak churches not within congregational bounds, and settlement work.

6. **FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND MINISTERIAL RELIEF.**—All contributions through the Assembly's Committee or otherwise, for the aid of invalid ministers, or the families of deceased ministers. All contributions for the education of candidates for the ministry, and for the Endowment Fund of Ministerial Relief and the Student Loan Fund.

7. **FOR SABBATH SCHOOL EXTENSION AND PUBLICATION.**—All contributions sent the Publication Committee at Richmond for the organization and support of Mission Sabbath Schools of the Assembly and for the donation of Books, Bibles, Periodicals, tracts and religious literature.

8. FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.—All contributions for the endowment or support of schools and colleges under Presbyterian or Synodical control, the General Assembly's Training School, and for Theological Seminaries. Include here gifts of your church and your church members to the Special Educational Campaigns, including amounts sent direct to the Treasurer of the Campaign Fund by individuals in your church. Do not include here funds contributed to the Executive Committee of *Christian Education and Ministerial Relief*, at Louisville, Ky.

9. FOR BIBLE CAUSE.—All contributions for the American Bible Society or its auxiliaries.

10. FOR ORPHAN'S HOMES.—All contributions from the church, Sabbath school and church societies for the support of Orphanages and Orphan Homes.

11. CURRENT EXPENSES.—This includes all money expended for janitor, light, heat, music, insurance, building and repairing church, liquidating debts, expenses of all church organizations and of the Sabbath school, support of indigent members of local church, payment of Presbyterian Tax and expenses of Commissioners to church courts and all other incidental expenses.

12. PASTOR'S SALARY.—This includes all salary paid to pastor, assistant pastor, or supplies during the year. Do not include any supplemental amount the pastor receives from the Home Mission Committee or other sources.

13. MISCELLANEOUS CONTRIBUTIONS.—Include Nos. 3 and 4 of *Special Gifts* and all contributions which cannot be classified under any of the above heads. Report only such amounts as pass through hands of a regular Church Treasurer.

14. NOTE ABOUT BENEVOLENT AND SPECIAL GIFTS.—Report under Benevolent Funds Contributed, amounts passing through the hands of regular and special Treasurers of the Church, using care to enter the amounts under proper heading. If individual members of the Church have sent funds direct to the Treasurers of any one of the Benevolent Funds numbered 1 to 10 inclusive (causes approved by the Church courts), the local congregation may take credit for such gifts and include them under their proper heading. Include "Special Gifts," No. 1, under No. 11, "Current Expenses, etc." Distribute to proper causes gifts to "Equipment Fund" if facts are known. If not, distribute according to Assembly Schedule. Include "Special Gifts," Nos. 3 and 4, under "Miscellaneous Contributions."

Only such funds as pass through the hands of the regular church treasurer, should be reported under the head of *Miscellaneous Contributions*.

If you have a manse, make an asterisk (*) after the name of the church.

A SPECIAL TREASURER FOR BENEVOLENCES—

The General Assembly strongly urges the appointment in *every church* of a *Treasurer of Benevolences* who shall receive and forward *promptly* all Benevolent and special funds. Where such a Treasurer is appointed, funds collected by the Sunday school and all church organizations for *Benevolences* should be turned over to the special Benevolent Treasurer of the church to be forwarded by him to the beneficiaries.

This plan will insure the keeping of Benevolent funds and Current Expense funds entirely separate and the prompt forwarding of Benevolent Funds, and securing accurate reports at the end of the church year.

31. Before filling the Statistical Blank, the clerk of Session should read the above instructions and follow them closely. It is usually best to enter all items in pencil first, so as to make corrections more easily. Often some item is omitted and it must be entered after the report has been apparently completed.

32. IV. THE NARRATIVE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORK BLANK.—This blank should be filled by the Session. The following questions should be answered:

1. How many preaching services do you hold on the Sabbath?
2. What is the average number, as well as the average percentage of church membership in attendance on morning, evening and prayer meeting services, week by week, throughout the year?
3. How many have been received into the church during the year, on profession? By letter? Your present membership?
4. How many additions to church from the Sabbath School?
5. Did you hold an evangelistic service during the year? Have you seen any improvement in the spiritual condition of your church and community as the result of the meeting?

6. How many families hold family worship?
Members of the Family Altar League?
7. How many Communion Services were held during the year? What percentage of members attended?
8. Do your members observe the Lord's Day?
9. Are members of church faithful in presenting their children for baptism?
10. Are the Catechisms taught the children by the parents?
11. Are the Catechisms taught in the Sabbath Schools?
12. Do the Sunday School pupils memorize the Scriptures? Hymns?
13. Are the principles of stewardship of life and possessions taught by the pastor?
14. How many members tithe or more than tithe?
15. Did your church make an Every Member Canvass?
16. Did your church pay in full its apportionment for the benevolent causes?
17. What salary do you promise your pastor?
Was the salary paid fully and promptly?
How much was your pastor's salary increased during the year?
18. To what extent does worldly conformity exist in your church?
20. Have the pastor and session made any effort to secure recruits for the ministry?

33. Question No. 18 should be answered in the light of the following interpretation by the General Assembly: "The term 'worldly conformity' includes all

those forms of worldly pleasure and selfish indulgence which the world and the church both recognize as unbecoming in a follower of Jesus Christ and marking the difference between the classes of whom it is said "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (A. D., p. 93.)

Preparation of the Reports of the Session to Presbytery

34. WHEN TO REPORT.—The Session, having read carefully the blanks, with instructions, referred to above, should meet as early as possible after the last Sabbath in March and fill them out.

The Treasurers of all departments of the church should have their reports ready to present to the session, or in the hands of the pastor or clerk of Session. Every report should then be filled out in accordance with the instructions on these blanks and suggestions given above. When these reports have all been completed and adopted by the Session, the clerk of Session should record in the records of the Session such reports as the Presbytery directs shall be recorded. This should be done just as soon as possible. When all the reports have been completed they should be sent *at once* to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. Thus the Stated Clerk of Presbytery will be able to enter them on the summary blanks for the Assembly before the Presbytery meets. It is very important that the Stated Clerk should do this before he goes to Presbytery as he will be too busy at Presbytery with other business to give the reports proper attention.

35. CORRECTIONS.—All corrections should be made before sending the reports to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. The figures, the totals, and additions should be gone over and verified. Every figure should be clear and legible. If the Church has more than one pastor, this should be indicated in the report. The Stated Clerk not knowing this, may give only the name of the regular pastor. The salary should be placed opposite each name.

36. **WHERE TO SEND REPORTS.**—These reports should be sent to the Stated Clerk and not direct to Presbytery. Above all they should not be placed in the Session book, expecting the Stated Clerk to find them. He will probably not see them and they will come back to the church, in the Session book. If the churches will comply with these instructions, much more accurate and reliable reports will be made to the General Assembly. It is sometimes the case that a church forgets to send up its reports and finds them after the Presbytery has adjourned. Sessions should not expect the Stated Clerk to enter them at this late date. He has completed his work, made his additions and transferred his summaries. The changing of a single column will necessitate making corrections all through the reports. The result will be errors which he will not see. These errors will go up to the General Assembly and may never be corrected.

