

The Moderator

By TE Andy Jumper who was one of the five Founding EPC Fathers.

TE Jumper was as a Pastor in the PCUS (Southern Presbyterian Church) at the time of this document writing in the early 1960s and Mr. Moderator was a chapter from the PCUS Elder Training Manual “The Noble Task”.

The MODERATOR

As the Moderator of the Church Session you, to a large degree, will shape the life, work, and program of your church. It is a heavy and demanding responsibility, but one you cannot escape. The Book of Church Order offers you no alternative. The question that faces you as Moderator, then, is how you can best do a difficult job. Even if you feel that you have no administrative abilities and even if other demands make this task seem burdensome, the nature of your office as pastor places it squarely on your shoulders. In this chapter our effort will be to help you fulfill this part of your task to the best of your abilities.

The fact that you are an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church does not mean that you will automatically make a good Moderator. Although you may have many talents and abilities in the vocation that has chosen you, it does not necessarily mean that you will be a good leader of leaders. In your Session are Elders who are wise in the ways of the Lord and His Kingdom, Elders who are mature in the faith and experienced in many areas. To be able to command their respect and to lead the work of the Session competently will demand a tact and diplomacy, consideration and thoughtfulness, that will tax your abilities to the limit. You will have to be an Elder among Elders, a Solomon among the wise, and an example among the devout!

To be a good Moderator will not be easy by any stretch of the imagination. In a very real sense, the Moderator influences the total life of the church through the Session. The kind of Session you have – the quality of performance and the faithfulness to the task – will largely be determined by you, the Moderator. Even with less than the best of leadership on his/hers Session, a good Moderator can do an effective job in the local church. But with the very best of Elders, a Session will be hampered in its work by an ineffective Moderator.

With such a high responsibility, it is imperative that each Moderator fully understand the work of the Session and the nature of his responsibility. It is imperative that he/she have a thorough grasp of the extent of the duty that is his/hers. Let us use this chapter, then, to think through some of the simple yet important items that will help a Moderator do the job more efficiently and effectively.

Conducting the Meetings of the Session

To a great extent the work of the Session will be determined by the quality of its stated meetings. The way in which discussion is conducted, the manner in which decisions are reached, the pattern for Sessional committees, the pride taken in duties well done, the importance placed on various jobs, create the whole atmosphere in which the Session moves and does its work. Do not take this responsibility lightly or do it poorly, for it is here that attitudes and opinions of your Elders are being formed. If the work you are doing is vital and important to you, you will convey this through the meeting. Unfortunately, if you do not feel this way about the things the Session does, this attitude is transmitted too. Let us look at some of the things that can be done to inspire the best attitude and to ensure that the noble task will be nobly done.

1. Making an Agenda

Every stated meeting should be planned in detail well in advance of the call to order. In consultation with the Clerk prior to the meeting, you will want to think through the order of business that is to come before the Session. If it is possible, the agenda for the meeting should be sent to each member of the Session in advance in order that all may know the items to be brought up and the order of business. In this way the Elders can intelligently prepare themselves to vote. Some Sessions even send out copies of recommendations to be presented by various committees, much as Presbyteries do. This policy is recommended. Elders who have had time to study and pray about important issues can then vote wisely.

What should an agenda include? It should include the order in which business is to be transacted, providing adequate time for new business that might demand the attention of the Session. A sample agenda might look something like this:

Agenda for Stated Meeting, the Session **(Examples Only)**

First Presbyterian Church

Anywhere, U. S. A.

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Date: July 10, 2025

Call to order by Moderator and opening prayer

Period of worship

Declaration of quorum and recording of absences

Review & approve minutes of past meeting

Letters and communications

Permanent (working) committee reports **(Examples Only)**

Worship

Commitment

Witness

Service

Strengthening the Church

Temporary committee reports

Special Sessional committee reports

Unfinished business

New business

Closing prayer and adjournment

Under each of these items, particularly the committee reports, specific things to come up should be listed in 1, 2, 3 orders. Do not rely on someone else or on your memory to conduct the business of the Session. Write it down in its proper place.

