



**uniting
church**
in Australia
Canberra Region



Church Council

The Church Council shall give priority in its life to building up the Congregation in faith and love, sustaining members in hope, and leading the Congregation to a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world. This priority shall be reflected in the agenda of its ordinary meetings.

The responsibilities of the Church Council include:

- i. sharing with the Minister(s) in mission and in the pastoral care and spiritual oversight of the Congregation;
- ii. nurturing the members and adherents in their growth in grace;
- iii. making decisions concerning baptism, confirmation and membership, and the keeping and reviewing of the rolls of the Congregation;
- iv. assisting the Minister(s) in the conduct of worship and in the administration of the sacraments;
- v. determining the time and place of services of public worship;
- vi. carrying out its functions concerning applicants for the specified ministries;
- vii. managing the financial affairs and the general administration of the Congregation
- viii. arranging for audit, presentation and examination of the accounts of all the funds of the Congregation;
- ix. managing and controlling of property
- x. preparing and presenting to a meeting of the Congregation an annual report concerning the life and work of the Congregation including its worship, mission and service, and making recommendations with regard to the program for the ensuing year;
- xi. exercising oversight of the appointment of officers and leaders of Congregational organisations;
- xii. referral of matters to Presbytery as prescribed;
- xiii. discipline of members
- xiv. carrying out its functions in relation to Ministers-in-Association

WHY WE MEET TOGETHER

SEEKING TO DISCERN THE SPIRIT

When a council of the church makes decisions, it is aiming to discern the guidance of the Spirit in response to the word of God. In retrospect however, some decisions are considered to have been visionary and innovative, others inappropriate and destructive, whether or not they were seen that way at the time – discernment is not something for which we can set down the rules.

But the processes we use to create community and communicate in our meetings can themselves assist in the discernment process. This will be enhanced if people come expecting to be open both to the Spirit and to each other. By creating and sustaining effective communications in the context of a Christian community, we will be more likely to discern the guidance of the Spirit and reflect this in our decision-making.

That is not to say that community should be ‘nice’ all the time. We will struggle through pain and difficulty together as well as experiencing the joy of open and honest communication, being unified in our brokenness and our common identity under God. When members are left hurt or the community is broken, poor decisions are likely to be made and the church has failed to be true community.

Pressure to make a decision while ignoring the hurt of some members is likely to lead to poor decisions.

THE ACT OF SHARING TOGETHER

For a meeting to be effective, the chairperson and all those participating need to agree on the purpose and on the ways in which that purpose will be achieved.

Despite an assumption by many people that the reason for going to a meeting is to make decisions, in reality the act of making a decision is often one which consumes the least amount of time.

If the purpose of the meeting is:

- to build community – let’s welcome each other, share something of ourselves and start to develop trust as we worship and celebrate together;
- to be informed – let’s learn as we explore ideas and concepts together, and are enthused by the challenge of shared knowledge;
- to develop new paths – then let’s listen, struggle, devise and refine together;
- to share a cup of tea – then let’s drink together!

The facilitating role of the chairperson is to recognise the needs of the group and of its individual members, and so to guide the council to allow those needs to be met as far as possible.

CHAIRPERSON’S ROLE

presiding at meetings in a manner which:

- assists the council to discern the will of God as far as possible
- meets the needs and purposes of the council and its members.

COUNTRY, COAST & CAPITAL