Payment of Dues to Presbytery

37. The Stated Clerk or Treasurer of Presbytery will send a statement of the dues the church should pay for the year, which amount is due March 31st. This item of dues should be made a part of the regular church budget and should be paid out of the current expense fund of the church. A check for the full amount should be sent *promptly* to the Treasurer of Presbytery. Delay in the payment of the dues is often very embarrassing, as a large part of the expenses of Presbytery are paid in April and May.

Review of the Records of Sessions

38. The records of the Session should be sent to the Spring Presbytery for review.

Church Treasurers

39. The General Assembly strongly urges the appointment in every church of a Treasurer of Benevolences, who shall receive and forward promptly all

benevolent and special funds. Where such a Treasurer is appointed, funds collected by the Sabbath School and all church organizations for benevolences should be turned over to this special Benevolent Treasurer of the church to be forwarded by him to the beneficiaries.

This plan will insure the keeping of Benevolent funds and Current Expense funds entirely separate, the prompt forwarding of Benevolent Funds, and the securing of accurate reports at the end of the church year.

The Assembly further directs that only such funds as pass through the regular Treasurer should be reported by the Church. Individual members, who desire to send funds direct to any benevolent cause of the church, should first make a report of the amount and the cause to the Treasurer of Benevolences so that a correct record may be kept. Under the heading "Miscellaneous Contributions" only such funds as pass through the hands of the regular Treasurer should be reported.

Remittance of Benevolent Funds

40. The Treasurer of Benevolent Funds should make a monthly remittance of all funds in his hands. The church should use the weekly envelope system and the Treasurer should see that payments are made promptly. If the Treasurers of Benevolent Funds could realize the great importance of prompt collections and remittances, they would make the financial condition of the beneficiaries much better.

41. *Church funds should not be used for any other purpose than that for which they have been contributed.*

42. What becomes of the reports of the Session to Presbytery? What should the Stated Clerk of Presbytery do with these reports of the Session after he has filled out all his blanks? He should send them to the Executive Committee of Publication and Sabbath

School Work, Richmond, Virginia. They should not be sent to the Stated Clerk of the Assembly. The Stated Clerk of the Assembly should receive only the Presbyterial Blanks properly filled out.

43. Concerning reports of the Presbytery to the Assembly, the standing rule of the Assembly reads as follows: "The annual Statistical, Sabbath School, Church Societies, Narrative reports shall be delivered to the Stated Clerk on or before May 1st of each year. These reports should be sent to Rev. J. D. Leslie, D. D., 904 Kirby Building, Dallas, Texas.

These last two items are inserted in order that Sessions may know what becomes of their reports.

44. GENERAL STATEMENT.—It has often been said that pastors and Sessions being indifferent and careless, will not heed suggestions. This has not been the experience of the writer through a long service as Stated Clerk of Presbytery. He has gone to Presbytery with all the reports to the Assembly well nigh complete. He has found that pastors and sessions were glad to co-operate with the Stated Clerk when they knew his wishes. The writer would appeal to pastors and Sessions to verify the above statement by a degree of promptness and accuracy that will make the Stated Clerks smile with delight and pleasure.

**Jurisdiction of Congregations, Officers and Trustees Over
Church Property and Other Secular Interests**

45. The Assembly adopted the following in 1890:

- (1) "There is vested in each congregation organized as a church, or in a number of persons about to be organized as such, the right and power to appoint and remove at will trustees and their successors, who may receive donations and purchase, take and hold property, real and personal, in trust for the congrega-

tion; and, if authorized by a majority of the church members at a congregational meeting constitutionally convened for that purpose, sell, mortgage, trust-deed, or exchange the property so held to aid in the construction or repairing of their church edifices, or for other purposes. Care should, however, be had to make the action conform to the law of the state wherein the property is located."

- (2) "In the appointment of Trustees a part or all of the deacons, if suitable, should be selected, and wherever property is now held by unincorporated churches it is advisable to have deeds made to the Trustees in all cases where it can be done." (A. D., p. 77.)

46. The General Assembly in 1923 adopted six recommendations concerning the incorporation of churches and church courts. (See Minutes G. A., 1923.)

47. The importance of having a valid deed for church property can not be stressed too much. For much of the property now held by Churches there is no valid deed.

Relation of Deacons to the Session

48. Concerning the relation of deacons to the Session, we quote:

"The duties of the Deacons, as servants (ministers) of the Church, are to execute the orders of the Session (or parochial Presbytery), as rulers of the church. Therefore, it is the duty of the deacons to collect and appropriate all funds for church purposes, whether for local purposes, support of a pastor, aid to the poor, or expenses of the church, or for objects of Christian benevolence recognized in the action of the courts of the Church, under the direction of the Church Session." (A. D., p. 77.)

49. Deacons may elect sexton and fix salary, etc. (A. D., p. 77.)

50. Concerning the relation of Deacons to the temporal affairs of the church, the General Assembly has made the following deliverances:

"In answer to an overture asking whether the management of the temporal affairs of the church is committed to the deacons by virtue of their ordination or by a special act of the Session, the Assembly replies that the management of the temporal affairs of the church does not belong to deacons by virtue of their ordination." (A. D., p. 78.)

"To an overture as to whether the Session or the congregation has the authority to commit to the deacons the temporal affairs of the church, it was answered that the authority lies with the Session." (A. D., p. 78.)

51. Deacons may not change pastor's salary without consent of congregation. (A. D., p. 78.)

52. Deacons have no right to call a congregational meeting. This is the duty of the Session. (A. D., p. 78.)

Congregational Meetings

53. CALLED BY SESSION.—The Session alone can call a congregational meeting. The Book of Church Order does not say in exact words that the Session alone can call a congregational meeting, but it does say that it has power to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the church and congregation. The General Assembly says, "It seems to follow that it is competent for the Session to call congregational meetings for any proper purpose." (A. D., p. 34.)

54. DUE NOTICE SHOULD BE GIVEN.—Neither the Book of Church Order nor the Digest gives any rule as to the time necessary to constitute "due notice," as is the case with the other courts. Usually, if there is no need of haste, it is well to give a week or ten days' notice. This may be done by public notice from the pulpit on the Sabbath, through the public print, or by written notice.

55. THE PRESIDING OFFICER.—"If the meeting is of such character that the pastor, from the motives of delicacy, should not preside, it is competent for the congregation to choose a presiding officer. There is nothing in the Form of Government to prohibit the congregation from inviting an elder outside their own Session to moderate a congregational meeting; but this is inexpedient, except in extraordinary cases. No proxies are allowed and no one but a member of the church can vote." (A. D., p. 34.)

56. ELECTION BY BALLOT NOT REQUIRED.—Our church does not require election by ballot. This is left to the discretion of the congregation.

57. RECORDING CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS.—A record should be made in the records of the Session that the congregational meeting was ordered to be held. The question has often been raised as to whether any note should be made in the records of the Session of the fact that the congregational meeting was held. While the full record of the congregational meeting is usually made in a separate book or in the back of the records of the Session, the writer has always felt that some mention should be made in the records of the Session, stating that the congregational meeting was held in accordance with the order of the Session. If on the date mentioned there is the simple record made that the congregation did meet and that the business for which the congregation was called was transacted and a reference made to the place where the congregational meetings are recorded, the records as a whole will be much more intelligible.