2. Starting on Time

If a meeting is called for a specific time, it is not fair to those who are there to wait for others who may or may not come. You will develop the habit of punctuality among the Elders if they know that the meeting will start precisely at the time specified. Remember to be punctual yourself, for you are establishing the pattern. According to the Book of Church Order, your Session cannot begin its meeting without you, the Moderator. If you are unavoidably detained, you should let them know at once and should explain your tardiness when you arrive.

3. Opening with Prayer and Period of Worship

The Book of Church Order requires that every court of the Church should open and close its meetings with prayer (BOG 16-1A). In addition, a brief opening period of worship sets the mood for the entire meeting and determines the atmosphere in which the business of the Session will be conducted. Through this exercise of devotion, the Word of God is brought to bear upon the business at hand and upon the hearts and minds of the Elders. The responsibility for these periods of worship should belong to your Worship Committee; they are an important part of every meeting and should not be ignored. Surely the Elders, who are responsible for the spiritual life of the congregation, would not presume to conduct their business without first opening their own hearts to the Holy Spirit. The example of Sessional devotion will carry far in your church.

4. Recording of Absences

While the Clerk of the Session is actually responsible for recording absences, it is your responsibility to be conscious of who is present and who is absent. Through the Clerk, it should be determined whether excuses have been presented to the court by those absent. The Moderator will want to be sure that excuses are carefully weighed and that appropriate action is taken. If an Elder is continually absent without excuse, it may become the responsibility of the Session to confer with him and if necessary to take action under its duties of discipline as set forth in the Book of Church Order.

As minister as well as Moderator, you will want to investigate the reasons for continued absences by an Elder and make every effort to impress upon him the significance of his calling and the seriousness of his failure to fulfill his covenant obligations. Simply to ignore such absences endangers the total work of the Session. Certainly, an unhealthy attitude toward the office of Elder is generated when absences are passed over without investigation or action.

5. Minutes

This is an important and necessary procedure and need not be burdensome. It is required that our minutes be approved. These are the permanent records of the Session and are subject to annual review by the Presbytery as required by Section G 16-3 of the Book of Church Order. Since quite often a question arises as to the precise action taken by the Session at an earlier date, it is doubly important that all actions be recorded correctly in permanent form.

6. Committee Reports

The form of committee reports to the Session will be fully discussed in another chapter (see Chapter VI, "Making the Committees Work"). However, the faithfulness with which a committee chairman follows this form is going to depend in large part on the Moderator's insistence that reports be made in the proper manner. The Moderator would do well to familiarize himself thoroughly with the section dealing with the recommended form of reporting to the Session by committees. The Session is able to act intelligently and effectively on matters presented to it only if the matters are properly presented. For example, suppose the Committee on Worship reports, "We recommend that the Session employ a new organist." You can imagine the confusion. Whom will we get? How much will we pay? What will we require of this person? What qualifications will we insist on? A Session that has many other important items before it could spend a whole evening discussing such a problem and still not have a satisfactory solution. In instances such as this, the Moderator should refer such recommendations back to the committee for proper presentation. To a tremendous degree, the effectiveness of the Session hinges on the ability of the Moderator to require that reports be carefully prepared and that they recommend definite action.

7. Old Business, Communications, and New Business

Do not leave unfinished business hanging! Your Clerk is primarily responsible for bringing such items to the attention of the Moderator, but ultimately the responsibility is yours. Communications and letters that demand the attention of the Session and that need answering should be taken care of as soon as possible. Nothing is more frustrating than to address an inquiry or request to some group and never get a reply! Be diligent to attend to the proper correspondence of the Session at each meeting. As for new business, give ample opportunity for it to be presented. However, if it presents a problem demanding time, though, and study, do not attempt to handle it toward the end of a lengthy meeting, when minds are not as alert as usual. Either refer to the proper committee for study and report, or appoint a temporary committee to report on the item at the next meeting, or simply docket it for first attention at the next meeting.

