

## A GUIDE TO REGISTERS FOR CLERKS OF SESSION

WHAT FOLLOWS IS AN ATTEMPT AT PROVIDING CLERKS OF SESSION A CHECKLIST OF WHAT TO DO, WHEN, AND HOW. I hope you find it helpful and please offer suggestions on how to make it better; all of our materials are to represent a group effort at producing materials that are valuable and helpful to all Clerks.

### INFANT BAPTISM

EVENT: Parents present infant for baptism.

PROCESS: Session approves. Baby is baptized.

RECORD: Following baptism, enter name in “*Baptized Children Roll.*” Be sure to include full name, name of parents, name of pastor, and, if possible, **date of birth**. [*Remember that this is a LEGAL DOCUMENT so you want to provide sufficient information to stand up in a court of law—as well as to satisfy people working on genealogies*].

SPECIAL: There may be occasions when the pastor baptizes a child not of the congregation. If it is done on behalf of another congregation where the child will be registered, you simply note the action in Session minute and notify other church that you did baptize the child. If the child will not be registered in another congregation, enter the child on your rolls, providing as much of the above information as is possible. [*This becomes your “Baptized Members Roll” on Session Annual Statistical Report*].

### CONFIRMATION: WITH BAPTISM

EVENT: Youth completes confirmation/commissioning process but was not baptized as a child.

PROCESS: Session approves youth for membership in the church and authorizes baptism as part of reception into church membership. Youth is baptized and makes public profession of faith.

RECORD: You will be making two entries:

- 1) Enter name in the “*Adult Baptisms*” section of your register—or whatever section you use for recording adult baptism. {Some may use the same section as they use for Infant Baptisms; others will have a separate section.} In some cases you will want to try to include parents and birthdate; in others, that may not be appropriate. Record name of the Pastor.
- 2) Enter the name in both CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL {giving them a chronological number}, and the ALPHABETICAL ROLL {cross referencing with the chronological number}. Be sure to indicate joining by “Affirmation of Faith with Baptism.”

### CONFIRMATION: ALREADY BAPTIZED

EVENT: Youth completes confirmation/commissioning process and was baptized as a child.

PROCESS: Session approves youth for membership in the church. Youth is received into membership.

RECORD: This requires entries in both CHRONOLOGICAL and ALPHABETICAL ROLLS as explained above. You will also want to reference the INFANT BAPTISM ROLL **if the child was baptized in your church or if you recorded their baptism when they transferred with parent(s) from another church** and indicate that they became members and the date they became members.

With reference to **bold** above: When adults transfer, their letter of transfer is supposed to include information about all baptized children: when, where, by whom. IF you receive that information, you should record it in your books, noting that the child is entered because parent(s) joined the church. Child is now on your “Baptized Members Roll.”

### **MEMBERS JOINING BY AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

EVENT: Previously baptized individual presents self for membership, but has never made a public profession of faith. This should be handled the same as **Confirmation: already Baptized**.

PROCESS: Session receives them into membership and they make a public profession of faith. Usually, this is an adult who just never joined as a teenager. {There are helpful services for this situation in the “Holy Baptism Supplementary Worship Services” book under the heading of “Renewal of Baptism”}.

RECORD: Enter names in CHRONOLOGICAL and ALPHABETICAL ROLL, making sure to record by “Affirmation of Faith.” **Include maiden name as appropriate.**

### **ADULT BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP**

EVENT: An adult presents her/himself for membership in the church and has not been baptized.

PROCESS: Session prepares the adult and receives them into membership pending public profession of faith and baptism. Such profession and baptism take place in public worship.

RECORD: This person’s name is entered in CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL and ALPHABETICAL ROLL with notation that they were **received by public profession of faith and baptism**. Be sure to record name of the pastor.

### **MEMBERS RECEIVED BY LETTER OF TRANSFER**

EVENT: Individuals present themselves to Session to be received into membership. They are members of another congregation.

PROCESS: **Ideally, the Clerk and the Pastor stay in close communication so that sufficient time is provided for the Clerk to correspond with the other congregation and have the transfer in hand before the individual is received into membership.** If the church writes back and says they removed the person from the rolls years ago and you’ve already received them by Letter of Transfer, you now have to go back to session with a motion to change the membership as received by Reaffirmation of Faith.

RECORD: Enter name in CHRONOLOGICAL and ALPHABETICAL ROLL. **If there are children, be sure baptismal information is entered.**

### **MEMBERS REQUEST TRANSFER BY LETTER—BUT WERE MEMBERS OF A CHURCH OR DENOMINATION THAT DOES NOT/WILL NOT PROVIDE SUCH A LETTER.**

EVENT: INDIVIDUALS PRESENT THEMSELVES TO SESSION TO BE RECEIVED INTO MEMBERSHIP. THEIR FORMER CHURCH WILL NOT SEND A LETTER OF TRANSFER.

PROCESS: **Again, the importance of getting the request to the church PRIOR to Session taking action.** In this situation, individual must join by “Reaffirmation of Faith” and that designation must be entered in the CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL. If this response is not expected, it is essential that the Clerk so inform the pastor as soon as possible so that the pastor can make a personal call on the individual and arrange a “face saving” solution.

RECORD: Enter information in CHRONOLOGICAL and ALPHABETICAL ROLL indicating that they have joined by “Reaffirmation of Faith.”