Inviting a Visiting Minister to Preside

58. When a minister visits a vacant church to preach or hold a meeting of the Session or Congregation, if he has not been appointed by the Presbytery to act as moderator of that Session, the Session should by vote invite him to preside. A record of this should be made in the records of the Session. Sessions of vacant churches often take it for granted that the minister has this authority and will perform these duties without being asked. Much embarrassment will be saved if the Session will remember this.

Assembly Decisions

The General Assembly has made a number of decisions concerning the Session.

59. The Session cannot hold a meeting without the sanction of the pastor. (A. D., p. 84.)

60. The pastor of the church which has no elders does not constitute the Session. (A. D., p. 84.)

61. A church without officers is entitled to be enrolled by Presbytery. (A. D., p. 84.)

62. No one can represent a church except an elder of that particular church. (A. D., p. 85.)

63. An elder may sometimes become unacceptable to the church. Can the relation be dissolved? Yes, the Book of Church Order, paragraph 113, says: "In such a case, it is competent for the Session upon application, either from the officer or the church, to dissolve the relation. The Assembly has defined the word "Competent" by saying that "it is within the authority" of the Session. (A. D., p. 70.)

64. DEMISSION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS.—An elder or deacon may demit the office under the Rules of Discipline, (Ch. 12, Par. 3.) The Session proceeds just as

the Presbytery does in the case where a minister is concerned.

65. "When an elder or deacon voluntarily and permanently removes beyond the bounds of a congregation, he is disqualified from discharging the functions of his office, and is no longer to be considered as an acting elder." (A. D., p. 69.) He does not become an officer in the church to which he has been dismissed. He may be elected and installed there without ordination.

66. When an elder is elected to represent his church in a stated meeting of Presbytery or Synod, his membership continues until the next stated meeting. (A. D., p. 68.)

67. An elder or deacon receiving a letter of dismission but subsequently returning the letter, is reinstated into the full communion and resumes his functions as an officer. (A. D., p. 70.)

68. The examination of elders and deacons on the Standards of the church is not required. The Assembly declined to send down to the Presbyteries an amendment to this effect. The Assembly directs that churches be very careful in the selection of elders and deacons and have them properly instructed before ordination, as required by the Book of Church Order, Ch. VI., Section IV. (A. D., p. 72.)

69. ROTATION IN CHURCH OFFICE.—The Presbyteries have voted against the rotary system for the offices of elder and deacon. The Assembly of 1923 declined to send down an amendment to the Book of Church Order on this matter. (A. D., p. 71.)

70. An elder who is licensed to preach does not lose his powers as an elder. (A. D., p. 75.)

71. Presbytery may dissolve the relation between an elder and a particular congregation without prejudice, with or without petition. (A. D., p. 72.)

72. The terms used by our church to define the nature of the elder's relation in the higher courts is "representative" and not "delegate," and for the member of Assembly is "commissioner." The record by the Clerk of Session of the election of an elder to attend a higher court, (Presbytery or Synod) should be as follows: "Ruling Elder..... was elected a representative to Presbytery (or Synod)."

73. The Session cannot authoritatively instruct its representative how to vote in a higher court. (A. D., p. 86.)

74. While it is important to make a record of all the proceedings of the Session, this does not necessarily require the copying at length on the record book of all the papers adopted by it, unless so directed by Presbytery. Some Presbyteries require the recording of the Narrative of Christian Life and Work, the Statistical Report, and sometimes the Sabbath School Report. If it is required, then the Session should obey this order, otherwise it is largely in the discretion of the Session as to what papers shall be copied. The Clerk should keep on file all papers adopted, whether recorded or not. (A. D., p. 86.)

75. This General Statement by the Assembly leaves the matter of making record of baptisms (which is not a Sessional act), and of congregational meetings held in accordance with the order of the Session, a matter of discretion with the Session.

76. "All organizations of the Local Church are under the jurisdiction and control of the Session as to the object for which funds are raised, the method by which they are raised and the channel through which they are distributed. Whether the said organizations shall be required to send their offerings through the local treasurer is a matter for the Session to determine." (A. D., pp. 86-87.)

77. The Session has no power to make new rules of membership. (A. D., p. 87.)

78. Concerning the requirements for membership in the Presbyterian Church, we quote from Dr. W. L. Lingle's book, "*Presbyterianism*," Page 29:

"In order to become a member of the Presbyterian Church one is only required to make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior. Nothing could be broader than that. The Presbyterian Church is willing to receive a member from any other evangelical church simply on the statement from the other church that this member is in good and regular standing in that church, and there is absolutely no other requirement. The Presbyterian Church accepts as valid the baptism of any other evangelical church. The Presbyterian Church recognizes as valid the ordination of ministers in all other evangelical churches to the communion table. The Presbyterian Church cordially co-operates with all other evangelical churches in Christian service. It would be difficult to think of a broader platform than this."

79. May a Minister of another Presbytery moderate the Session? Yes; but he is not a member of the court and cannot vote. (A. D., p. 87.)

80. May a Minister of another denomination moderate a Session? No; this is neither constitutional nor regular. (A. D., p. 87.)

81. The Session is "opened" and not "constituted" with prayer. Clerks of Sessions should note this and be careful to use the correct word. (A. D., p. 88.)

82. It is sometimes the case that a church desires to be dismissed to another denomination. In this case the Presbytery should authorize its Stated Clerk to

furnish a letter of transfer to the church as a congregation; the transfer of the church property should be in accordance with the State Laws. (A. D., p. 89.)

83. Dismissing a member in blank is irregular. The name of the church to which a member is dismissed should ordinarily be given in the Certificate of dismissal. (A. D., p. 21.)

84. The Session is not required to notify the Session to which the member is dismissed of this fact. It is very desirable that the church to whom the certificate was given, should notify the court issuing the letter of the fact of reception. (A. D., p. 21.)

85. Letters issued to members should include their baptized children. (A. D., p. 22.)

86. By parity of reasoning from the rules governing a Presbytery, a congregational meeting can transact only the business for which it has been called. It can adjourn from Sabbath to Sabbath until the business for which it has been called has been completed. The Congregation cannot adjourn from Sabbath to Sabbath to transact *any business which may come before it*. The Congregation can meet only as it is called by the Session in accordance with the rules of the Book of Church Order, par. 102.

87. ON THE OWNERSHIP OF THE PROPERTY OF A DISSOLVED CHURCH.—The Assembly rendered the following decision in 1917: "When a local church, either with or without its consent, is dissolved by a Presbytery having jurisdiction over such a church, without making disposition of the property of such dissolved church, all such property shall, upon such dissolution, vest in and become the property of such Presbytery, and such Presbytery shall have full power to sell, convey, and dispose of such property and the proceeds thereof, and to authorize the conveyance thereof to be executed

in the name of the Presbytery by such person or persons as it may direct, care being taken, however, that in all such cases conformity be had to the laws applicable, if any, of the states wherein such property may be located, and care also being had that the conditions, if any, of the instruments of conveyance be observed." (A. D., p. 90.)

88. In judicial cases, the Assembly has made the following deliverance:

- (1) "That judicial admonition is a censure whose whose legal force terminates when it is inflicted.
- (2) "The person on whom judicial admonition is inflicted is in good and regular standing, in the sense that he is not under judicial process or censure.
- (3) "Such a person, not being under judicial process or censure, is entitled to a letter of dismission, if he desires it, to a church in connection with this Assembly." (A. D., 1910 ed., p. 669.)