8. Length of Meeting

Do not stay in session all night! How often meetings last wearily on into the late hours! Nothing can do more to dampen the enthusiasm of Elders (and their families) toward the work of the Session than to have the meeting lengthen interminably. If the work of the Session cannot be adequately done within a reasonable time, then a special meeting should be called to handle the remainder of the business.

People who have worked all day and must report for work the next morning simply cannot afford to stay up half the night. Neither their regular job nor the Session business gets adequate attention. However, if the Moderator keeps the meeting moving, holds irrelevant discussion to a minimum, hears only those reports that are properly presented, and handles debates adequately, there is no reason why a Session should stay up half the night to do its work. Do you work quickly and efficiently; if there are those who wish to “visit,” let them do so after the meeting has been adjourned.

9. Parliamentary Procedure

As Moderator, it will be necessary for you to be familiar with the ordinary parliamentary procedures. Some guidance is offered in Book of Church Order. *Robert's Rules of Order Revised* will also be indispensable to your personal library. Since you will be called on many times in your ministry to rule on questions of procedure, you will need to do some real and earnest study on this subject. For moderating a Church Session a good rule of thumb is the larger the number involved, the stricter the adherence to parliamentary procedure. If you have a small Session of eight or ten, the meeting may be run as informally as possible. But the larger it gets, the more you will have to stick to the rules.

10. Some Don'ts to Observe

- (1) Don't ignore the ideas of others. You as the Moderator are to be an impartial chairman of a meeting; and it is not your responsibility to decide what is good and what is not good. Many Moderators get into trouble by trying to make decisions that rightfully belong to the entire Session.
- (2) Don't insist on your own way. You may be absolutely right, but that isn't the way to win a debate. If you feel that you have a good idea or wish to enter into debate on a particular discussion, then you should relinquish the chair to the Vice-Moderator or the Clerk and take your turn in speaking to the question.
- (3) Don't call brief meetings at odd times to act on questions that need the full consideration of the Session. It is better to be slow about a matter than to take a hasty, ill-advised action that you may regret later or may need to rescind.
- (4) Don't minimize the work done by others. Give every person full credit for the work he has done and give him proper time to report to the Session. People always do better work if they feel that what they are doing is important and appreciated.

11. Some Dos to Observe

- (1) Do give everyone an opportunity to speak. Often the quiet elder who doesn't have much to say has a real contribution to make to the Session if only he is given a chance to speak.
- (2) Seek to keep an individual from dominating a discussion. If one man is pushing a particular pet idea and insists on speaking every other time, say something like, "First Name, since you have already expressed your ideas to the Session, let's hear what someone else may have to say in regard to the motion,"
- (3) Hear both sides of a question. Sometimes the minority *can* be right even when you hold a different opinion.
- (4) Be as fair as you can. If you begin to take sides on issues before the Session, your fellow Elders will soon lose confidence in your ability to serve as an impartial moderator of the meeting.
- (5) Require recognition by the chair before allowing a member to speak. Several conversations at once are confusing and downright rude! Nothing is so disconcerting (or fruitless) as trying to answer a question when several side conversations are going on. You may have to be firm at this point, but in the long run the Session will appreciate your firmness.
- (6) Have orderliness in the meeting. The meeting can be too formal; but it can be so informal that it will effectively stop all work! A relaxed atmosphere with fairly strict requirements for discussion and debate is best.
- (7) Be sure to read in Chapter VI the suggestions on conducting a meeting. (Obsolete from PCUS)

Working with Committee Chairs

One of the most important parts of your responsibility as Moderator of the Session is your work with the chairs of the various committees. You can have the very best Standard of Procedure and the most important work to do; but if your committees are not functioning properly, nothing will get done. Here, as minister and Moderator, you play an important "behind-the-scenes" role. It is your job to work with the chairs of the committees, to encourage them, to inspire them, and—when necessary—to give them a gentle shove in the right direction! Yet never must you give the feeling or impression that you are running the committee or doing its work or having all the ideas. Even if you are, you must be mature enough and secure enough to let others take the praise.

