



Newly-Elected Ruling Elder Mini-Manual

You've been elected to be a church officer... Now what? We've got you covered with Winnebago Presbytery's Mini-Manual for Ruling Elders!

Updated December 2023; Adapted from Previous Winnebago Presbytery Stated Clerk Michael Lukens' Ruling Elder Mini-Manual

How to Use the Mini-Manual

The manual you have at your disposal is a tool box of 6, 15-30 minute training sessions for newly-elected Ruling Elders, intended to be scheduled at the beginning of 6 session meetings. The first session can also be used with Deacons and/or as a stand-alone session if that works better for your church.

Each of the 6 sessions has a lesson plan and materials provided. Homework for the following session is available in the week ahead. We recommend purchasing copies of [*The Presbyterian Ruling Elder: An Essential Guide*](#), as frequent references are made to chapters within. Copies of this book, and [*The Presbyterian Deacon: Essential Guide*](#), can be purchased from The PC(USA) Store. Relevant excerpts from both books and chapters from other sources and materials have been reproduced for you to be copied for your session members.

You will also notice there are videos listed from *Theocademy*, www.theocademy.com. *Theocademy*, “develops faith formation materials for Presbyterians through high quality video series and study guides.” The study guides, which provide more discussion questions to facilitate exploration and conversation, can be viewed online or downloaded and printed for your session members. You can find out more at the above link, as well as order 5 free copies of the video series.

It would be helpful to get feedback from you and your session about whether this was a useful tool. There is a digital survey link included in the materials for Session 6. Please, encourage all session members to submit their thoughts. We greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete it!

We hope that you find this tool easy to use and helpful in training newly elected officers to their ministry in the church! Please, contact presbytery staff if you have any additional questions:

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Thank you!

Table of Contents

Session 1: “So You’re a New Church Officer...”

Session 2: Ruling Elder Roles & Responsibilities

Session 3: Presbyterian Polity Crash-Course

Session 4: Theological & Philosophical Big Picture

Session 5: Discernment & Call

*Session 6: Denominational Structure & Relationship
to Other Councils*

Resources & Other Topics

Session 1: “So You’re a New Church Officer...”

* This session can be used as a stand-alone meeting for all newly elected officers, or as part of the Ruling Elder training at the beginning of newly-elected officers' first session meeting.

Lesson Plan & Materials:

1. Congratulations on Your Recognition & Election!
 - a. Reading: [Letter from the Presbytery](#)
2. Defining the Constitution of the PC(USA)
 - a. Reading: [Book of Order](#), F-3.04
3. What's This 'Ordered Ministry' Thing?
 - a. Video: [“Ordered Ministry”](#) (Theocademy)
 - b. [Study Guide](#) (to be completed in conjunction with above video)
4. What's Your Role? (Deacon & Ruling Elder)
 - a. Reading: [“What Must a Ruling Elder Be?”](#) *The Presbyterian Ruling Elder*, Chapter 3
 - b. Reading: [“Who Are the Deacons & What Do They Do?”](#) *The Presbyterian Ruling Elder*, Chapter 3
 - c. Reading: [Book of Order](#), G-2.01 - G-2.04, pp. 25-29
5. Navigating Session Meetings
 - a. Reading: [“What is a ‘Consent Agenda’ & Why Use It?”](#) by Michael Lukens
 - b. Reading: [“10 Things Ruling Elders Should Know”](#) by Alyson Janke
 - c. Clerk of Session Inclusion: [How Do Your Committees Report?](#)

Homework:

- Reading: [“The Session,”](#) *The Presbyterian Ruling Elder*, Chapter 4

Session 2: Ruling Elder Roles & Responsibilities

Lesson Plan & Materials:

1. Being Church Leaders
 - a. Video: ["Being Leaders"](#) (Theocademy)
 - b. [Study Guide](#) (to be completed in conjunction with above video)
2. Discussing Session 1 Homework
 - a. Reading: ["The Session,"](#) *The Presbyterian Ruling Elder*, Chapter 4
 - What was new to you and/or surprised you?
 - How do you see this information impacting your work?
 - What more do you want to know to be an effective leader?
3. Responsibility Chart
 - a. Resource: ["Who is Responsible for...?"](#) Chart

Homework:

- Reading: ["Presbyterian History & Heritage,"](#) *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*, Chapter 1 & "Polity," *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*, Chapter 13

Session 3: Presbyterian Polity Crash Course

Lesson Plan & Materials:

