

Guidelines for Congregational Meetings
Including Nomination of Church Officers,
Preparation of Budget, and Voting Procedures

Adopted by Council on October 15, 2020
Amended by Council on December 10, 2020, November 23, 2021,
June 9, 2022, & December 8, 2022

I. Purpose of Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to set forth standard operating procedures for Council to follow in preparing for, and conducting, congregational meetings. Council's goal in adopting these guidelines is to provide clarity and consistency regarding how we do the business of Christ's church and to also avoid disputes within the congregation.

II. General Leadership and Oversight of Congregational Meetings

While the entire Council shares in the leadership of the congregational meeting, the President of Council (POC) shall preside and moderate the meeting. The POC will also be responsible for the preparation of the agenda for the meeting in cooperation with the Clerk of Council, the Pastor, the Chair of Deacons, the Chair of Finance, and the Treasurer. The congregational meeting shall be considered one of the main responsibilities of the POC.

III. Overview and Chronological Checklist (Preparing for the Meeting)

The following chronological checklist is provided to guide the President of Council (POC) in his or her leadership of the Council with regard to preparing for the annual congregational meeting, particularly with regard to the nomination of church officers and preparation of the church budget.

June Council Meeting

- Begin nomination process at the Council level
- Encourage Council members to provide an individualized list of personal nominations for Elders and Deacons
- Submit lists to Senior Pastor and POC prior to August meeting
- Open congregational nomination process (an announcement shall be made to congregation, via whatever means deemed appropriate by the POC, requesting that the congregation submit any nominations to the Clerk of Council by no later than September 15th)

August Council Meeting

- The Clerk of Council will distribute the list of potential nominees to the entire Council at least 1 week prior to the August meeting and solicit feedback from Council regarding any potential issues related to the nominees
- Discuss and approve list of nominations
- Instruct Senior Pastor and/or POC to reach out to nominees to ascertain their willingness to serve (complete prior to September Council Meeting)

- Prospective Nominees will be provided with a description of their offices and a copy of the church order

September Council Meeting

- Senior Pastor and/or POC will report to the entire Council regarding the willingness of the nominees to stand for election
- Clerk of Council shall circulate a list of congregational nominations to the entire Council for its approval
- POC and/or Senior Pastor shall reach out to those nominated by the congregation, and approved by the Council, to ascertain their willingness to stand for election (to be completed prior to October Council Meeting)
- POC shall contact the Chair of Finance and Treasurer to commence drafting of proposed budget

September Executive Committee Meeting

- The POC shall schedule an Executive Committee meeting to meet with the Chair of Finance and the Treasurer to finalize the proposed budget for the October Council Meeting (all paid staff, including pastoral staff, shall absent themselves from this meeting)

October Council Meeting

- Council will discuss and approve proposed budget (church staff and spouses of staff should be excused from the Council room during this discussion)
- Council will approve the final slate of nominees for Congregational Meeting, including nominations from both Council and from the congregation
- With assistance from the church office administrator, the POC shall collect, publish, and distribute biographical information regarding the respective nominees to assist the congregation in evaluating the nominees
- Council shall approve the agenda for the congregational meeting
- POC shall implement such other steps required for the congregational meeting as are set forth herein

November Council Meeting

- POC shall normally cancel the regular November meeting of Council if preparations for the Congregational Meeting are complete
- POC shall encourage Council attendance at the Congregational Meeting, which is considered, by church order, to be a Council Meeting to which the congregation is invited.

The Congregational Meeting Location and Set Up

The congregational meeting shall be held in a location with multimedia capabilities and with a suitable sound system to enable everyone to see, hear, and participate in the meeting. Ordinarily, the meeting shall be held in the sanctuary of the

church. The congregation shall be encouraged to sit in the middle section of the sanctuary and the sexton shall rope off the two seating wings of the church to facilitate this seating arrangement.

Post-Congregational Meeting Checklist

- POC or Clerk of Council shall issue invitations to new church officers to attend the December meeting of their respective office (deacons or elders) and to attend the December meeting of Council
- New officers shall be presented with a copy of *The Elder's Handbook* or *The Deacon's Handbook* based on their respective office
- The Senior Pastor will provide newly elected officers with guidance regarding the Covenant for Office Bearers
- The installation of new officers shall ordinarily be scheduled to occur upon the first Sunday in January
- Communion shall ordinarily be celebrated on the second Sunday in January
- POC or Senior Pastor shall advise staff of any salary adjustments approved by the congregation at the congregational meeting

December Elder, Deacon, & Council Meetings

- At the December Deacon Meeting a Chair of Deacons shall be elected for the coming year (Deacons elect may participate in this vote)
- At the December Elders Meeting a Chair of Elders shall be elected for the coming year (Elders elect may participate in this vote)
- At the December Council Meeting the Council shall nominate and elect a President of Council, Vice-President of Council, and Clerk of Council. Elders and Deacons elect are eligible to be nominated for these positions, may nominate others for these positions, but may not participate in the vote to approve these positions.

