

Operating Manual
Watchung Avenue Presbyterian Church
North Plainfield, New Jersey

A. Introduction

The Session of Watchung Avenue Presbyterian Church, North Plainfield, New Jersey is the governing body of the Congregation. Although it delegates certain responsibilities to the Boards of Trustees and Deacons, the Session is designated by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, (U.S.A.) as the body having responsibility for the mission and government of the particular church (Book of Order, G-10.0000).

The membership of the Session of Watchung Avenue Presbyterian Church includes Elders in active service and the Pastor as Moderator. In accordance with the Book of Order, Financial Officers are elected annually by the Session. The Elders, Deacons, Trustees, and Pastor are elected by the Congregation and are subject to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Elders, Deacons and the Pastor shall be ordained or installed to the office to which they are called and elected in accordance with the ordination and installation questions of the Book of Order.

B. Session Organization and Procedures

Moderator

The Pastor is the Moderator of the Session. The Moderator calls Session meetings: Session meetings may also be called by any two active Elders or by the Presbytery. The Moderator presides at Session meetings and votes. Session meetings are conducted according to Roberts' Rules of Order.

Clerk of Session

The Clerk prepares docket for the Session in consultation with the Moderator; keeps the minutes of each Session meeting and all congregational meetings; makes the annual report of Session to the congregation; prepares annual statistical reports for the General Assembly; records minutes in the Session book; completes forms for annual review for Presbytery; keeps church records up to date, including transfer of reports as needed to archives. The Clerk of Session shall have the responsibility of seeing that the Session reviews their duties and other church responsibilities annually. The Clerk and the Pastor shall organize annual training events for new Elders, Deacons, and Trustees. The Clerk of Session is understood to be the lay leader of the Church. (PW and other committees or organizations outside the Session structure can report through the Clerk.) As per the Book of Order, the Clerk of Session is elected annually by the Session and may serve multiple and consecutive terms.

Committee Chairperson

Committee Chairpersons will be appointed by the Pastor in consultation with the Clerk each calendar year. Appointments will be made on the basis of the talents, experience and interests of the person appointed in accordance with the needs of the Session for the year.

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The primary responsibilities of Committee Chairpersons are to serve as Elders and not as representatives of any special interest group in the Congregation.

Each Session Committee Chairperson is expected to take the initiative to plan, present for Session approval and then implement the portion of the Church's program, which is the delegated responsibility of that particular Committee.

The Chairperson (not the Pastor or the Clerk) shall call meetings of his/her Committee as often as necessary. It is expected that each Committee will meet at least every-other month, some will need to meet monthly.

Session Meetings

The Session normally meets at 7:30 p.m. at the Church on the second Monday night of each month, except July and August. Meetings in July and August are for emergency purposes only.

Meetings of the Session are conducted by the Moderator, and subject to the requirements of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). All minutes are reviewed annually by Elizabeth Presbytery. Meetings of the Session are open to all members of the congregation, except when the Session has voted to enter into Executive Session.

C. Session Committees

Educational Ministries

Purpose

To plan and administer programs that will equip all ages to know and understand the Bible and to develop a social responsibility with individual awareness of themselves and society.

Duties

1. Administer the Church School from Nursery through Senior High.
2. Recruit staff and select curriculum.
3. Coordinate Vacation Church School.
4. Develop and implement an adult education program, including special events and retreats.
5. Maintain the resource room, audiovisual equipment & computer room.
6. Support, train and encourage teachers and Church School staff.
7. Consult with Pastor on Adult Educational opportunities and assist with promotion of these events.
1. Plan and promote all the Youth Fellowship activities including retreats and mission opportunities.
2. Oversee the use of the Youth Room.

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3. Assist the Pastor in the Confirmation Class as needed.
4. Prepare a budget to support the Youth program and organize fundraisers, with permission.

Church Usage Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Church Usage Elder or committee is to assure that our buildings are used in an efficient and orderly manner while serving the needs of our congregation and the community. This committee works in conjunction with the Office Administrator and the Board of Trustees.