Do you remember how Paul put it? He wrote, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Work closely with your committee chairs. Talk over the work of the committees, share ideas, and make suggestions to them. Occasionally you may find it profitable to have a meeting with all of the chairs together to talk about the work, the problems, the ideas, and the dreams of the elders as they strive to fulfill the noble task. Many ministers have found that a regular practice of meeting with the chairs of all committees is a wonderful stimulus to the work of the Kingdom. It may even become necessary from time to time to have a heart-to-heart talk with a particular chair as you urge and encourage him/her to pursue diligently the area of responsibility assigned to him/her and their committee. Of course, it is extremely difficult to tell a person that he/she isn’t doing their job and that they better get busy! It requires tact and diplomacy that would tax the most able. We cannot tell you how to do this since each case will vary; but starting with earnest prayer and sincere self-searching to see if you are at fault, is a good beginning. As a further suggestion it would be helpful to get your committee chairs off to a good start by offering them training for their duties. You might desire to follow the suggestions in Chapter III under subhead 10, “Committees of the Session—Personnel.” (Obsolete from the PCUS)

Working with the Board of Deacons

As the pastor of a church, you are not only Moderator of the Session; you are also an advisory member of the Board of Deacons. And while you cannot vote on matters before the Board, they will look to you for wisdom, for advice, and for recommendations. Some ministers have the idea that their attendance at meetings of the Board of Deacons is not important, and they do not bother to attend. This not only violates the spirit of our government; it is unfair to the members of the Board. You are in a key position to know the church’s total program, its needs, its goals, and its policies. Your advice will be of invaluable assistance to the Board as it formulates its program and does its work. Also, since you, as Moderator of the Session, stay in close touch with the total program of the church, it is imperative for your effective leadership for you to know what the Board is doing. On the other hand, it certainly does something to the spirit of a Board of Deacons if their pastor is not interested in their work or thinks it is not important enough to require his attendance. Use your wisdom, your knowledge, and your abilities to counsel and advise these Deacons wisely as they grow in grace and in service to the Church. It is to be remembered that you have an important role in interpreting the Session and the Board of Deacons to each other.

Keeping Up with the Total Program

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to assign to an individual or to a committee the responsibility for a job and get it done every time. Yet, initiative is destroyed if you give a job and do not expect it to be done. Somewhere in between is a happy medium that you must find. Is the Clerk keeping proper records? In what shape are the financial books of the church? What is going on in the Women of the Church? What is happening in church school? Are visitors welcomed? In a very real sense of the word, you are the overseer of the *total* work of the church. Like the captain of a ship, you must ultimately bear responsibility for whatever happens. You must know what is going on in every area of the life of the congregation which you serve. You must know how the committees are functioning and how well the work is being done. Remember that the work of the Session—indeed, that of the entire church—will be as good as its Moderator and pastor; and its program, as effective as he/she is. It is not an easy job or a light responsibility, particularly for the Teaching Elder who takes this calling seriously; but, after all, you are not in the ministry because it is easy.

A General Summary

There is so much that could be said and perhaps should be. Yet, this at least points us in the right direction. The variety of duties, responsibilities, and tasks is simply amazing, for the noble calling is indeed a hard and exacting one. It demands diligence, faithfulness, unremitting attention, and a great deal of prayer.

From: The Noble Task - The Elder

Presbyterian Church In The United States

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MAKING THE COMMITTEES WORK

Note the word “Chairman” delineates all chairpersons regardless of Gender

This chapter is designed primarily for those who will serve as chairmen of the various committees of the Session. While responsibilities for each committee will vary, there are some general principles for operating a committee that will be applicable to all. The effectiveness of a committee depends in the final analysis on the chairman of that committee. What are his duties, his particular responsibilities? How does one go about accomplishing these and getting the work done? It is with such questions that we will now deal.

Smaller Committees in General

Since in all probability your committee will be relatively small, many of the duties and responsibilities that would be carried out by others in a larger committee will fall on your shoulders as chairman. Let us look at some of these duties.