The Presbytery

89. The Presbytery is the next court in the order of gradation. It is composed of the ministers and one ruling elder from each church within a certain district. It is organized by the Synod.

Meetings

90. The Presbytery meets twice a year. This is not optional but is required by the Book of Church Order. These meetings are usually referred to as "stated" meetings to distinguish them from "adjourned," or "called" (*pro re nata*) meetings. Each stated meeting is "opened" not "constituted" with a sermon. No church court is ever "constituted" with prayer or with a sermon. Called meetings may be held any time

between the stated meetings. The Book of Church Order, paragraph 79, says that "the Moderator, at the request of two ministers and two ruling elders, may call a special meeting of the Presbytery." The called meeting can transact only the business for which it was called. (Book of Church Order, par. 79.) The stated meeting of Presbytery may adjourn to a definite time to transact any business that may come before it.

The General Assembly in 1921 suggested to the Synods and Presbyteries to so arrange their meetings that the Synods shall meet in the fall before the Presbyteries in order that the apportionments by the Synod for the Every Member Canvass may be passed on to the Presbyteries for action.

Quorum

91. "Three ministers and one ruling elder shall be a quorum competent to transact business." (Book of Church Order, par. 74.)

The Business of Presbytery

The Book of Church Order, paragraph 77, gives a full description of the powers of a Presbytery.

92. The following outline will give the *principal items* of business usually transacted by a Presbytery. This is given because many elders who have never attended a Presbytery do not know what is done there.

- (1) To receive ministers. The examination for the reception of a minister is chiefly upon his "views" on theology and not upon his "knowledge." When the examination is made with a view to licensure and ordination, it is upon his "knowledge," and should be full and thorough.
- (2) To receive candidates for the ministry and subsequently license and ordain them after they have completed the usual course of study.

- (3) To act upon calls from churches within the Presbytery and arrange for the installation of the ministers called.
- (4) To appoint Executive and Permanent Committees who shall have charge of the work of Presbytery between the stated meetings. The most important of these are the four Executive Committees of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Christian Education and Ministerial Relief, and Publication and Sabbath School Work, and the Permanent Committee on Stewardship.
- (5) To appoint Examining Committees, who shall conduct the usual examinations required in the case of the reception of ministers and the licensure and ordination of ministers.
- (6) To appoint Standing Committees, to whom the business coming before Presbytery is referred for consideration. They are appointed at the opening of each stated meeting of Presbytery by the Moderator. These Committees report to the Presbytery before its close, making recommendations, etc., which, if adopted by the Presbytery, become the acts of the Presbytery.
- (7) To review the records of Sessions which are sent to the Spring Meeting of Presbytery.
- (9) To prepare the annual reports of the Presbytery to the General Assembly. This constitutes an important part of the business of the Spring Meeting. When the churches send up to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery full reports in advance of the meeting, the Stated Clerk is usually able to read his reports in full to the Presbytery for final adoption. These reports are sent by the Stated Clerk to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and become the record of the church and Presbytery for that year.

The Stated Clerk

93. The Stated Clerk of Presbytery is usually a minister who is willing to perform the duties of the office because of the love and interest he has for the work. The small salary does not compensate for the work performed. It should be materially increased. The office requires a man who has some clerical ability and fitness for the work. The Stated Clerk is elected by Presbytery which also fixes the term of office, the usual term being three years.

Duties of the Stated Clerk

94. KEEPING THE RECORDS.—It is the duty of the Stated Clerk to keep correct records of all the proceedings of the Presbytery and either record them in a record book or to have them printed in pamphlet form. (For suggestions on this matter see "Printed Minutes.") He is the custodian of all the papers and records of the Presbytery. Care should be taken that they are not lost or mislaid. During the year the Stated Clerk receives many communications and papers, which are intended for Presbytery. These he should carefully preserve and present to the next stated meeting. At all times, he is the official representative of the Presbytery.

95. CORRESPONDENCE.—Concerning the matter of correspondence, it is important that every letter, requiring an answer should be answered promptly. Every official paper or communication to Presbytery should be acknowledged. After years of service, the writer is convinced that every letter should be answered, even though some of them do not relate directly to the work of the Presbytery. Some Stated Clerks hesitate on account of the expense in postage, etc. The Presbytery should direct the Stated Clerk to pay out of the funds of the Presbytery all expenses of stationery and postage.

The Stated Clerk should send notices to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, on postal cards furnished by him, of all ministers received and dismissed. This information is used to supply the Executive Committees of the Assembly and the Stewardship Committee, with a monthly report of all changes of address, thus keeping their mailing list up to date.

96. REPORTS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (1) *Their Preparation.*—The preparation of the reports of the Presbytery to the General Assembly in the spring is one of the most important duties of the Stated Clerk. This preparation consists in securing first of all from the Executive Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va., or Texarkana, Texas, the latest forms of blanks. Since the General Assembly often makes some slight change, only blanks with such changes should be used. It is a good idea to order just enough for one year, allowing a few extras for churches which may lose the set sent them.

97. (2) SENDING OUT BLANKS.—When the Stated Clerk sends out the blanks about March 1st he should see that every church secures a full set. He will have to judge to whom these should be sent. In the case of the church with a pastor, it is usually best to send them to the pastor. In case of vacant churches, the clerk of Session is the proper person to whom he should send them. If the Stated Clerk is the Treasurer of the Presbytery, he should also send a bill for Presbyterial dues. On page 44 there will be found a form of statement which has been used with considerable success.

98. (3) ADVANCE PREPARATION.—The Stated Clerk should prepare in advance of the spring meeting of Presbytery an alphabetical list of ministers, licentiates and candidates; also a complete list of churches with their post offices. These lists should be accurate. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly will send each Stated Clerk of Presbytery a blank form on which he

is requested to enter the list of ministers up to and including the spring meeting of Presbytery. This list is very important to the Stated Clerk of the Assembly and should be sent very promptly. The blank should be filled out just as it stands, using the abbreviations, etc., as suggested by the papers sent to the Stated Clerks.

99. (4) GIVE FULL INSTRUCTIONS TO CLERKS OF SESSIONS.—When the Blanks are sent out to the churches, a letter should be written giving full instructions to the clerks of Sessions and others who receive the blanks, telling them when they are to be returned. The Stated Clerk should insist on having the blanks filled out and returned to him just as soon after the 1st of April as possible. He should insist further that every church, no matter how small, return the blanks sent with all the information it is possible for it to give. He should insist further that pastors and clerks do not wait until the meeting of Presbytery to *bring* these reports. When a sufficient number have come in from the churches, he should begin to transfer them to the Presbyterial blanks for the General Assembly. If the Sessions will act promptly and heed the suggestions of the Stated Clerk, he can have most of this work done before he goes to Presbytery and be able to read a completed report to Presbytery. The entire Statistical Report should be read to Presbytery and corrections should be made before it is finally adopted. When a church fails to return the blanks and there is no way of securing information from the church, the Stated Clerk should fill in the number of elders, deacons and members from the last report from the church. It is often the case that there are ministers on the floor of Presbytery who can give full information concerning almost every church that fails to make a report.

100. (5) RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT MEMBERS.—The Stated Clerk is requested to see that the columns of "resident" and "non-resident" members equal the "total number of members." These columns must

balance, otherwise the report is not correct. If this is not done, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly will have to check the three columns to find the error.