Duties

1. Evaluate all requests for use of church space and recommend to Session a course of action.
2. Keep a record of all groups and organizations using church property and notify all concerned of all regulations and fees.
3. Notify the church secretary of each reservation for use of space.
4. Coordinate with the sexton and the reserving group for any physical arrangements that are required.
5. Obtain the name, address and telephone number of the contact person for the reserving group.
6. Be the liaison person with church groups desiring space.
7. Update the fee schedule and contract requirements for rental groups (member and non-member) for Session review as needed.

Church Growth and Planning Committee

Purpose

The purpose of this Committee is to enable the congregation to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to new members and to assimilate new members into the life of this church, along with working on long-range planning needs for sustainability at Watchung Avenue.

Duties:

1. Help develop and implement a program of contacting prospective members.
2. Plan and conduct the program at which the Session receives new members.
3. Contact inactive members to determine whether they shall be placed on reserve roll after encouraging them to participate in the church's life.
4. Coordinate the WAPC website.
5. Coordinate outside publicity for church life and activities.

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6. Ask each group in the church to recruit people to welcome and follow up on new members and visitors to their group or activity.
7. Coordinate Session retreats or planning meetings where problems and priorities of the church will be examined.
8. Develop with the Trustees a capital improvements schedule with specific recommendations on how improvements are to be financed.
9. Serve as liaison between Trustees and Session as needed.
- 10.
11. Coordinate the Hispanic Ministries Team.

Living Memorial and Earl Hair Committee

Purpose

The purpose of this Committee is to encourage and manage grants and memorial gifts given to the church.

Duties:

1. Records memorial funds and sends acknowledgements.
2. Educates congregation on wills and endowments on Wills Emphasis Sunday.
3. Creates task forces when necessary to make significant expenditures from Living Memorial.

Personnel Committee

Purpose

To assist the Session in fulfilling its responsibilities for the persons employed by the church; to provide counsel, support, and a helping hand to the staff in consultation with the Pastor as Head-of-Staff.

Duties

1. Establish clear work responsibilities for each position.
2. Encourage professional effectiveness and growth.
3. Evaluate job performance and accomplishments.
4. Recommend salary amount.
5. Oversee the process of hiring staff, including student assistants.
6. Establish a system to prevent sexual harassment/abuse by church employees and volunteers.
7. Ensure that incoming staff receive copies of the WAPC Personnel Manual and are informed about its contents. Review manual on an annual basis for any needed updates.
8. Assist in conducting yearly reviews of all WAPC staff.

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Stewardship Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Stewardship Committee is to encourage generous giving from the congregation, to obtain pledges, and to facilitate development of a budget.

Duties

1. Review patterns and problems of giving in the congregation.
2. Coordinate the Annual Stewardship Campaign.
3. Develop a program of year-round interpretation and inspiration in cooperation with other committees.
4. Receives proposed budgets from Session committees.

Worship and Music Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Worship and Music Committee is to supervise worship at our church.

Duties

1. Support the music program through the Choir Director/Organist.
2. Reviews and recommends to Session any significant changes in the music program.
3. Approves special services, reviews the faithfulness and effectiveness of such services and reports to the Session.
4. Recommends a Worship/Music budget to the Session.
5. Set up for regular and special Schedules and instructs Elders and Deacons for serving at Communion.
6. Schedules lay participation in all services especially through Call to Worship.
7. Supervises pulpit supply when Pastor is absent, and providing the speaker with the honorarium from the church. The worship committee should consult with Elizabeth Presbytery that updates the pulpit supply list annual and sets the minimum terms for this service.
8. Assures that worship services are inclusive for people regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or ability.

Fellowship Committee

Purpose

The committee is responsible for occasional social functions and meals held at church. This committee can be self-functioning and report to the Session as needed through the Clerk of Session.

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Duties

1. The committee is responsible for implementation of fellowship programs at the church in consultation with the Pastor and other groups in the congregation.).
2. The committee will not be responsible for the Program unless the committee so volunteers.
3. Provides coordination for hospitality (when requested) following Memorial Services or other events (when requested) at the church.

