
THE ROLE OF A CHURCH COUNCIL

Guidelines for Meetings and Members

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Each year Foursquare churches across the country elect/ratify Church Council members to serve for two-year terms. The role of the Church Council at The Coastlands is very significant—more significant than most people realize. For instance, the Council is my boss; I work under them when it comes to the business affairs of the church, and although they do not have the authority to remove me from being pastor, I am answerable to them on matters of our church's finances and administration.

You might say that just as the Pastors chart the spiritual direction of the church, the Council oversees the financial patterns of the church. These two groups, working in conjunction with one another, provide the necessary balance to our leadership so that all of our major decisions are arrived at prayerfully, faithfully and wisely.

Spiritual and financial excellence must always be maintained at The Coastlands if we want to experience all God has in mind for us. The Church Council is one of the primary advocates of that excellence. Because of the tremendous importance of the Church Council, the Council members themselves (both husband and wife in the case of a married couple) assume a direct personal responsibility to lead the congregation in heart attitudes, financial patterns and spiritual integrity.

Our Council consists of 5-6 appointed units (either a single person or a couple) plus the senior pastor. Each unit serves a two-year term; two/three units are elected one year and three units are elected the following year. We select nominees through discussion with our pastoral team and existing Council.

The Council sets the monthly budget spending limits each quarter, and the staff complies with their decision. Every month the Council receives a comprehensive report detailing all expenditures and income. While the Council does not set individual line-item amounts in the budget (that is left to the pastor and staff who work with the particulars of ministry throughout the month), it does assure that our church will not spend more money than it takes in.

Through the years, the Church Council at The Coastlands has functioned in a spirit of love, cooperation and collegiality. Our basic policy is to move by unanimous consensus on any decision brought before the Council. A single vote can suspend or halt any church activity, move, program or policy. This places awesome responsibility on Council members to listen to the Lord for His counsel; it also means that Council members must differentiate between their opinions and His prompting.

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS AND MEMBERS

The following guidelines help the Church Council function optimally and cooperatively, year after year:

1. ***We are of one mind.*** Just as we "go back and forth" in our own individual thinking, so does the Council collectively consider topics by looking at them "on one hand" and "on another." Discussion and disagreement are not viewed as antagonism, fights or disunity.
2. ***What each Council member thinks is important.*** After discussion, we can usually reach a consensus—an agreement among all the members on a certain course of action. But sometimes one or two of the Council members still feel unresolved. Those individuals and their opinion are as important as the majority.
3. ***That is why our basic mindset is to move by unanimity***—we want to wait until everyone feels good about a decision before we act upon it. Although we are not legally bound to wait for a unanimous decision, that is our goal.
4. ***Council members don't have to be able to explain or justify why they feel a certain way about something.*** The Council is not a court of law where evidence must be presented; neither is it a science lab where proof is required. What members think is more important than why they think it.
5. ***We believe in openness and candor.*** Though the subjects we deal with are often very sensitive, it is better to speak openly (trusting that everyone wants what is best for everyone else), rather than to talk around a subject and be unclear. Our Council conversations should be sensitive and loving, without being afraid to tell it like it is.
6. ***The regular Council meeting once a month is the best place to talk openly and to make decisions.*** We discourage unofficial meetings of the Council, but we highly encourage the Council members to relate to one another on a more personal basis. No substantive policy discussions or decisions should come about outside of the monthly meeting.

7. ***Council members will come under increased pressure and assault because of their leadership role in our church.*** That is why some of the Council meeting is devoted to interpersonal exchange, personal ministry and spiritual discussion with the Senior Pastor. Such ministry should not be viewed as a replacement for Council members' accountability and nurture within the normal context of relationships.
8. ***Most discussions and decisions are confidential.*** In order to inform the Council about various matters, it is often necessary to talk openly about finances, people and issues. Consequently, we want to be careful to keep from "*uncovering*" anyone by talking about people or their situations outside of the Council meeting.

The duties of the Council are prescribed in the bylaws of Foursquare, and all Foursquare Churches follow the same basic pattern. Council members will be provided with copies of the bylaws.

PURPOSES OF THE COUNCIL AT THE COASTLANDS

1. To assure the financial integrity of our church.
2. To approve the monthly budget (quarterly) of The Coastlands.
3. To approve any contractual arrangements on behalf of The Coastlands.
4. To establish the staff salary schedule, including the senior pastor's salary.
5. To ensure that the pastor receives every consideration for compensation, vacation schedule, etc.
6. To approve staff positions and additions proposed by the senior pastor.
7. To keep accurate records of all meetings, including minutes, policies, and financial records.
8. To maintain a standard of financial and spiritual excellence.
9. To evaluate and support the pastor.
10. To act as a sounding board for the pastor and staff.
11. To represent the congregation and their concerns to the pastor and staff.

12. To represent the pastor and staff and their concerns to the congregation.