

Rolls and Registers

Spring 2015

Which rolls do I need to keep?

A roll of active members, one of baptized members, and one of affiliate members. Your session may want to continue to have a roll of inactive members, but such a roll is no longer required.

What if we want to continue a roll of inactive members?

You may do so. I recommend that your session define what they mean by this roll and that they document the rules for being added or removed from the roll – this should be in session minutes and in your Manual of Administrative Operations.

How do I maintain a roll of baptized members?

Typically, this is a list of any children who have been baptized in your church and children of active members who have been baptized elsewhere. You or your session should review this roll yearly. Children who are confirmed are moved to the active members roll and removed from this one. When the parents get removed from the active roll or move away, the children should be removed from the baptized members roll. If a baptized member never joins the church and stops participating, he or she should be removed, as well. You might have a practice of removing anyone who has reached the age of, say, 25, unless that person is actually active in the church. Very few people would stay on this roll after the age of 25.

I recommend that you keep the date of birth of the baptized member as well as the date of the baptism. This is the most mismanaged of the rolls, but it is an important roll – these are future Presbyterians.

Do I have to keep a paper roll book?

No, but if you don't, you should print a list of active and affiliate members at least once a year and insert it into your minutes book. The paper roll book can provide a useful history of past members, but it is not essential. Large churches usually have database software to keep track of members and their families. Smaller churches may find that a spreadsheet, such as in Excel, is helpful, even if you have a paper roll book.

Is there a roll for those non-members who are active in my church?

The new Book of Order defines a category called “Other Participants”, which could be used to include the Inactive Roll and a roll of active non-members – either as a single roll or as two subsets of the rolls. It is not totally clear whether this is a roll or just a definition, but it is a count in the Annual Statistical Report.

What information should I keep in the database or spreadsheet?

I have a template you may use as a guide to design your own spreadsheet for the roll of active members. You should have the full name, the date the member was received, and how they joined. A one-up roll book number is helpful if you also have a paper roll

book, because the roll book number is how you would find the paper entry. Think about the counts that you have to make for the Annual Statistical report: age, race or ethnicity, gender, for example. Those items would be good to have in either a database or a spreadsheet.

What is the difference between a roll and a register?

A roll is a list of people. A register is a list of events – these events involve people, but the primary reason for the register is an event: a baptism, election of officers, calling a pastor. In times past, we kept registers of marriages and deaths, but the Book of Order now lists only four registers: baptisms, deacons, elders, and pastors.

What information should be kept in each of these registers?

1. Baptisms
 - a. Infant Baptisms. Include name, parents' names, and date of birth of those being baptized and the names of persons presenting the children for Baptism.
 - b. Adult Baptisms. Include name, parents' names, and date of birth of those being baptized.
2. Elders, with the name of the church in which each was ordained, the date of ordination, terms of active service, and the record of removals;
3. Deacons, with the name of the church in which each was ordained, the date of ordination, terms of active service, and the record of removals;
4. Pastors, co-pastors, associate pastors, interim pastors, stated supplies, and parish associates serving the church, with dates of service.