

SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CHURCH COUNCIL CHAIRS

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Modelled on ...

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The
7 HABITS
of
HIGHLY
EFFECTIVE
PEOPLE

Powerful Lessons in Personal Change

FRANKLIN COVEY CO.

SESSION PLAN

- Habits 1 – 5 55 minutes
- BREAK 10 minutes
- Habits 6 – 7 30 minutes
- Thinking about some scenarios 20 minutes
- Evaluations, questionnaires ... ***Please*** 5 minutes

HABIT I

An effective chair is:

- Transparent
- Accountable
- Has integrity

TRANSPARENCY:

- Transparency *is not* about breaching appropriate confidentiality
- Transparency *is* about ensuring that how decisions are made is open to scrutiny and accords with accepted rules and procedures

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- Accountability is transparency's twin
- Accountability means recognising that the Chair is a servant of the Council and must be ready to answer to the Council
- Much may be delegated to the Chair (and/or Executive) – but the exercise of a delegation is nevertheless accountable to the Council

INTEGRITY:

- Complete honesty
- High ethical principles
- Avoidance of any situation which may, or may appear to, prejudice these, including conflicts of interest

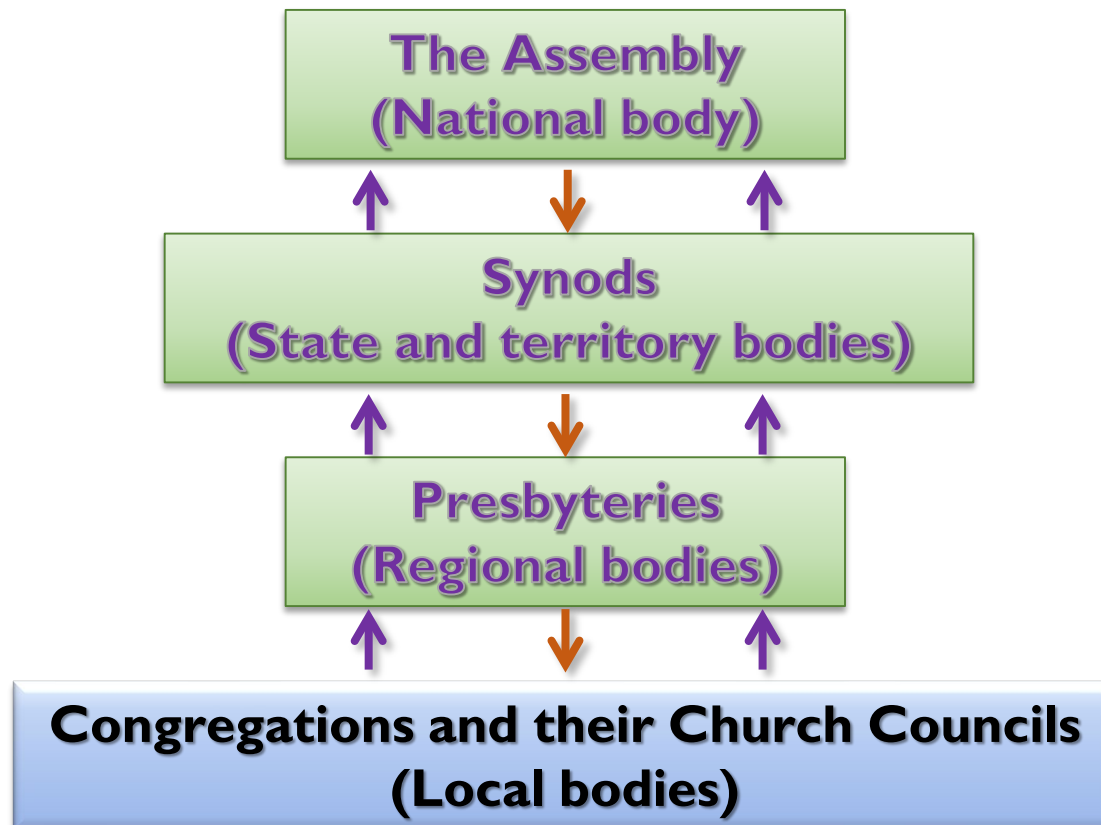
HABIT 2

An effective chair is
generally versed in the

- Rules
- Structures
- Procedures

of the Uniting Church

Decision-making in the Uniting Church



The Role of the Church Council

**Refer to the Church's Regulations available
on-line at**

[https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/resources/
Regulations_Policies/2015Regulations-updated.pdf](https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/resources/Regulations_Policies/2015Regulations-updated.pdf)

