APPENDIX B – Guidelines for Keeping and Examining Session Minutes

"Minutes" are a permanent record in an orderly form.

PERMANENT:
1. All minutes should be typed or legibly written in ink.
2. All minutes should be kept in a bound volume for permanent record with the name of the church appearing on the cover of the volume. (Loose-leaf notebook is acceptable.)

RECORD:
3. The clerk should include the date of celebration of the Lord's Supper and record births, deaths, baptisms, the manner of reception, and the dismissal of members. (*BCO* 12-8) If a member is dropped from the rolls, the clerk must state the reason and refer to the appropriate article in the *BCO* (*BCO* 12-5a).
   Baptisms should include the name of the officiant. The manner of reception should be one of the following: (a) Transfer of letter (including the transferring church information); (b) re-affirmation of faith (when a letter of transfer is unavailable); (c) profession of faith (previously baptized adult or child); or, (d) profession of faith and baptism (unbaptized adult or child). Reception of children with their parents should record each child's reception as a non-communing member and whether or not the child is baptized. Dismissal to another church should include the church information for the receiving church; and, for children who are dismissed or removed with their parents, should report their membership and baptism status.
4. A copy of the annual budget approved by the session and the annual statistical report should be attached (*BCO* 12-5). A listing of the active Ruling Elders and Deacons with contact information shall be included annually to reflect the roll as of December 31. It is recommended that an updated list be included whenever the list of active officers changes (e.g., because of rotation terms or the election and installation of new officers).
5. Joint meetings of the session and the diaconate should be recorded, keeping in mind that no joint actions can be taken (*BCO* 9-4). Therefore, any motion passed by the Session during a joint meeting should clearly indicate that only session members voted. Notations should be made when the session approves the minutes of the diaconate (*BCO* 9-4; 12-5).
6. The minutes should include the names of delegates to Presbytery or General Assembly as well as the report they make to the session after Presbytery or General Assembly (*BCO* 12-5f).

ORDERLY:
7. Every session must meet at least once quarterly (*BCO* 12-6) and submit its minutes annually for Presbytery's review (*BCO* 12-7).
8. Parliamentary procedure is to be followed in accordance with the *BCO* and *Robert's Rules of Order* as approved by General Assembly.
9. Each action should be put in the form of a motion, with a second and notation of whether the motion passed or failed. In no circumstance should the clerk write his personal opinion in the minutes, but notes may be made for historical purposes.
10. The minutes of each meeting should be approved at that meeting or at the following meeting. This should be done by way of a motion.
11. Each set of session minutes must be signed by the clerk. Minutes of congregational meetings must be included and signed by the Moderator and the elected clerk.

FORM:
12. Opening – At every meeting the clerk should record the date, time, and place of the meeting, the names of those present, absent, and excused. The names of visitors should be recorded. The clerk should note whether a given meeting is stated or called.
13. Pages should be consecutively numbered, leaving no blank pages between meetings and no records left unattached.
14. The minutes are to show that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer (*BCO* 12-9).
15. Presbytery's Committee to Examine Session Minutes shall report its findings using the terminology employed by the General Assembly in its *Rules for Assembly Operations (RAO)* (exceptions of form and exceptions of substance), and sessions shall respond to exceptions of substance Presbytery finds by the same procedure specified in the *RAO*.