

Committee Orientation

For committees to function well and be effective, committee members need at least annually to undergo a brief orientation to their purpose and method of operation. This orientation outline is a helpful guide to orienting members to their committee function.

A. Committee Mandate/Purpose

1. Committees are an extension of either the church council or the congregation itself (as defined in the church's constitution). Therefore committees are accountable to and report to either the council or the congregation.
2. Committee purpose is typically defined by a congregation's by-laws, or in some cases its constitution. If a committee does not have a council-defined purpose, its first order of business is to establish its purpose.
3. Each committee should have a description describing its purpose and scope. See *Committee Description* for a template.
4. Committees accomplish different objectives. See *Committee Types*. Those relating to ministry programs are "task types." They further one or more of a congregation's function of:
 - worship/prayer
 - discipleship/education
 - service/justiceSupport-type committees assist program and task-type committees. An example of a support-type is a property committee.
5. Committees are mandated to comply to all laws and regulations, both legal and congregational.
6. At no time shall a committee act or decide in ways that jeopardize the congregation's security or reputation.

B. Expectations

1. Each member should personally contribute to the committee's purpose.
2. Each member is responsible for the committee's functioning.
3. An appropriate, regular committee meeting schedule should be established.
4. Meeting agendas should be consistent, agreed upon and adhered to.
5. Record keeping of all committee decisions should be regular and published in a timely manner.
6. Members should diligently attend and contribute to committee meetings.
7. Members should understand the committee's funding sources and budget.

C. Budget

1. Committees oversee a portion of the *congregation's* budget. The available money is *not* the committee's. For this reason the committee should expend budgeted money only if it furthers the congregation's goals and purpose in that budget year.
2. When preparing the coming year's budget, committees need to justify each budget line within their ministry area. Previous year's expenses are only partial rationale for the following year's budget.

D. From Plan to Action

1. At least annually the committee should identify its upcoming objectives, plan its work and schedule its tasks.
2. See *Project Planning and Evaluation* for establishing action steps.
3. See *Planning Organizing Doing Evaluating (PODE)* for systematically organizing tasks.

E. Code of Behavior

1. See *Council Members Code of Ethics* for similar committee code of conduct.
2. Members are to exemplify Christ in behavior, attitude and service.
3. Committee and its members are under the authority of the church council and the congregation.

F. Reporting

1. Committees are an extension of either the council or the congregation as defined in the congregation's constitution and by-laws. Thus regular written reports are to be submitted, noting:
 - issues of concern
 - decisions to be made by council or congregation
 - committee plans
 - committee recommendations.
2. Committees are to at least annually submit summary reports to the congregation.
3. Council ratifies all committee decisions and oversees all committee plans and expenditures.
4. Church staff are to be kept informed of committee action and decisions.