See handout notes for relevant extract

The CHAIR needs to have a sound understanding of how the Church Council relates to:

- the Minister (if there is one)
- the congregation
- the Presbytery
- and ideally the Synod and the Assembly

and to ensure that the Council's agendas, deliberations and resolutions are appropriate in that regard.

HABIT 3

An effective Chair works with the Secretary to ensure the agenda prioritises the important matters, is manageable, and has an effective strategy for dealing with the minutiae that may be important but can eat up the Council's time.

- The agenda does not belong to the Secretary – it needs to reflect the needs of the whole Council
- It should be *proactive*, not reactive
- It must prioritise the *important* over the urgent
- It must be realistic about what can be accomplished in the time available. Sometimes things have to await the next meeting

DISCUSS

Every Church Council receives copious correspondence, and seems to have to deal with endless small matters which cannot be ignored. Yet these matters can all too easily distract the Council from its real work in mission.

- *What strategies have you found effective for dealing with the time-consuming and often urgent minutiae, in such a way that they do not take Council meeting time?*

HABIT 4

An effective Chair is well prepared for each meeting, and conducts the meeting with ministry as its focus, and with clarity, precision and positivity.

The Church Council

Although the Regulations allocate to Church Councils many business functions, the emphasis is on **Ministry**:

3.1.2 (a) 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.

(b) 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 in accordance with the Regulations concerning **baptism, confirmation and membership**, and the keeping and reviewing of the rolls of the Congregation; (See Part I of these Regulations)
- (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 in accordance with the Regulations concerning **applicants for the specified ministries**;

FOCUS

It is the responsibility of the Chair to conduct meetings with matters of faith and ministry as the priorities.

PREPARATION

Is the difference between

- the Chair managing the business, and
- the business overwhelming the Chair.

So the agenda, and all supporting papers, need to be available *well before* the meeting.

MANAGING THE MEETING

- Manage time
- Allow appropriate time for prayer / worship / devotions
- Consistently remind the Council that it is talking about *ministry*

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- Constantly ensure that the current proposal and its purpose are clear to all Council members
- Manage the discussion: ensure relevance, control dominators, draw out the reticent
- Reach an outcome – unless Council agrees not to do so
- End with thanks and on a positive note – Councillors need to feel that their time has been well spent!

HABIT 5

An effective Chair understands and follows the *Manual for Meetings*, assisting the Council to discern the will of God and develop consensus around its ministry decisions; and follows through on decisions after the meeting.

The Manual for Meetings

Refer to the Church's Regulations and Manual for Meetings available on-line at

<https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/MfM2015.pdf>

See handout notes for relevant extract

Familiarity with the Manual is essential!

Manual highlight: making decisions

- Importance of consensus decision-making
- Procedures for consensus decision-making and role of the Chairperson

Question: What have been your successes, and difficulties, with consensus decision-making?

Manual highlight: making decisions

- Resort to formal decision-making
- Absentee and proxy voting – not allowed
- Decision-making by email?

HABIT 6

An effective Chair works outside of meetings to develop a sense of community and fellowship within the Council, actively inducts new members into that community, and encourages the development of all members.

The Church Council as a Community

From The Manual for Meetings

The communal nature of the relationship expressed in the Trinity and re-expressed in the Body of Christ provides a model for the type of community we become, and both enlightens and sets limits to our agenda; for the church is a community created by Christ and sustained by the Spirit. Community-building activities for the church start with the acknowledgement of the headship of Christ and the individuals' membership together as the Body of Christ.

