



Tips for Energizing Congregational Meetings

“Why are we having this meeting?”

- ▶ The interconnectedness of the Constitutions of the ELCA
- ▶ The Congregational Meeting can do 7 – and only 7 – things
 - ▶ Elect officers and Congregation Council members
 - ▶ Adapt a mission spending plan budget.
 - ▶ Call or dismiss a pastor or deacon
 - ▶ Buy or sell real property
 - ▶ Enter a contract above a certain dollar amount
 - ▶ Revise the governance documents – Constitution, Bylaws, & Continuing Resolutions
 - ▶ Join or leave the ELCA
- ▶ All other matters are in the hands of the Congregation Council
- ▶ If there are not actions to take do not call it a “meeting”

Plan well

- ▶ Ask “What actions do we need to take at this meeting?”
- ▶ Develop an agenda well ahead of time
 - ▶ The Congregation Council should review and propose the agenda
 - ▶ The agenda should never be done by just one person!
 - ▶ Consider an “action agenda”
- ▶ Agenda should include specific language to be voted on
 - ▶ “RESOLVED: The Mission Spending Plan for 2023 will be \$150,000”
- ▶ Get your Nomination Committee working well ahead of time
 - ▶ “Better a vacant seat on the Council than having the wrong person in that seat.”
- ▶ Present a narrative budget that tells your story of mission
- ▶ Publish the agenda ahead of time and “close” it.

More guidance on adopting and “closing” the agenda

- ▶ A carefully prepared agenda is a key to a productive Congregation Meeting.
- ▶ Best practice is to NOT ask for additions to the agenda at the meeting. It is not needed if the agenda has been developed in an open manner ahead of time.
- ▶ Once the agenda is “adopted” at the meeting it is referred to as “closed.” Once closed new items can be added by a 2/3 vote of the Congregation Meeting.
- ▶ Be careful that items on the agenda are “in order” – that they don’t conflict with the Constitutions of the ELCA and of the congregation.
- ▶ Consult with your Synod Minister if you have any questions.

Action Agenda *might* look like this

- ▶ Opening
Worship/Prayer/Devotion/Inspiration
- ▶ Establish that a quorum is present
 - ▶ Who is a VOTING member?
- ▶ Adoption of Agenda – *if needed*
- ▶ Brief reports from officers and pastor
- ▶ One motion and vote *receive (not approve)* routine reports and actions
 - ▶ Minutes, treasurer's reports, pastor & officer reports etc.
- ▶ Action item # 1
with a prewritten motion
- ▶ Action item #2
with a prewritten motion
- ▶ And so on...
- ▶ Announcements?
- ▶ “One-word” evaluation?
- ▶ Closing prayer and adjourn

DO NOT have “other business” on the agenda! This is an invitation for a hijack

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The role of the Chair

- ▶ “To manage the completion of the body’s work as defined by the agenda.”
- ▶ Parliamentary procedure is your friend!
 - ▶ It allows the majority to make decisions efficiently...
 - ▶ While protecting the right of the minority to be heard
 - ▶ “Structure corrals anxiety”
- ▶ Protect the agenda!
 - ▶ How to handle a “blind side” last minute motion?
 - ▶ Anything not germane to an item on the agenda is referred to the Council for “study and possible action.”
- ▶ When a member speaks, they address the Chair.
- ▶ Have a parliamentarian to aid the Chair

The minutes... what they are and are not.

- ▶ A record of the actions taken at a meeting...
- ▶ NOT a record of the discussion.
- ▶ The minutes should not be released until they are official - after they are reviewed, corrected (if needed) and approved by the subsequent Congregation Meeting.
- ▶ Publish highlight promptly

Other ideas...

- ▶ Have a forum a few weeks before the meeting to discuss key matters informally
- ▶ Let people know when you are starting to build the agenda
- ▶ Consider having the Council approve and close the agenda
- ▶ Matters that come as recommendations from the Council are already moved and seconded
- ▶ Bring your constitution up-to-date and review following each triannual Churchwide Assembly
- ▶ Your Synod Staff are a resource

Questions and discussion...