

A Suggested Order of Meeting

Vestry Meetings

In this new era the vestry and all leader groups will seek to give the congregation the gift of missional leadership. The governance functions in this agenda are concentrated, allowing greater time for the development of an atmosphere of discipleship formation in the church so that the people will be equipped to serve the world in the Name of Christ.

30 MINUTES

Gathering: Bible Study and Prayer. (For specific examples, see resource section in *Cultivating the Missional Church: New Soil for Growing Vestries and Leaders*).

0 MINUTES

Minutes: “approved” as distributed with corrections received at any time.

5 - 10 MINUTES

Financial Report: Use language accessible to all with an executive summary person reporting. Report should highlight key points and any actionable items. A norm to be honored is highly focused discussion; general financial positions may be discussed here or in Discipleship or Mission.

10 - 15 MINUTES

Discipleship programmatic activity of the parish that forms disciples: worship, formation, fellowship, and generosity (stewardship). Receive and discuss any discipleship-related reports matters pending from previous meetings pertaining to Discipleship.

15 - 30 MINUTES

Mission actions that send the baptized into the world (apostleship): service, financial support, evangelism, social justice. Receive and discuss any mission-related reports matters pending from previous meetings pertaining to Mission.

0 - 10 MINUTES

Other items needing vestry attention: This is the “catch-all” time of the meeting anything that doesn’t fit elsewhere other actionable items pending from previous meetings.

30 MINUTES

Leadership School: Leadership development is the focus of this segment including time for study and reflection. (For specific examples, see resource section in *Cultivating the Missional Church: New Soil for Growing Vestries and Leaders*).

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1 MINUTE

Sending: Personal and corporate mission is primed by being sent into the world to be a blessing

NOTES

- ♦ If every element of this order of meeting went to the maximum suggested time, the meeting would take about two hours. Note this is a maximum time frame; 90 minutes is a more likely time frame. It may be helpful to appoint a process observer in the implementation of this schedule. The observer, a member of the vestry, simply pays attention to the flow of the meeting, verbally marks the passage of time, and reports on her or his process observations at the end of the meeting. Some vestries find it permanently helpful for the clerk to verbally note the hour and half-hour elapsed time. As well, this time framework helps remove the possibility of micromanagement so that the vestry may concentrate on the big view, the overall vitality of the church.
- ♦ It is very likely that this Order of Meeting will need to be gradually implemented. The four key elements - Bible Study, Tending to Discipleship, Raising up Apostles (mission activity), and the School of Leadership - may be introduced in this way: Continue your present practice of opening devotions and prayer. Ask half the vestry to focus attention to discipleship formation within your normal meeting format; ask the other half to be attentive listeners for mission activity. Add the School of Leadership time at the end. Before entering the School of Leadership portion of the meeting, ask the listeners to report on what they heard through focused attention. This action begins to form the attention of members of the vestry. Note that many parts of a discussion may actually have both missional (or apostolic) and discipleship as components. Attention will likely be drawn to parts of parish life that reflect neither.
- ♦ All items brought before the vestry requiring action (except for emergencies) are placed on a 30-or-more-day clock. This practice is that no action be taken on items introduced for the first time. Consequently, two gifts are given: there is no “tyranny of urgency” and time is amplified to ponder the step. This would include, for example, a finance report. Those who have ideas about what is presented at one vestry meeting can seek details in the intervening time and be prepared to accept the report (as is or modified) at the next meeting.
- ♦ When a decision is made, especially those that might be referred to as “actionable items,” it is a good practice to append a simple list to the minutes of any open or not yet accomplished item. This list is visited regularly during the “other items” section of the meeting for purposes of accountability and tracking. These “actionable items” may also be considered, as appropriate, in the Discipleship section or Mission section. The key point here is that important decisions be provided support and follow-through.

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- ✦ Consensus formation is the recommended model for decision making. In an action which is pro forma, consensus may be noted simply by anyone saying, “I propose that the vestry accept this report by consensus.” The chair then asks if there is consensus, “Is this the mind of the vestry?” Members of the vestry then give their assent (or not).

- ✦ Reports from members of the vestry or others who have worked for the good of the church’s ministries and mission are always received gratefully and, if action is required, with a predisposition to say, “yes” to what is presented or requested. This is the nature of a permission-giving church; it seeks to offer creative space for the work of the Spirit in others. More information on a permission-giving church is found later in this resource section. The vestry should inform all who are bringing reports or requests that require action before the vestry about the “30 day clock” on taking action.

- ✦ An extension of being a permission-giving church is captured in the question, “Does it need to come before the vestry?” When a church is dedicated to the extension of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there will be many nudges from the Spirit that call the baptized into service. The vestry will find itself, when it is missional, more in the mode of simple gratitude and less in the mode of being

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