101. (6) CORRECTIONS.—It is sometimes necessary to make corrections. When this is the case, the erasures and corrections should be made just as carefully as possible. It is difficult for either the Stated Clerk of the Assembly or the printer to make out figures that have been corrected two or three times.

102. (7) VERIFICATIONS.—After all four reports have been made out, the Stated Clerk should go over each report to see that the names of ministers, churches and post offices are spelled correctly. It is often the case that the same name is spelled more than one way in a single report. He should not begin to add up the columns until this verification has been made. If the Stated Clerk has access to an adding machine, he should have the additions done on it. Then he should check each figure after this has been done. It is surprising how many mistakes even the best adding machine men make.

103. (8) NON-RESIDENT MINISTERS.—Ministers who are not living within the bounds of the Presbytery should write the Stated Clerks in advance of the Spring meeting to give them their correct post office address and the nature of their work. Stated Clerks will find the following forms or concrete illustrations with explanatory key very helpful in filling out the Statistical Report to the Assembly. If the Clerks will use them, greater uniformity in our reports can be secured.

Only these forms and the abbreviations attached should be used.

<i>Ministers</i>	<i>Post Offices</i>	<i>Churches</i>
1. S. D. Alexander (P.)	Warm Springs, Va.	First*
2. John Bell (P.)	Harrisonburg, Va.	Liberty†
John Bell (P.)	Andersonville, Va.	Shiloh
3. Samuel Coles, D. D. (P.)	Sand Hill, Va.	Harmony†
Samuel Coles, D. D. (S. S.)	Oak Dale, Va.	Philadelphia
<i>* Insert here.</i>		
4. Jacob Henry (S. S.)	Ebenezer, Va.	Ebenezer*
Jacob Henry (S. S.)	Hampden-Sidney, Va.	Geneva
5. Walter H. Henderson	Geneva, Va.	
Walter H. Henderson (S. S.)	Lexington, Va.	Hopewell
6. William Jones (Asso. Pas. or A. P.)	Warm Springs, Va.	First
7. H. B. Lane (F. M.)	Caminos, Brazil	
J. L. Overton (Pres.)	Lexington, Va.	
8. William Overton (In Trans.)	Pleasant Ridge, N. C.	
9. Churches supplied but not with regular Preaching	Hope, Va.	Hope (S. S.)
10. Vacant Churches	Cross Roads, Va.	Concord (V.)
Vacant Churches	Staunton, Va.	Bethlehem (V.)
11. Licentiates		
James Smith	Yancyville, Va.	
12. Candidates (5)		
13. S. B. Coleman, D. D. (P.)	Cross Roads, Va.	Concord

(NOTE TO PRINTER: Insert in report at place marked with an asterisk (*) the line beginning S. B. Coleman, etc.)

105.

Key to Table

1. For a pastor of a single church.
2. For a pastor of more than one church.
3. For a pastor and Stated Supply.
4. For a Stated Supply for more than one church.
5. For a minister living at one place and preaching to a church at another place.
6. For an assistant or associate or co-pastor.
7. For a foreign missionary, home missionary, evangelist, editor, pres. etc.
8. For a minister in transitu.
9. For churches supplied but not with regular preaching.
10. For vacant churches.
11. For licentiates.
12. For candidates.
13. For a minister or church which has been omitted. Enter the name of the minister, post office, church and Statistics and write below it the note to the printer as shown above.

106. The following abbreviations are recommended to indicate the occupation of ministers:

AGT.—Agent.
 A. EV.—Assembly Evangelist.
 A. P.—Assistant pastor.
 ASSO. P.—Associate pastor.
 CH.—Chaplain.
 C. M.—City Missionary.
 C. P.—Co-pastor.
 ED.—Editor.
 P. EV.—Presbyterial Evangelist.
 S. EV.—Synodical Evangelist.
 F. M.—Foreign Missionary.
 P. H. M.—Presbyterial Home Missionary.
 H. R.—Honorary Retired Minister.
 INF.—Infirm.
 P.—Pastor.
 P. E.—Pastor elect.
 PRES.—President.
 PRIN.—Principal.
 PROF.—Professor.
 SEC.—Secretary.
 S. C.—Stated Clerk.
 S. S.—Stated Supply.
 S. S. M.—Sunday School Missionary.
 S. H. M.—Superintendent Home Missions.
 T.—Teacher.

Duties of Chairmen of Standing Committees

107. The Chairman of a Standing Committee should call together the Committee of which he is a member, just as soon as possible after reports, papers, etc., have been referred to his Committee. The Committee should give careful consideration and when a conclusion has been reached, the chairman should write out these conclusions, *not on scraps of paper* but on paper of uniform size, which the Stated Clerk will supply. *No abbreviations* such as "Com." for committee or "Ch." for chairman, etc., should be used. The report should be written only on one side of the paper. Care should be taken that names and initials are correct, and that the entire report is written in good English. The chairman should enter all changes made in the report by the court, by way of amendment or otherwise. The report should not be given to the clerk until all such changes have been made in a legible way. This paragraph applies equally to chairmen of committees in Presbytery and Synod.

Records of Presbytery Sent to Synod

108. The records of the Presbytery, duly signed by the Stated Clerk, should be sent to the Synod each year.

Equipment for the Stated Clerk

109. The Presbytery should purchase for the use of the Stated Clerk the following equipment:

- (1) A Record Case. This case should be made of leather. The size should be about 16 inches long, 14 inches deep or high, and 8 inches wide. It should be large enough to hold all the records, papers and books used by the Stated Clerk. Ordinarily he will use loose leaf books 8½ inches by 11 inches.
- (2) A number of loose leaf books in which to keep the records and papers.

- (3) A punch with which to punch papers so they can be filed in the loose leaf books.
- (4) A copy of Alexander's Digest, Revised Edition 1923, which should be brought to the meetings of the Presbytery.
- (5) A typewriter. The Stated Clerk should not be compelled to use his meagre salary to purchase a typewriter.

110. It is not just to the Stated Clerk to give him a meagre salary and then require him to equip his own office. The experience of the writer has been that the churches will gladly pay the expenses of such equipment and increased salary of the office for the sake of efficiency. When a minister gives gladly and willingly of his time to serve the Presbytery in an official capacity, he should have everything necessary for his convenience, and for making his work effective.

Permanent Clerk

111. The Presbyteries and the Synods usually elect a Permanent Clerk in addition to the Stated Clerk. The term of office is usually for a period of three years. The duties of this office are to prepare the minutes of the court, read them each morning, and when they have been adopted, place them, in finished form, in the hands of the Stated Clerk. Although there is always a Temporary Clerk elected to keep the minutes, the Permanent Clerk should not depend altogether upon these minutes. He should sit by the Temporary Clerk and keep the minutes also. After each Session of the Court, they should check over their minutes together to see that nothing is omitted, and that the minutes are correct. He should then, with these corrected minutes, write out in full the minutes to be presented to the Court for adoption. If it is possible, the typewriter should be used and the minutes made in duplicate. This is more important, however, in the Synod than the Presbytery as the minutes there are much longer.

112. The question has often been asked whether the Court should "Approve" or "Adopt" its minutes. The General Assembly in 1890 said: "The Minutes of a church court become its official records as soon as they are *approved* by that court." (A. D., p. 168.) In 1913 the Assembly said: "They become final when *adopted*." (A. D., p. 168.) The Courts are by these actions authorized to use which ever word satisfies the conscience of their members.