Mission Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Committee is to lead the congregation's mission program.

Duties

1. Review, recommend and disburse funds for Presbytery General Mission causes; for local organizations and programs.
2. Conduct a yearly review of the WAPC mission pledge designations.
3. Be the liaison to Presbytery Mission Committees.
4. Interpret mission through newsletters, minutes for mission, speakers, and.
5. Assist the CROP Walk task force.
6. Coordinate the One Great Hour of Sharing offering and any other special offering with a mission focus.
7. Correspond with volunteers in mission, special interest missionaries and sister churches.
8. Recruit and train volunteers for mission projects.
9. Bring issues to the Session for action when appropriate.
10. Keep the congregation informed of North Plainfield issues that affect the church through the newsletter, website of Minute for Mission.
11. Coordinate occasional speakers from the community on North Plainfield issues.
12. Support the congregation's participating in North Plainfield based organizations like Friends of the Carpenter, Head Start, North Plainfield Education Foundation, and North Plainfield Community Forum.

Nominating Committee

Purpose

The committee is responsible for recruiting leadership.

Duties

1. Chair the Nominating Committee to nominate people to fill positions on the Session, Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees and Financial Officers.
2. Assist the clerk in organizing training events for new Elders, Deacons and Trustees.

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D. Board of Trustees

Description of Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees, who are also members of the Corporation, to hold, defend and manage church property, all subject to the authority of the Session and under the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Laws of the State of New Jersey. (See in particular, G-7.0400-.0404 of the Book of Order.)

The Board establishes financial policies and procedures in consultation with the Session and assists in supervision of the work of the Treasurer(s), Financial Secretary(s), Sexton(s) and the counting and recording of all offerings.

The Board manages the Housing Fund through the Investment Committee.

Officers

Chairman/President – Shall preside at Board meetings and oversee the work of the Board.

Vice Chair/Vice President – Shall assume the duties of the Chairman in his/her absence and serve on such committees as the Board decides.

Secretary – Shall keep minutes of all Board meetings, conduct correspondence, hold the seal of the corporation and serve on committees.

Committees of the Board

(One Board Member will chair each of the following committees.)

Budget & Finance	Recommends changes to financial & insurance policies and procedures and oversees the work of the financial officers. Alerts Board to significant budget shortages or overages. Presents annual budget to Session for approval.
Grounds	Responsible for the appearance and maintenance of the grounds, including plants, trees, grass, and the cutting of grass and removal of snow and ice.
Inside	Responsible for the appearance and maintenance of the inside of the buildings, including plumbing, heating and electrical systems; painting and general maintenance.
Investment	Responsible for the management of the Housing Fund. Recommends asset changes as needed to the Trustees and the Sessions.

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Outside Responsible for the appearance and maintenance of the outside of the buildings, including roofs, walls, windows, gutters, electricity, painting and general maintenance.

Committees of the Church

One Board member will be named to serve each of the following committees of the church: After School Program, Living Memorial, Memorial Garden, Nominating and Personnel.

E. Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons is responsible for the tasks of a Deacon that are laid out in the Book of Order, Chapter 6. Specifically the Deacons are charged with the following tasks in addition to those in the Book of Order:

1. Organization and set up of worship, including special services
2. Ushering and offering responsibilities
3. Reaching out to homebound church members and those who are ill
4. Keeping track of elements for worship (communion, paraments, candles, etc.), and arranging for any repairs needed with the Board of Trustees
5. Consultation with the worship elder
6. In consultation with the Treasurer, maintaining the Deacon Fund for emergency care needs in the congregation or community.
7. Shall report to the Session annually about their activities.

F. Getting Work Done through Committees

The process of making decisions and implementing them in our church depends on committees. To work effectively, committees should generally follow the suggestions below.