Notifying Members of Meetings

Since you probably will not have a regular secretary, ordinarily the chairman should call the meetings, set the time, date, and place, and be responsible for notifying the members. You probably will not need a regular date for meetings. You will need to meet more often at some times than at others; the nature of your committee responsibility will determine the frequency of your meetings. However, every committee should meet briefly at least once a month to review its work and to prepare its report to the Session, even if the report merely states, “The Blank Committee met on such and such a date. There is no report to be made to the Session at this time.” Always notify your committee members immediately prior to the meeting date and remind them of it. You will have better attendance that way.

Minutes of the Meeting

You may want to appoint one of the committee members to serve permanently as secretary; or you may prefer to appoint someone at each meeting. You may desire to keep the minutes yourself. In any event, always have pen and paper available. The minutes should be kept in a neat and orderly fashion. Ordinarily a copy should be given to the Clerk of the Session for use by the elected officers or for filing. Your records should be kept in such a form that those who succeed you can reap the fruits of your labor and experience and can readily discover what has been done in the past.

Formality of Meetings

“The smaller the group, the more informal the procedure” is a good principle to follow. You can wreck the enthusiasm and spontaneous contributions of an effective small committee by bogging it down with parliamentary rules. Of course, in a large committee rules are more necessary; but in a smaller committee they may interfere with fruitful discussion.

Getting Off to a Good Start

Always open and close your meetings with prayer. This is not an empty ritual we go through, but a profound opening of the mind and soul to the will of Him whom we are called to serve. It is always appropriate to have a Scripture reading or a brief period of worship as you get the meeting under way. The more receptive we are to God as we begin our work, the more effective our work will be.

Beginning and Ending the Meetings

Begin your meetings on time. If a member is detained, it is not fair to the others to make them wait for his arrival. You can briefly fill him in when he comes. And then, stop within a reasonable time. It is better to have a second meeting than to attempt to do the work of the church when you are tired and worn out and when members are in a hurry to get home. It is not fair to the committee members—or to the work to which you are assigned—to do it without proper consideration and study.

Appointing Subcommittees

If your duties are many and varied, it may be necessary to appoint subcommittees either permanently or from time to time as the need arises. For example, if you are chairman of the Committee on Strengthening the Church, you will probably want a Home and Family Nurture Subcommittee as a permanent part of your committee. However, one danger you will want to avoid is too much division of duty. The smaller the committee, the more it should operate as a committee of the whole on matters for which it is responsible. Don't feel that you have to give everyone a job.

Doing the Work of the Committee

It is important that every committee fully understand the responsibilities that have been assigned to it. Therefore, as chairman it is your responsibility to lead the group in a thorough examination of its task. If your Session has a Standard of Procedure, the duties of your committee will be spelled out for you in considerable detail.

It is imperative that your group spend much time in the first few meetings getting duties and responsibilities firmly fixed in mind. In the event your Session does not have any sort of Standard to list your duties, your committee will need to spend some time thinking through just what is expected of you and what your tasks are.

As your committee examines its assignment, there are some questions that it will want to ask itself. Let us look at some of these basic questions.

Pinpointing the Job

What is your job? You may want to write down or make notes for the group on what its specific task is. If you are a member of the Worship Committee, for example, it is not enough to say simply that your job is to take care of the worship of the church. Your group should think through what this involves and be specific about what it means to lead the church in worship. In this case, you would want to think through such things as music, instruments, director of choirs, supply pastors, special services, etc.

Benefiting from Past Experiences

How has this work been done in the past? This is the next question your committee will want to ask itself. Don't be too hasty to discard old methods, for they usually arise out of experience. On the other hand, don't feel bound to a particular things simply because it has always been done that way.

Seeking New Ideas

What are the possible ways of doing the job? Are there different ways, new ways, better ways of doing a job than those that have been used in the past? Every possibility should be thoroughly examined and critically scrutinized from every conceivable angle.

Finding the Best Way

Having described the problem, how it has been solved in the past, and how it may be done differently, your committee must now decide what is the best way to do the job. Sometimes the church may have failed to make progress or to keep pace with the rapidly changing demands of the times in which we live. The reason is that we have failed to examine critically ourselves and our customary ways of acting and have not been zealous to inquire whether a better way can be found.

