

FLOOR CLERKS – SELECTING AND JOB DESCRIPTION

PRESBYTERY GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING FLOOR CLERKS

We are grateful to God for the dramatic growth of our denomination over the years. This expansion affects the number of individuals attending General Assembly, and Assembly logistics are complicated. We require larger venues and increased ancillary services to accomplish our business within severe time restraints and in the face of a burgeoning agenda. Agencies, organizations and committees present us with a profusion of information, many of which call for immediate and significant action.

No other component of Assembly operation exemplifies the effect of this complexity and expansion as much as the work of the floor clerks. As committee work intensifies and the Assembly faces volumes of reports and print materials, we experience an increased dependency on these volunteers. In the absence of reliable, punctual, patient and versatile clerks, the work of the Assembly would grind to a painful halt.

By the mercies of God, many men have stepped forward to participate, selflessly and cheerfully, in this service to the Body of Christ. The Assembly has consistently recognized the crucial role of the floor clerks and has often expressed appreciation to them. Our Presbyteries play a key role in maintaining this level of excellence and service.

Consider the following guidelines in soliciting volunteers to serve as floor clerks:

1. Floor clerks are requested, and strongly urged, to attend the pre-Assembly Orientation on Tuesday prior to the opening of the Assembly. If it were practical, this would be a requirement.
 - a. During this the meeting, assignments are finalized. If volunteers do not attend this meeting, there is no way to know who will actually show up for the Assembly. Following this meeting, efforts (often frantic) are made to contact additional volunteers to take the place of those who have not reported. When the Assembly convenes and “surprise” volunteers arrive, we must decide to either repeat the orientation under the pressure of opening day urgencies or excuse the late arrivals. Unless there is a severe shortage of floor clerks, they are generally asked to be available to serve in the absence of another floor clerk. This results in volunteers feeling underappreciated and the gives the impression that we have too many clerks (a truly rare occurrence).
 - b. Should a floor clerk be unable to attend Orientation, the volunteer should contact the Floor Clerk Coordinators and arrange for an alternative training time. This facilitates assignments and lets the Coordinators know whom to expect when the Assembly convenes.
2. Presbyteries occasionally send multiple volunteers to share or rotate one Floor Clerk position. We would prefer to discourage this practice. The process of keeping track of who has rotated into a particular floor clerk position is simply too complex when tracking 30+ clerk positions. The Floor Clerk Organizers may permit sharing in a reasonable and logistically practicable format. Such volunteers will be required to report to the Floor Clerk Coordinators and use a sign-in sheet.
3. Volunteers should attend, on time, every session of the Assembly. This is particularly crucial when a manual or paper count of votes is required. If clerks are absent, the voting process is difficult and may even be compromised.
4. Some Presbyteries have considered financial assistance for those serving as floor clerks. We support this concept and are willing to cooperate with the Presbytery in terms of feedback or other arrangements as requested. If the Presbytery informs the Coordinators of such an arrangement, priority assignments will be made to insure that the volunteer will have the opportunity to serve. Note that it is not required that these arrangements between the Presbytery and the volunteers be divulged to the Floor Clerk Coordinators.

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR FLOOR CLERK

SUMMARY OUTLINE

- I. Duties
 - A. Distribute Paper
 - B. Assist Moderator
 - C. Assist with Voting
- II. Methodologies
 - A. Responsible Attendance
 - B. Manageable Units
 - C. Provided by Presbyteries

Floor clerks perform essentially three tasks: distribution of handouts on the floor of the GA, responding to the direction of the Moderator and assisting, when called upon, in the tallying of votes.

Distribution of Paper - It is impossible for commissioners at General Assembly to follow the discussion and vote responsibly without having the material in hand. Most work comes to the floor through Committees of Commissioners, and most do not meet until just before the Assembly begins. Their reports are distributed in digital format and in paper format as the Assembly is meeting. Distributing the paper materials by the floor clerks in a timely fashion is essential to the functioning of the body.

Assist Moderator - Occasionally, the Moderator will direct the floor clerks to accomplish some task necessary for business. The Head Floor Clerks will direct the floor clerks to affect the direction of the Moderator. Willingness and cooperation of the floor clerks is very important for the duration of the General Assembly.

Assist with Voting - When opinions on issues are closely divided it becomes necessary to divide the house and count the vote. Recently the Assembly has implemented an electronic voting system. The floor clerks serve as a back-up to this system in the event that a manual count becomes necessary. Full attendance by the floor clerks at each session of the Assembly is essential to ensure an accurate count.

Additionally, there are some votes which may require a paper ballot at the discretion of the Moderator or the body. Floor clerks are trained to provide this option when necessary. It is of interest to note that divisions of upwards of one thousand have been decided by ten or fewer votes. This points to the necessity for accuracy in counting and the importance of dependable attendance by the floor clerks as these divisions may be called quite unexpectedly.

Responsible Attendance - If an earthly king's business is "urgent" (I Samuel 21:8) then God's is very much so. Floor clerks must be ready, willing and diligent whenever their services are needed, to ensure that the deliberations and decisions of His church are given the best attention possible. They must be at their assigned station in the meeting hall at all times during the transaction of business. They must also confer with the Head Floor Clerk in the event that they must be absent from the floor at any time.

Manageable Units - For efficient distribution of paper, the floor is divided into the small units and assigned by the Head Floor Clerks to be served by individual floor clerks. To ensure reasonable coverage, clerks need to take care of their assigned section. This minimizes pauses in the conduct of

business while missed areas await the report of the moment. Of course, there will be latecomers that inflict the irritations of their habits on the whole body--such failures are not the clerks' fault but he may be able to alleviate some of the irritation. Floor clerks should try to be alert to latecomers, if possible, and help reduce the turmoil in the aisles.

Provided by Presbyteries - If every Presbytery provided one clerk, there would be more than enough to meet the needs of the Assembly. In addition to distributing paper or assisting with voting some floor clerks are needed to organize boxes of arriving paper, to organize the extra copies of materials which have already been distributed and/or to assist with other necessary "behind the scenes" tasks. By the Grace of our Loving Father, we have always had sufficient volunteers to serve as floor clerks, though many graciously serve multiple functions and are willing to go out of their way to help with whatever needs to be done. It would be a great blessing for each Presbytery to provide at least one volunteer. Some presbyteries provide more than one floor clerk, and it is greatly appreciated.

The task of floor clerking is needed and an obvious way we can explore Jesus' assertion that the way to greatness in His kingdom is by servanthood.