1. Committees make decisions – individuals do specific tasks.
The job of committees is to discuss the recommendations that Individuals or subcommittees make,
 - to decide whether the recommendation should be carried out or not
 - to implement the recommendation by assigning particular people to do the task involved by a specific date
2. Deadlines are extremely important. Not everything has to be done immediately or even within a week or two. Often though, other tasks or decisions hinge on getting a previously assigned task taken care of. Set reasonable deadlines and live up to them.
3. Volunteer to do a task only when you have the time and desire to do the task. Too often, people agree to do a task because they think no one else will and then don't follow through on the job themselves.
4. Chairperson's role is critical. Committee members who are preparing recommendations or doing a particular task should generally be called before the meeting to make sure they are prepared. This doesn't have to feel like you are checking upon them—it can be, "How are you doing with that and is there any way I can help if you've got roadblocks?" In this way, the committee's time can be saved for the critical process of making decisions

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and should not be consumed by a person who didn't do his or her homework, asking the committee to do it. The chairperson also ensures that each committee keeps moving forward and does not stagnate in their assigned ministry at WAPC.

5. In meetings, the focus should be on the specific actions/tasks/recommendations the committee is considering and who will implement and how. We are all tempted to make speeches and tell stories that get reminded of our energies and comments should be focused as much as possible on clarifying the problem or clarifying the solution. We are sometimes tempted to propose wonderful but impossible solutions, or instead of addressing the task before us, we are tempted to say—the whole church should be changed. Remember Aesop's Fable: The mice gather to decide what to do about the cat. A wise fool suggests that they tie a bell around the cat's neck. Wild cheering erupts, until the wisest mouse asks, "Who is going to tie the bell on the cat?"
 - Effective meetings don't normally exceed two hours. After that time, our energies are drained and our minds and spirits are tired.
 - The chairperson's job is to keep the discussion focused, to seek resolution of issues and to get the committee to make decisions for specific, concrete actions. It's by our fruits, not our discussions, that we are known. The chairperson should seek to distribute tasks among the people on the committee. Committee members need to volunteer whenever they feel called to it. People need to politely turn down jobs that are not suited for them.
6. Vague concerns are often appropriate new business for a committee. Usually such concerns are sent to a particular person or subcommittee for focusing, so specific recommendations can be made and dealt with.
7. Rejoice in one another. Speak up; you may have just the right key. Listen - other people and their thoughts are priceless. Be led by the Spirit.

G. Attendance at Meetings of Session, Trustees, and Deacons

1. Attendance at Meetings

To efficiently conduct the ministry of the church, all officers are expected to attend all regularly scheduled meetings. It is part of the ordination of officers and their pledge to fulfill the duties of office. In cases where circumstances preclude attendance, the individual should notify the appropriate authority of the circumstances and an excused absence will be recorded.

In cases of two consecutive unexcused absences or four consecutive excused absences, notification will be made to the Moderator. The particular board will ensure that a contact is made to better understand the situation and, perhaps, recommend remedial action. Continued absence will necessitate voluntary resignation by the individual or formal action in accordance with the "Rules of Discipline".

2. Attendance at Commission/Committee Meetings

Regular participation in commission/committee activities is essential to the operation of the church and its mission. Its officers are assigned to commission/committees for leadership in accordance with their wishes where possible but in no case should it be necessary to serve on a

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commission/committee against the will of the officer. It should be understood that all active officers must be willing to serve on a commission/committee as a condition of accepting ordination. If during the course of the year, reassignment is desired this should be made known to the Moderator of the Session as appropriate and reassignment will be accomplished as quickly as possible. It is the responsibility of the commission/committee chairman to maintain a regular schedule and to ensure that the members are properly notified of meetings. Where circumstances make it impossible for the committee chairman to attend, he or she will arrange for leadership by another member. Members will notify their chairperson when they find it impossible to attend meetings. The commission/committee chairperson will make a personal contact in cases of two consecutive unexcused absences or four consecutive excused absences. Replacement will be considered, as appropriate.

3. Conduct Unbecoming an Officer of the Church

Cases of serious misconduct of an officer of the church may be brought to the attention of the Session. It may appoint a committee of one or more to counsel with the offending member in an effort to seek resolution of the problem or to request their resignation, if necessary. If further action is required, it must be in accordance with the Book of Order - Rules of Discipline.