Standing Rules or Manual

113. Presbyteries usually adopt a set of rules for their guidance. These rules should not be too elaborate, otherwise they will hinder rather than help the work of the Presbytery.

Treasurer of Presbytery

114. The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery should ordinarily be the Treasurer. But when it is not convenient for the Stated Clerk to act as Treasurer, a minister or ruling elder should be elected. The funds for the payment of all the expenses of the Presbytery come from dues paid by the churches. The amount needed is first estimated and then prorated to the churches on the basis of membership, the total membership being used for the estimate. While the calculation is made at the rate of a certain number of cents per member, the important thing is the total amount. A higher rate is necessary if the resident membership is used, rather than the total membership. All dues from the churches should be sent to the Treasurer in the Spring. He should make a full statement to the Spring Presbytery. Some Presbyteries have this report made in the fall. This is a matter for each Presbytery to decide. The Treasurer pays all dues from the Presbytery to the Synod and General Assembly and the ordinary expenses of the Presbytery.

Forms for Treasurer's Blank

115. Treasurers will find the following blank helpful. It has been used for many years with good results.

No. I	No. 1, 192...
..... Church	Church
Dues \$.....	Dues to the Presbytery of..... \$.....
Date	For year ending March 31, 192....
	Received Payment
	Treasurer.
Paid192..	Please return this bill.

116. This bill should be detached from the stub and mailed to the church some time in March, with the request that it be paid promptly. When the funds have been received the Treasurer should mark the stub paid giving the date of payment. He should then return the receipted bill to the Treasurer of the church. Churches and Presbyteries should know that the General Assembly has directed the Treasurer to pay the Commissioners in proportion as the Presbyteries have paid their apportionments.

Printed Minutes

117. Presbyteries should have their minutes printed. In this day of the printed page, all records should be placed in type. The preparation of the copy for the printer is very important. If possible, typewritten copy should be used. Original papers and manuscripts should be used in preference to copies. Rev. W. A. Alexander, D. D., one of the best Stated Clerks that the church has ever had, replied to a question by the writer, that in every case the original paper was preferable to a copy. Errors creep in through the copy. If the copy is used, it should be carefully proof read.

Editorial Work of Stated Clerk

118. How much editorial work is the Stated Clerk authorized to do? He should have the authority to correct the English, making it grammatical, but not to

change the meaning. In the rush of the meetings of Presbyteries, slight grammatical errors will be made which should be corrected before the paper is printed. The Stated Clerk should supply the omission of words, and the initials of a name, should correct errors in spelling and in the addition of figures or in the transfer of totals, etc. He should prepare a complete directory of the officers and the committees and print them in the minutes, giving the post office address of the chairmen. The minutes should be printed on good paper and in good type. Cheapness should be avoided. When a sufficient number of copies of the printed minutes have been printed, they should be bound into a volume. A complete set of the minutes should be kept in a vault. Copies of the printed minutes should be sent to those bodies who make a specialty of keeping the minutes of church courts, such as the Theological Seminaries and the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.

Assembly Decisions

The General Assembly has made a number of decisions of great importance to Presbyteries.

119. A Presbytery may meet without its bounds. (A. D., p. 103).

120. The presence of one ruling elder is necessary to a quorum. (A. D., p. 103).

121. The Presbytery cannot meet away from the place to which it has adjourned to meet; but may so meet and such meeting may be legalized by the Assembly, and not by the Synod. (A. D., p. 103-4.)

122. Presbytery has discretion in the matter of organizing a new church. (A. D., p. 105.)

123. Only those appointed by Presbytery can claim a seat in a commission. (A. D., p. 106.)

124. The powers of a Commission are limited to the business for which it was appointed. (A. D., p. 107.)

125. The Assembly has declined to make a decision on the question of a quorum of a Commission. (A. D., p. 106), except that in 1883 it said that a quorum of a Presbyterian Commission should not consist of less than two ministers and one ruling elder.

126. The Assembly in 1909 made the following deliverance on a quorum of a Commission to install a pastor: "Such a quorum need not consist of a quorum of the court." (A. D., p. 43, 1910 ed.)

127. Stated Clerks of Presbyteries are instructed by the Assembly not to send up to it different overtures or papers on the same sheet of paper. (A. D., p. 109.)

128. The Synod has the power to order a Presbytery to meet during its own sessions. (A. D., p. 99.)

129. When a Presbytery requests the Synod to order a meeting it must specify the objects for which it is to meet and nothing else can be done at that meeting. (A. D., p. 98.)

130. The Minutes of a church court become its official record as soon as they are approved by that court, and the signature of the Stated Clerk is the evidence that they have thus been approved. (A. D., p. 168.)

131. Any errors subsequently discovered by the court in its approved records may be corrected at its subsequent meeting, and the correction appearing only in the minutes of that meeting. The Stated Clerk may not correct the minute by entering an explanatory note in the margin of the minute or by striking out the line or word or paragraph. (A. D., p. 168.)

132. TENURE OF OFFICE OF STATED CLERKS.—Stated Clerks are usually elected for a term of three or four years, usually three years as is the case with all officers of the Assembly. This is true also of the Permanent Clerk.

133. The right of petition lies at the foundation of overtures. A large majority of them originate in the

Presbytery. Usually a minister desires a change in some part of the work of the church. The Presbytery often adopts the overture without considering its merits, or whether it has been previously presented to the Assembly. The Assembly has answered a number of overtures three and four times. Before an overture is adopted, the Presbytery should very carefully examine the Assembly's Digest to see if the matter has been before the Assembly on any previous occasion. The probabilities are the Assembly will not grant a favorable answer to the overture. After examining the records of the Assembly for a number of years, we find that about 75 per cent of the overtures are answered in the negative. This statement is made solely for the purpose of giving information on this subject. "The Assembly recommends the Presbyteries that in the matter of overtures, the Synod be not passed over, except in cases clearly calling for the action of the Assembly." (A. D., p. 125.) This action was taken in 1876 in view of the multiplication of overtures.

134. In 1921 the Assembly adopted the rule, "No overture will be considered by the Assembly until it has first been presented to a Presbytery or a Synod. If the overture is approved by a Presbytery or Synod, it will then come before the Assembly as an overture from that Presbytery or Synod. If the overture is rejected by the Presbytery or the Synod, it may then be presented to the Assembly; but the fact that it has been presented to a Presbytery or a Synod must be clearly stated on the Overture." (A. D., p. 139.)

The Synod

135. This is the third court in the order of gradation. A Synod must have at least three Presbyteries. It consists of all the ministers and one ruling elder from each church in a certain district. The state lines usually determine the size of a Synod. There are two exceptions to this rule among the Synods of our church.

Meetings

136. The Synod meets once a year. The time fixed by custom for the meeting is in the fall. The Book of Church Order makes provision for adjourned and called meetings just as it does for the Presbytery. See Book of Church Order, par. 82. The General Assembly, in 1921, suggested that the Synods meet before the Presbyteries in the fall in order that the apportionments made by Synod might be passed on to the Presbyteries for action.

Quorum

137. "Seven Ministers and three Ruling Elders shall be a quorum, provided that not more than three of said ministers belong to one Presbytery: provided, further, that in the case of a Synod composed of only three Presbyteries, any seven ministers representing any two of the Presbyteries together with three Ruling Elders, shall be a quorum." Book of Church Order, par. 82.