If each committee will be diligent to follow these steps and choose the best way of doing a particular job, the work of the Session will move forward and the quality of our service will improve.

Translating Ideas Into Action

Having made some decisions about duties and ways of performing them, the committee must now decide how to go about translating ideas into action. This will come in terms of appointing individuals or subcommittees to begin a task; or it will come in the form of recommendations to the Session. Ideas are of no avail unless we turn them into reality by hard work. As Jesus once put it, “We must work the work of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work” (John 9:4).

Following Up on Assignments

When a subcommittee or an individual is assigned some particular task or responsibility, the chairman should always ask for a report at the next meeting. When a person has been assigned a task and carries it out, appreciation and interest should be shown by having him report his actions to the committee. By the same token, requiring a report to the group serves as a control to assure the committee that its work is being done.

Reporting to the Session

Each committee should make a full report to its activities to the Session each month. If recommendations are to be presented or authorization is to be sought, these should be presented clearly, simply, and intelligently. Since a failure to report properly to the Session results in a waste of time, let us look at some of the general principles that should guide a chairman in making his report.

Avoid Boring the Brethren

Do not read the minutes of your committee meeting. The Session has assigned to your committee a particular task. They are not so interested in how and when and where you went about doing it, but more in whether you did it. A brief summary of the meeting is entirely in order, but it should bring out only the pertinent points and issues involved. Nothing can so capably throw cold water on a meeting of the Session as a long recital of the minutes of some committee. Your minutes should be available for quick reference in the case of questions, but do not inflict them upon your fellow Elders without good cause!

Reporting Your Actions

As we stated above, the Session is interested in what you have done, so do report your actions! They want to know whether your committee is doing its job and what has been accomplished. If particular assignments have been made to your group, the Session will want to know the outcome. For example, suppose your group is the Committee on Witness. Your report might read something like this:

The Committee on Witness met once this past month. Our Andrew Club continues to visit each Wednesday and have made 35 calls on prospective members since our last report. We wish to report that according to the Session's authorization; a registration desk has been placed in the Narthex; and the Women of the Church have agreed to supply a hostess each week to greet our visitors and have them sign the registration book. Work planned for the immediate future includes a survey of the Northwood district. We are also investigating the use of a listing service that provides the names of new residents in our neighborhood. Future plans include our annual week of special evangelistic services, on which work has already begun in cooperation with the Committee on Worship. A report such as this informs the Session of your diligence, of what has been done, and of what you plan to do. No time is wasted, and the pertinent information is conveyed to the Session.

Making Recommendations to the Session

Misunderstandings start when recommendations to the Session are improperly made. Most recommendations require study, planning, and investigation before they are presented to the Session. Adequate decisions cannot be made unless the facts and figures are in hand to serve as a basis upon which decisions are reached. When a committee makes a recommendation to the Session on which it desires the Session to act, the recommendation should not only grow out of study and planning; it should be so precisely formulated by the committee that its passage will ensure its accomplishment of it. The committee should prepare the recommendation beforehand and should come to the Session with a motion ready to present.

Let us again take the Committee on Witness to illustrate this point. Suppose a method for getting the names of new residents in the community is needed. Certain groundwork must be done by the committee. What methods are available? What expense is involved? Which plan is the most workable? These and other questions are handled in committee. When the committee has reached a decision after thorough investigation, its report and recommendation to the Session might read:

The Committee on Witness has investigated the various methods of obtaining the names of new residents in the community and has concluded that a professional service best meets our needs. Therefore, we recommend that the Session authorize the Committee on Witness to enter into a six-month agreement with the Newcomer Service, Inc., at the rate of \$15 per month, such funds are to be charged against the budget of the Committee on Witness.

The Session does not spend fruitless time discussing a question on which nobody has specific information. It is now simply a matter of acting on a clear-cut recommendation that leaves no doubt about what is needed. If every committee would investigate the necessary facts of a matter and clearly formulate the recommendation to effect the proper action, much time would be saved, and the Session could act on fact and not on fancy.