Gathering and affirming the church as a community of faith has traditionally been through the worship of God, formal and informal.....

Establishing community does take time. Overall, however, time will be saved in the process of making decisions if care is taken to prepare the group effectively. As a guideline it is suggested that 20% of the time available be allocated for worship and community building activities.

COMMUNITY:

- Our fellow Church Councillors are our sisters and brothers in Christ, not our business partners

Question: So how do we build a sense of community within the Council?

WHY INDUCTION?

- Because we want and need new members and their gifts –
and “sink or swim” is not a great strategy for encouraging or retaining them

WHY DEVELOPMENT?

- Because people are entitled and need to hone, improve and update their skills in governance

HABIT 7

An effective Chair understands the governance responsibilities of the Council and assists it to discharge them appropriately without distracting from its primary ministry role.

Governance Matters

Increasingly, courts are holding boards with governance functions accountable for situations they oversee.

Boards owe a duty of care to all those whom they encounter – members, employees, members of the public.

Legally, the situation for volunteer board members is no different from that of highly remunerated members of corporate boards.

Governance Matters

It is essential that all members of Church Council are aware of their responsibilities and potential liabilities.

Board members who properly discharge their responsibilities have little to fear – but proper discharge is essential!

Boards have an obligation to act *reasonably* – not to be omniscient or prescient, but to act reasonably.

Key Governance Matters

- Financial responsibility and solvency
- Monitoring insurance coverage
- Monitoring other matters of legal compliance
 - employment
 - health and safety
 - child protection legislation
 - anti-discrimination legislation
 - Safe Church training
 - copyright (e.g. use of music, church publications)

Key Governance Matters

- Due diligence
- Succession planning
- Periodic review of Council's efficacy
- Accountability to the Congregation and Presbytery
- Enterprises run by the church

By virtue of his/her position, the Chairperson has a particular responsibility

- to discharge her/his own responsibilities well; and
- to remind other members of their responsibilities regularly or as required.

- Don't hit the panic button!!!!
- Remember:

Board members who
properly discharge their
responsibilities have little
to fear

Governance Matters

Board (Church Council) members must

- Always act honestly, transparently and with integrity.
- Be generally aware of relevant legislation and regulations.
- Attend, and prepare thoroughly for, meetings.
- Ensure they understand the issues. Ask questions when they don't.
- Be prepared to speak up, especially if their view is “out of step”.

Governance Matters

And they must

- Ensure financial statements are regularly submitted, thorough and clear; and ensure they understand them.
- Ask hard questions, especially of those in authority.

(I didn't know. I wasn't told. I should have asked!)

- Challenge things they believe may be wrong or injudicious.
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Governance Matters

- Disclose possible conflicts of interest
- Assess and manage risk responsibly.
- Maintain confidentiality – even after their term on Council has expired.
- Maintain “cabinet solidarity” once decisions have been made.
- Generally contribute to the good functioning of the Council.

Governance Matters

**None of these matters should distract us
from doing the work of the Kingdom.**

They should be seen as positives, to ensure we do that work well, avoiding as far as possible unhappy or unintended outcomes, and looking after the people of God and the wider community.

JUST A REMINDER

1. Transparent, accountable, has integrity
2. Knows the rules, structures, procedures of the Uniting Church
3. Works with the Secretary on the agenda ensuring priority and manageability of important matters; strategises minutiae
4. Well prepared for meetings which are conducted positively and with ministry as the focus

5. Follows the Manual of Meetings to assist Council discern the will of God; develops consensus
6. Develops community and fellowship within the Council and inducts and develops new members
7. Understands governance responsibilities and discharges them appropriately

REMEMBER

- New habits can be learnt
- Old habits can be unlearnt
- Practice sets us on the path to perfection
- But none of us will ever get there
- All one can do is one's best ... And that is surely all God asks of us
- And he is more ready to forgive our failures than we are to forgive ourselves