The Business of Synod

138. The Book of Church Order, par. 84, gives a full description of the powers of a Synod. The Synod requires certain reports from the Presbyteries. The character of the business differs materially from that of the Presbytery, on the one hand, and from that of the General Assembly on the other hand. The business of the Synod is state wide in character and is conducted by Synodical organization. It embraces such work as Synodical Home Missions, Education, Orphans' Homes, etc. The following outline will give the principal items of business transacted by a Synod.

- (1) To receive the annual reports from the Executive and Permanent Committees.
- (2) To receive the annual reports of the Boards of Trustees of Educational institutions, Orphans Homes, and any other educational or benevolent work of the Synod.

- (3) To appoint standing Committees to whom all these reports shall be referred for consideration, and to report back to Synod making recommendations concerning the future progress of the various departments of the work.

The Stated Clerk

139. The qualifications for the Stated Clerk of Synod are the same as those for the Stated Clerk of Presbytery. His duties differ from those in the Presbytery only as the business of Synod differs from that of the Presbytery. The term of office for the Stated Clerk is usually three years.

The Stated Clerk is ex officio Treasurer of Synod and receives and disburses all funds placed in his hands, making a full report thereof to Synod.

The Permanent Clerk

140. Nearly all the Synods now have Permanent Clerks whose term of office is the same as that of the Stated Clerk. The duties of the Permanent Clerk are similar to those of the Permanent Clerk of Presbytery which are described on page 42 of this manual.

Reports

141. The Synod does not make a report to any other church court, though the records are submitted for review to the General Assembly each year. They should be signed in ink by the Stated Clerk.

142. Synods are erected by the General Assembly. Changes in the boundary lines between Synods are made by the General Assembly.

143. Meetings of Synod, held out of time and place, may be legalized by the General Assembly.

144. The Synod has no power to amend the record of an inferior court.

Overtures

145. The Assembly recommends that in the matter of overtures and memorials from Presbyteries, the Synod be not passed over, except in cases clearly calling for the action of the Assembly. (A. D., p. 125.)

The General Assembly

146. This is the highest court, the court of last resort, the supreme court of the Presbyterian Church.

Meetings

147. The General Assembly meets annually on the Third Thursday in May. The first General Assembly was held in the United States in 1789 on the third Thursday in May at 11:00 A. M., in the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pa. Usage has fixed the above date as the time for the annual meeting. There is no law governing this matter, only a Standing Rule adopted in 1923. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was organized in Augusta, Ga., December 4, 1861.

Membership

148. In 1911 the Assembly adopted the following as the basis of representation in the General Assembly: "Every Presbytery shall be entitled to send one minister and one ruling elder; but if the number of communicants in the churches and ministers on the roll together be over 4,000 it shall send an additional minister and ruling elder; and in like proportion for every 4,000 communicants and ministers." (Book of Church Order, par. 87.)

Length of Term of Commissioners

149. Commissioners are chosen for one year. There is nothing in the Book of Church Order preventing Presbyteries electing Commissioners for two years. The General Assembly in 1902 and 1903 made a de-

liverance saying that a Presbytery is under obligation to appoint the full number of Commissioners. (A. D., p. 128.)

150. The rule for electing Commissioners is as follows: "The minister who is the oldest member of the Presbytery, who has been for the longest time absent from the General Assembly as a representative of this Presbytery, shall be the ministerial Commissioner to the General Assembly, unless the Presbytery by a two-thirds majority shall determine otherwise." (A. D., p. 129.) An alternate may take the seat of the principal. (A. D., p. 130.)

The Business of the General Assembly

151. A summary of the powers of the General Assembly are given in the Book of Church Order, p. 90.

The principal items of business are:

- (1) To receive the annual reports of the Executive and Permanent Committees. These reports which are presented in printed form, are referred to Standing Committees who make a thorough study of them and report back to the Assembly making certain recommendations, which are usually adopted.
- (2) To receive overtures, communications and papers which are referred to Standing Committees.
- (3) To receive and issue appeals, references and complaints regularly brought before it from the inferior courts.
- (4) To hear official representatives from other bodies.
- (5) To hold popular meetings in the interest of the Assembly's causes.
- (6) To exchange greetings with other ecclesiastical bodies and adopt such actions as the Standing Committee of Foreign Correspondence may recommend.

Stated Clerk

152. The office of Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is one of great responsibility. Only ministers of the highest order of clerical ability and experience should be elected. Long and intimate experience with the work of all the courts of the church is a valuable preparation for the office.

153. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is the official representative of that body. All communications for the Assembly should be sent to him. He should issue all official documents, notices, and matters of importance to the church. His office should be made a clearing house for the whole church, also a Bureau of Information. The Stated Clerk should be the one official of the Church to whom ministers, ruling elders, deacons, and members may write for information on any ecclesiastical matter on which they desire information. The term of office is three years.

**Duties of the Stated Clerk in Preparation for the Meeting of
The General Assembly**

154.

- (1) To revise the Sessional and the Presbyterial Blanks. The Stated Clerk and the Executive Secretary of Publication must confer together and make such changes as are ordered by the Assembly. Copy for these changes must be ready by January 1st.
- (2) To secure reduced rates for the Commissioners which requires correspondence with railroad officials; to issue Circular Information to each Commissioner and to the Church papers as to rates.
- (3) To prepare the blank forms for the Summary reports, which are made by the transfer of the totals of the Presbyterial reports to them.

- (4) To correct and bring up to date the Card Index on which is kept the alphabetical list of ministers and licentiates. From this list a typewritten copy must be made for the minutes.
- (5) To receive from the Stated Clerks the Presbyterial Reports to the Assembly, the overtures, the Presbyterial Dues, and all other communications intended for the Assembly, and receipt for same.
- (6) To prepare copy for the Blue Book and the Manual.
- (7) To verify the names, initials of all ministers and licentiates; the spelling of the names of churches and their post offices; to verify the additions of all columns and to correct errors, if there be any.
- (8) To prepare the Docket for the Assembly, together with blank forms on which to transfer the sections to nominate to the moderator the members of the Standing Committees.

**Duties of the Stated Clerk During the Sessions of
The General Assembly**

155.

- (1) To see that all arrangements for the meeting of the Assembly have been made in accordance with suggestions made by the Stated Clerk to the pastor and church entertaining the Assembly.
- (2) To enroll the Commissioners.
- (3) To give the moderator all assistance needed in the preparation of the typewritten copy of the Standing Committees.
- (4) To present the business in his hands to the Assembly in the order in which it is found on the docket.

- (5) To arrange for the keeping of the minutes of the daily Sessions by trained assistants.
- (6) To give close attention to the presentation of all reports by Standing Committees and see that the Chairmen make all changes and corrections in these reports in accordance with the Standing Rules.
- (7) To keep the minutes of the daily Sessions and read them each morning to the General Assembly for approval. In 1922 the Assembly abolished the office of Permanent Clerk and placed the duties of this officer upon the Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk should employ the best possible clerical assistance. He should have general oversight of the clerical force and offer suggestions to them as occasion demands.

**Duties of the Stated Clerk After the General
Assembly Has Adjourned**

156.