The Need for Written Reports and Recommendations

The chairman of each committee should present his report to the Session in written form. This serves several functions. First, it keeps reports from being too long and repetitious. Second, it makes the accurate. Third, it prevents the chairman from forgetting something that might be omitted in an oral report. Fourth, it can then be presented to the Clerk for inclusion in the minutes if so desired. It is to be noted that the form of report suggested under Section 2 above is short, informative, and to the point.

It is particularly desirable that recommendations for action to the Session be written out. It is time-consuming to have to stop while the Clerk writes down a long or involved motion. If the report is prepared by the committee in advance and presented to the Clerk in written form, this ensures several things. First, as mentioned, time is saved. Second, the report is recorded as the committee intended it to be. Third, the desired action is either properly accomplished or authorized. And fourth, when the committee formulates its recommendation, the process serves to clarify its own thinking.

Some General Items to Remember

As chairman of an important committee of the Session, you will want to remember or be conscious of several general items as you work with your committee.

1. Why You Are Meeting

Always know why you are meeting. If you have no reason to meet, don't! The average church member has enough meetings to attend without our burdening him unnecessarily. If you do have some reason to meet, have the need or problem clearly worked out to present to the committee.

2. Giving Every Member a Chance

You are not the boss of the meeting; you merely chair it. Don't insist on your way or your ideas. By the same token, do not let another individual dominate the meeting. The atmosphere should be such that all will feel free to enter into discussion and participate in the decisions of the committee.

3. Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

We expect a lot out of our volunteer workers in the church, and rightly so. Our error is in not expressing proper appreciation. We do not work because we will be thanked, but appreciation does make us feel better about it! Any time you can show recognition, approval, appreciation, or simply give a slap on the back, do it! Next time you will have a more willing worker. Look for opportunities to express thanks, and you will find more of them.

4. Keeping Your Committee on the Right Track

Committees sometimes spend more time "visiting" and engaging in friendly talk than they do on the business at hand. The atmosphere of a small committee should be friendly and relaxed; but as chairman, it is your duty to see that the job is done within a reasonable time. Keep the meeting moving and on the business at hand. You can always bring the conversation back to the issue by reminding the group of what you have been discussing. Keeping the Issues Clear

5. As chairman it is your duty to clarify issues. You will do this by making occasional summaries of what has been said on a particular topic, until all possibilities have been clearly presented. After a final summary, your group is ready to vote on the question at hand and do it intelligently.

Your Committee and Its Budget

Each committee ordinarily has a specific amount designated in the budget for its particular work. Unless authorized by the Session or congregation, you will be expected to stay reasonably within this budget.

Therefore, your committee will want to plan its work well and thoroughly in order to operate within your financial means. Over the year you will probably discover items that should have been included in the budget or will need to be included in next year's budget. Be sure to make notes of these items so that when information is requested of your committee by the Budget Committee, you can present a realistic budget proposal for the coming year.

It is essential to keep account of your expenditures so that you will always know where you stand in relationship to your budget; and as nearly as possible, you will want to plan your program sufficiently far in advance to ensure that the most important part of your responsibilities is adequately done. For example, if your committee is the Committee on Worship, do not spend all of your money on special services during the first part of the year and come up in August with no funds to pay a supply pastor when your minister is on vacation!

Working with the Moderator of the Session

You will want to work closely with the pastor and keep him informed of the committee's activities and plans. From time to time you may wish to invite him to sit with your committee. Since he is intimately familiar with the over-all work of the church, he is in a valuable spot to advise and counsel you. Take advantage of his knowledge and ability, but don't depend on him to do your job!

Your year as chairman of a committee of your Session can be a year of real contribution and service for you and your fellow committee members. It will take faithfulness and perseverance; but the crown for which you strive is worthy of the race. A large responsibility rests upon your shoulders; and it is your high duty to fulfill it to the very best of your ability. Your Session, your church, your Lord—all are counting on you.