

These guidelines are intended to complement the requirements for minute-taking as written in section 092 of *The Manual of The United Church of Canada*.

General Rules on Content and Style

Minutes are not meant to be detailed accounts of who said what but a way to convey distilled, pertinent information, especially actionable items (i.e., motions).

Minutes should be

- well laid out
- easy to follow
- clear about what decisions were made
- written in plain business language

Rather than

Nancy provided information about the leadership development course. Frank asked about the cost. Nancy informed us that it was \$1,760. Joe thought that was a bit too expensive and asked if grants were available. Peter described what funding is available. Nancy felt that folks should look into the course.

The information would be better presented like this:

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	Information about the Leadership Development Program was presented. The total cost is \$1,760. Applications to the Congregational Learning Fund are available to help pay the cost.
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What NOT to Include in Minutes

- private and confidential information, such as details on clergy misconduct, someone's illness, etc.
- gossip or informal discussion
- advertisements for events
- copies of reports received simply for information and not essential for understanding the business and discussion of the meeting

Note: Reports submitted for approval should be included in an appendix.

- correspondence; the Presbytery Secretary should file this separately
- any information additional to the business discussion and actions taken at the meeting
- relevant information discovered after the end of the meeting
- opinions not expressed during the meeting
- editorial comments

Disposition of Motions

We recommend that motions take this format:

Motion: Nancy Drew/Joe Hardy

That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved. **Carried**

What to Include in an Appendix

Generally, the appendix is reserved for any document that was the basis of discussion or played an important role in the decision of the court. Such a document is normally prepared for the meeting and made available to all members of the court. Reports that are given orally are usually summarized in the body of the minutes.

More specifically, you might include in an appendix

- audited year-end financial reports
- committee reports received for approval
- commissioned reports received for approval
- terms of reference requiring approval of the court

Include the appendices within the sequential pagination scheme of the minutes.

Note: Do NOT include documents (reports, correspondence, etc.) that are personal and confidential.

Obituaries

Each presbytery is responsible for preparing obituaries for deceased ministry personnel and formerly active lay people who have held key offices in the church and last resided within the bounds of the presbytery. An obituary should appear in the minutes of the meeting following the death, if possible.

The following elements should be included in an obituary:

- full name
- when and where born, parentage
- educational background, credentials
- career summary (e.g., list of pastoral charges, list of church offices held)
- when and where died
- family (names of spouse, children)
- funeral service details

Presbytery Executive Meeting Minutes

Executive meeting minutes have the same requirements for form and content given in *The Manual*. They should be inter-filed with the regular meeting minutes of the presbytery, in chronological order, and as part of the same page numbering system.

Use of E-mail and Telephone for Decision-Making

Generally, e-mail may not be used for presbytery decision-making. Telephone calls may be used under special circumstances.

According to Appendix III, section 7(d), of *The Manual, 2010*:

In the conduct of United Church business, voting by proxy or by mail-in ballot is not permitted. Voting by telephone or by email is permitted only when it occurs during a meeting that is held in a manner that allows all of the persons participating to communicate with one another simultaneously and instantaneously.

Therefore:

- For actual decision-making, it does not make sense to use e-mail since votes cannot be made simultaneously and instantaneously.
- E-mail might be used to poll members on routine matters, but then appropriate motions would have to be made at the following meeting.

When having special telephone meetings, section 301 of *The Manual* also applies:

In cases of emergency, a special meeting for transacting specified business requiring immediate attention may be called by the Chairperson and the Secretary. When the Presbytery meets, the Chairperson and the Secretary shall submit their reasons for calling the meeting. Only the business specified in the notice may be considered at such special meeting. An adjourned special meeting must be held before the next regular meeting, and may consider only the business for which it was originally called.

For more information, contact your Conference Archives:

www.united-church.ca/contact/archives