- (1) To proof read the minutes and make such changes as are authorized by the Standing Rule before placing them in the hands of the printer.
- (2) To proof read the printed minutes, the appendix, the Statistical Tables, and all the preliminary and supplemental pages of the minutes.
- (3) To notify officially every person whom the Assembly has appointed on a committee or to a service for the Assembly.
- (4) To make certified copies of the action of the Assembly on any matter for which a request is made.

General Duties Between Meetings of the Assembly

157.

- (1) To notify officially the inferior courts of any action of the Assembly requiring their attention.
- (2) To answer all correspondence.
- (3) To give copies of the decisions of the Assembly to those who request them.
- (4) To make a thorough and comprehensive study of the laws of the church, the decisions of the Assembly and to be able to give all needed information to those requesting it.
- (5) To receive official notices during the year from the Stated Clerks of changes of Presbytery and post offices of all ministers and to make a monthly report of such change to the Executive and other Committees requiring a correct mailing list.

Treasurer of the Assembly

158. The Stated Clerk is the Treasurer of the Assembly. He should send a statement of the amount of dues each Presbytery should pay. This amount should be calculated upon the amount of per capita ordered by the General Assembly. The Treasurer should receipt for the dues, pay all expenses of the Assembly as directed by that body, and make a full statement to the Assembly each year.

Duties of Chairmen of Standing Committees

159. The Standing Rules of the General Assembly make the following requirements of the chairmen of Standing Committees:

- “(9) No partial report from a Standing Committee, except from the Committees on Bills and Overtures and Foreign Correspondence,

shall be received by the Assembly without the consent of the Assembly. All reports of Committees shall be typewritten in seven copies by the Assembly's stenographers; and proof-read by the Chairman of the Committee reporting. The duties of the Chairman of the Committee shall not be completed until he has edited carefully his Committee's report, after it is typewritten, for errors in phraseology and grammar, and shall have filed the required number of copies of the report with the Stated Clerk. The Chairman of each Committee shall also, after the Assembly shall have acted on the report presented by him, incorporate therein at the proper place each amendment made by the Assembly to the report.

- (10) The report of a Standing Committee to the Assembly shall be as brief and concise as the recommendations of a Committee will permit. The report shall only contain a brief preamble of the questions acted on by the Committee and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee. Extracts and quotations from reports of an Executive Committee, a Permanent Committee, or an Ad-Interim Committee should be avoided except when required to make the report intelligible. Overtures shall be answered by reference to the number of the overture and a brief statement of its substance."

The chairmen of Standing Committees should stand near the desk of the Stated Clerk to avail themselves of any assistance which he may be able to render them, while presenting their reports.

Appointments of Assembly Usually for One Year

160. The Assembly in 1916 ruled "that all appointments are ad-interim and expire at the next Assembly unless a longer term of office is provided for by a Standing Rule or explicit statement."

Overtures and Memorials May Be Referred Without Being First Read

161. The Assembly in 1872 declined to order the reading of Overtures and Memorials.

The Enacting Power of the General Assembly

162. There is a wide difference of opinion as to the power of the Assembly when enacting that which has been voted upon by the Presbyteries, submitted to them by a previous Assembly. (A. D., pp. 132-133.) On this subject the following action may be of interest.

163. "Questions in regard to which the Constitution of the Church vests in the General Assembly alone the power to take final and authoritative action. One Assembly may refer questions of this class to a succeeding Assembly, but the succeeding Assembly cannot be shorn of power constitutionally lodged in the General Assembly alone, by the act of a previous Assembly referring the question to the Presbyteries for action. The Presbyteries may properly express their opinion in such matters, and the expressed opinions of a majority of the Presbyteries would naturally have much weight with the Assembly, but the power to decide rests with the General Assembly alone."

Secretaries and Clerks of the Assembly

164. Secretaries and Clerks of the Assembly have the privilege of deliberating as members in certain cases.

"A reference to the rule will show that 'The privileges of members on the floor' are not conferred by it on the above officers, but only the privilege of making

statements and explanations touching trusts committed to their care. This the Assembly regards as both safe and convenient." (A. D., p. 133.)

Executive Secretaries and Others Elected by the Assembly

165. The Assembly has ruled "the nomination of secretaries and others may be made by the several Executive Committees, this does not take away from the Assembly the right to make other nominations if it so desire." (A. D., p. 137.)

General Statement

166. The activities of the Presbyterian Church are given full expression through Executive and Permanent Committees. These Committees are appointed by the General Assembly, the Synod, and the Presbytery.

167. I. There are four Executive Committees as follows:

1. Foreign Missions.
2. Home Missions.
3. Christian Education and Ministerial Relief.
4. Publication and Sabbath School Work.

Their names indicate clearly the character of the work committed to each committee.

168. Each Executive Committee through the Synodical and Presbyterial organization, presents the interests of its department to the individual churches, through the pastor and Session. Four things are emphasized:

1. Deeper interest in the causes.
2. More earnest prayer for God's blessing upon the causes.
3. More volunteers for service.
4. Increase of gifts by the churches, to maintain the work and to enlarge it.

169. II. The General Assembly's Permanent Committee of Stewardship is entrusted with the responsible task of "presenting to the whole church the whole program of the church; to promote only those features of the Progressive Program for which there exists no established agency and to push vigorously the department of Stewardship of Possessions.

"The administrative work assigned this Committee is three-fold, as follows:

- "1. To direct in a general way the Presbyterian Progressive Program.
- "2. To organize and direct a Publicity department.
- "3. To direct the effort to raise funds to meet Equipment Needs."

170. III. The Woman's Auxiliary. This department was organized in 1912. The organization of a Woman's Auxiliary on the Circle plan in every church is the goal of this department of the Church's activities. The report for 1923 shows that there are now 1,987 Societies with a membership of 91,474 organized on the Circle plan. The auxiliary has been organized by Synods and Presbyteries.

171. IV. MEN'S WORK. — This department was formally organized in 1923 with a Permanent Committee in charge of the work. "The purposes of this organization are:

1. To organize all the men of the congregation in Christian Fellowship.
2. To promote among them the study of the Bible and of the history, standards, agencies and aims of the church.
3. To stimulate and enlist them in fuller service for Christ and His Kingdom."

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172. At the close of the Ecclesiastical year which ends March 31st, every church through its Session makes an annual report of all the activities of the church through the Sessional Blanks sent to every church by the Stated Clerks of the Presbyteries. The Presbytery makes a summary report to the General Assembly of the church, Sabbath School, and Church Societies, including the Women's Auxiliary and Men's Work. These summaries are printed in the Statistical Tables of the minutes of the General Assembly.

Printed Minutes

173. The General Assembly issues two volumes: 1, Reports, which includes the annual reports of Executive Committees, the Women's Auxiliary, the Stewardship Committee and the Men's Work Committee. 2. The Minutes of the General Assembly consisting of the proceedings, the appendix and the Statistical report of each church, arranged by Presbyteries. Copies of the volumes of Reports and Minutes are sent free to each minister on the roll of the church. They are mailed to the latest post office address supplied to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. The Assembly does not guarantee delivery. The price of the volume of reports is \$.50 and the minutes, \$1.00 to all persons within our church. To all others outside our bounds, the price of the volume of reports is \$1.00 and the minutes, \$2.00.

174. Ruling elders, deacons, and members should avail themselves of the opportunity to secure each year both of these volumes. Send all orders to Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va., or Texarkana, Texas.

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