- 1) It is appropriate to note briefly by their name the circumstances of joining.
- 2) If there are Baptized children, contact the Stated Clerk to determine if it is a Baptism recognized by our faith tradition.

### **RECEIVING MEMBERS BY REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**EVENT:** An individual indicates a desire to become a member. They have been baptized; have made a public profession of faith; and were members of a church. For whatever reason (including above) they are no longer a member or are unable to secure a Letter of Transfer.

**PROCESS:** Session receives them into membership and in public worship they reaffirm their membership vows.

**RECORD:** Enter information in CHRONOLOGICAL and ALPHABETICAL ROLL indicating that they have joined by “Reaffirmation of Faith.”

### **MEMBER MOVED FROM ACTIVE TO INACTIVE ROLL** (If Session decides to use this optional roll).

**EVENT:** Cleaning rolls, by moving inactive members to Inactive Roll.

**PROCESS:** As Session reviews the rolls, they take action to move a member to the Inactive Roll.

**RECORD:**

- 1) Go to the CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL and enter “Inactive” giving the date of the Session action.
- 2) Under **SUSPENDED Tab** add names moved to “Inactive” creating an Inactive Roll.

### **REMOVING AN INDIVIDUAL FROM THE ROLLS**

**PROCESS:** In all the following, note that you do not cross out, erase, white-out, or otherwise try to actually remove the name. It always needs to remain legible.

**RECORD:** Anytime one of the following happens you will need to:

Note the action in the CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL and, where possible, reference it in the ALPHABETICAL ROLL. Where appropriate, note the date action is effective.

- 1) **A person dies.** Do NOT cross out name or otherwise delete.
- 2) **A Church requests a letter of transfer for a person and the Session grants the transfer.** Note: A Clerk cannot issue a letter of transfer until the Session has acted. If you get the letter on Wednesday, and the person is joining the other church that Sunday, and Session doesn’t meet for three weeks, that’s the other church’s problem. Also note that the action is not complete until receipt of confirmation that the other church has actually received the individual into their membership. Use of “*Certificate of Transfer*” is helpful in this regard.

<p><b>NOTE THAT A TRANSFER CAN ONLY BE GRANTED TO ANOTHER CHURCH AND ONLY AT THE REQUEST OF ANOTHER CHURCH. AN INDIVIDUAL CANNOT REQUEST THEIR TRANSFER-AND YOU MAY NOT TRANSFER TO “TO WHOM IT MAY CONCER.”</b></p>
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- 3) **Session acts to delete a person from the Rolls.** Again, the Clerk cannot take this action on her/his own initiative. Note that Session cannot DELETE a person from the INACTIVE ROLL until they have been on that Roll for two years.

Handling a person on INACTIVE ROLL who seeks Transfer – Session may act to transfer an individual by placing them on the ACTIVE ROLL and then transferring them. Session is not required to transfer a person on the INACTIVE ROLL.

**WEDDINGS** (An optional category that previously was required).

EVENT: A member of the church is married in the church—or is married in another church and you are provided the information—or a nonmember is married in your church by approval of the Session granting permission to use the building and the actual marriage reported by the Pastor.

PROCESS: Session is given information or votes to approve. This is recorded in the minutes.

RECORD: All of these actions are recorded in the “MARRIAGES” section of the Register. If possible, record the full names of the couple, the name of the pastor, **the marriage license number**, and the date of wedding. If a member, go to the CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL and enter the information. **If it is a female member and will be changing her name, enter the married name in both CHRONOLOGICAL and ALPHABETICAL ROLL but be sure to indicate maiden name in parenthesis for future reference.**

It is also important if the bride is a member, to enter the new married name alphabetically, referring to unmarried name and chronological number.

**PASTORS**

EVENT: Change of pastoral leadership.

PROCESS: Session and/or congregation votes on a pastoral change.

RECORD: Enter the full name of the Pastor (or Associate or Interim Pastor) in the “PASTOR/MINISTER” section of the Register. If space permits, enter seminary, ordination date, and ordained by what Presbytery. This includes all pastoral leadership including: **Interims, Stated Supplies, Associate Pastors, Interim Associates, Designated, Commissioned Lay Pastors, and Temporary Supplies.**

**ELECTION, ORDINATION, INSTALLATION OF RULING ELDERS (AND DEACONS)**

EVENT: Congregation elects Ruling Elders (and Deacons).

PROCESS: Session trains and validates and proceeds to public ordination and installation.

RECORD: Following ordination/installation, enter full names in the ROLL OF ELDERS/ROLL OF DEACONS section of your register, including date elected (and, where possible, the term).

If they are reelected, go back to their name and note reelection and installation dates and terms. {If no space, enter again and reference at original entry their reelection.}

**BLENDED FAMILIES**

EVENT: A unique problem facing today’s Clerk of Session is keeping track of “Blended Families.”

PROCESS:

Adult Members who are involved can easily be tracked by notations in the open space to the far right of the name.

Baptized Children – If member parent(s) remarry and take new name, note this to the right of the name if space allows. If not, enter child’s name a second time (noting where first registered) with parent’s or parents’ new name or status.

Unbaptized Children – I suggest you use space to right of parents’ name in CHRONOLOGICAL ROLL to enter information on new spouse and ANY OTHER CHILDREN ACQUIRED AS A RESULT OF THE MARRIAGE.