

Faithful and Effective Council Leadership

Shaping Meetings and Congregational Culture



**Southeastern
Pennsylvania
Synod, ELCA**

Lutherans Together:
Loving God, Loving Neighbor

Council Leadership shapes congregational culture!

As leaders you are NOT just running meetings

- You are serving as stewards of your congregations resources and finances
- You are stewarding the mission of your congregation
- You are modeling discipleship in action
- You are discerning spiritual gifts
- You are inviting others into ministry

Turn and Talk: What makes leading a church council different than leading at your place of work, the PTA, a sports league, etc.?

As congregational leaders we want to ...

- Lead with Faith
- Lead with Clarity
- Lead with Care

Everything you do in your role should fall into at least one of these categories!

Leading with Faith

You were elected to be in an administrative role BUT ... you are also spiritual leaders (surprise!)

- Begin with a scripture, prayer or devotion of some kind - there is ALWAYS time for this.
- Consider pausing for prayer before particularly difficult or big votes or conversations
- Be willing to ask outloud “How could this serve Christ’s mission in this place?” when redirection or centering is needed.

Table Talk:

What is one simple way you could deepen the spiritual tone of your church council meetings?
What has worked (or not worked) for your council?

Lead with Clarity

Preparation is 70% of leadership (yes, I just made that up, but it sounds right!)

Before every meeting:

- Create and send an agenda 5-7 days ahead of time
- Ensure any written reports and past minutes are distributed (and expect people to read them - do NOT read them out during the meeting!)
- Clearly label on the agenda what items are: Info Sharing/Discussion/Decision Points
- Put time guidelines on each agenda item
- End with a review of Action Steps, deadlines and ownership

Lead with Clarity

Consider a meeting flow that feels like:

1. Devotion & Prayer
2. Agenda Review and Acceptance
3. Reports & Minutes
 - a. Includes Pastor's report, finance report, committee reports, etc.
 - b. Try to stay high level when you can - this is not the meat of the meeting!
4. Mission Focused Conversation
 - a. THIS is the meat of the meeting - whether it is outreach, discipleship, stewardship, worship, etc. this is the conversation that starts in Council and continues into the congregation.
5. Action Item Review and Next Steps
6. Close in Prayer

Keep meetings between 90-120 minutes!

Lead with Clarity

Running the meeting:

- Get familiar with Robert's Rules of Order (motion, second, discussion, vote)
- Disagreement is OK - BUT require it to be respectful
- Use Facilitation Tools
 - Think - Pair - Share
 - Parking Lot
 - Call the Question
- Don't be afraid to redirect or wrap up conversation when needed
- Consider community agreements

The President (and VP) is meant to manage process, not outcomes.

Lead with Care

Culture matters more than efficiency.

- Build relationships intentionally
- Clarify roles for everyone - even if they don't have an officer position, everyone has a role!
- Address conflict early - and in partnership with your Pastor
- Focus on vision, not just operations.

The meeting matters, but the people matter more, and the mission matters the most.

And when all else fails: TRUST in the SPIRIT!



Challenges and Wisdom Sharing

Common questions:

- What if one person dominates the meeting?
- What if members don't read materials ahead of time?
- What if conflict happens?
- What if we can't find people to serve?
- What is best day/night for meetings?
- Is Robert's Rules required? (yes!)
- What if

Remember the Big Picture

God has called you to this role at this time. Take a deep breath.

Your role is NOT to run a perfect meeting.

Your role is to be good stewards of the congregation and its resources, and ultimately to help the congregation discern God's movement among you.

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