1. What are the Principles that Guide Us?
 - a. Video: [“Principles of Order & Government”](#) (Theocademy)
 - b. [Study Guide](#) (to be completed in conjunction with above video)
2. Discussing Session 2 Homework
 - a. Reading: [“Presbyterian History & Heritage,” *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*, Chapter 1](#) & [“Polity,” *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*, Chapter 13](#)
 - What was new to you and/or surprised you?
 - How do you see this information impacting your work?
 - What more do you want to know to be an effective leader?
3. Breaking Down Motions: Ranking & Non-Ranking Motions Chart
 - a. Reading: [“The Motion,” *Parliamentary Procedures in the PC\(U.S.A.\)*, pp. 7-12](#)
 - b. Resource: [“Ranking & Non-Ranking Motions Chart,” *Parliamentary Procedures in the PC\(U.S.A.\)*, pp. 10-11](#)

Homework:

- Reading: [“Worship,” *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*, Chapter 9](#) & [“Sacraments,” *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*, Chapter 10](#)
- Reading: [“Some Key Ideas,” *How to Spell Presbyterian*, Chapter 1](#)

Session 4: Theological & Philosophical Big Picture

Lesson Plan & Materials:

1. Foundations of Presbyterian Discipleship
 - a. Video: ["Update Your Faith System"](#) (Theocademy)
 - b. [Study Guide](#) (to be completed in conjunction with above video)
2. Discussing Session 3 Homework
 - a. Reading: ["Worship," Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers, Chapter 9 & "Sacraments," Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers, Chapter 10](#)
 - b. Reading: ["Some Key Ideas," How to Spell Presbyterian, Chapter 1](#)
 - What was new to you and/or surprised you?
 - How do you see this information impacting your work?
 - What more do you want to know to be an effective leader?

Homework:

- Reading: ["God Calls Persons to Serve," The Presbyterian Ruling Elder, Chapter 1](#)

Session 5: Discernment & Call

Lesson Plan & Materials:

1. Focus on Fellowship & Mission
 - a. Video: ["Blessed to be a Blessing"](#) (Theocademy)
 - b. [Study Guide](#) (to be completed in conjunction with above video)
2. Discussing Session 4 Homework
 - a. Reading: ["God Calls Persons to Serve,"](#) *The Presbyterian Ruling Elder*, Chapter 1
 - What was new to you and/or surprised you?
 - How do you see this information impacting your work?
 - What more do you want to know to be an effective leader?

Homework:

- Reading: [Winnebago Presbytery Handbook for Clerks of Session](#), pp. 9, 19-20, 23, & 27

Session 6: Denominational Structure & Relationship to Other Councils

Lesson Plan & Materials:

1. Focus on Fellowship & Mission
 - a. Video: [“Councils of the Church”](#) (Theocademy)
 - b. [Study Guide](#) (to be completed in conjunction with above video)
2. Discussing Session 5 Homework
 - a. Reading: [Winnebago Presbytery Handbook for Clerks of Session](#), pp. 9, 19-20, 23, & 27
 - Reading a Docket/Agenda
 - Session’s Relationship to Other Organizations
 - Relations with Other Councils
 - Presbytery Commissioners
3. Reporting to Other Councils
 - Reporting to OGA, “Annual Statistical Report,” [Winnebago Presbytery Handbook for Clerks of Session](#), p. 26
 - Reporting to Presbytery
 - Terms of Call, “Other Information,” [Winnebago Presbytery Handbook for Clerks of Session](#), p. 26
 - “Required Policies,” [Winnebago Presbytery Handbook for Clerks of Session](#), pp. 29-35
4. Committee vs. Commission vs. Task Group
 - a. Clerk of Session Inclusion: *How Do They Differ in Your Church?*

Resources & Other Topics

Other Topics:

1. Transitioning Off of Session
 - a. [“The Ministry of Ruling Elders After Session Service”](#) by Diana Barber
 - b. Clerk of Session Inclusion:
 - [How Do You Let Go?](#)
 - [How Else Can You Serve?](#)
 - [Turning In Your “Things”](#)

Resources:

- “Books & Online Resources,” [Winnebago Presbytery Handbook for Clerks of Session](#), pp. 38
- [“Being Presbyterian in the Bible Belt: A Theological Survival Guide for Youth, Parents, and Other Confused Presbyterians.”](#) Foote, Ted V. and P. Alex thornburg, Geneva Press, Louisville, KY, 2000
- [“Presbyterian Polity for Church Officers, Fourth Ed.”](#) Gray, Joan S. And Joyce C. Tucker, Geneva Press, Louisville, KY, 1999
- [“To Be a Presbyterian.”](#) Weeks, Louis B., John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1983
- [“The Great Login in the Sky.”](#) Rev. Andy Greenhow, Stewardship Newsletter, Luther Seminary
- [“Helpful Resources.”](#) PC(U.S.A.) Office of the General Assembly Website
- [“Being Presbyterian.”](#) Theocademy Video Series