January Worship Services

- The installation of new officers shall ordinarily be scheduled to occur upon the first Sunday in January (first time office bearers must sign Covenant for Office Bearers in accordance with Article 5 of the Church Order prior to installation)
- Communion shall ordinarily be celebrated on the second Sunday in January

IV. Qualifications of Nominees for Church Office

- A. Nominations from the congregation must be submitted in writing by September 15th to be eligible for consideration by Council.
- B. Prospective nominees must display evidence of the biblical criteria for church leadership as set forth in Scripture. The determination of whether someone meets the scriptural qualifications is solely within the discretion of Council.
- C. Prospective nominees shall ordinarily be active professing members of RCRC for a period of two years. This period shall be measured from the date of their membership to the date they would commence service

- in office. Council may waive this requirement on a case by case basis.
- D. If the prospective nominee has previously served on Council, such person shall be disqualified for service on Council for a period of two years (measured by the date he or she ceased service to the date he or she would commence service again). Council may waive this requirement on a case by case basis. A person elected or appointed to Council to complete a three (3) year term of a retiring or resigning member of Council shall be eligible to be nominated and elected to serve for a subsequent full three (3) year term immediately after the completion of his or her partial term.
 - E. All paid staff, with the exclusion of those occupying the office of the Minister of the Word or Commissioned Pastor, shall be disqualified from service on Council.
 - F. A prospective nominee shall be disqualified if his or her spouse is currently serving on Council. This rule will not apply if the spouse currently serving on Council will conclude his or her term prior to the time that the nominee in question would commence his or her term.

V. Notification of Congregational Meeting

The POC shall ensure that the congregation is notified of the congregational meeting by contacting the church office administrator and directing him or her to publish notification of the meeting date, time, and location in the church bulletin, or other suitable digital or online format (i.e. email, blog posting, social media, video screens, etc.), for three (3) consecutive Sundays prior to the date of the meeting. This announcement shall include instructions regarding how members may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to attend the meeting.

In addition to this written announcement, the POC shall also make, or designate another member of Council to make, a verbal announcement of a similar nature from the pulpit for two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to the date of the meeting.

VI. Distribution of Draft Proposed Budget To Congregation

The Council, in consultation with the Chair of Finance, shall arrange for the distribution to the congregation a draft of the proposed budget by no later than October 31st. When the draft of the proposed budget is circulated, the congregation shall be encouraged to provide feedback to the POC regarding budgetary concerns, including staff salaries and proposed salary adjustments. The congregation shall have a period of at least (7) days after the distribution of the draft proposed budget to provide such feedback to the POC. The congregation shall be advised of the deadline for receipt of such feedback. The POC shall share any feedback with the Executive Committee of Council and the Chair of Finance. If amendments to the draft proposed budget are determined necessary based on feedback received from the congregation, Council shall approve such amendments prior to the congregational meeting and advise the entire congregation regarding same. The purpose of this provision is to encourage congregational feedback on budgetary matters prior to the congregational meeting in

order to reduce the need for amending the budget from the floor during the congregational meeting. This provision, however, should not be construed as a restriction or prohibition of the congregation's right to make such modifications to the budget by motion at the congregation meeting.

VII. Preparation, Distribution, and Collection of Ballots (Absentee & Regular)

The POC shall direct the church office administrator to prepare absentee and regular ballots with assistance from the Clerk of Council. Absentee ballots shall ordinarily be made available to the congregation concurrently with the commencement of the announcements regarding the meeting. Absentee ballots shall note that only members of the congregation over the age of 18 are eligible to vote and that incorrectly completed ballots, as defined in Article X (C) hereof, shall not be counted.

Absentee ballots may be mailed to the church office by regular U.S. mail, hand delivered to the Clerk of Council, or deposited in the Clerk's or church's mailbox. Absentee ballots should be submitted in a sealed envelope and should only be opened at the congregational meeting by the Clerk of Council and presented to the designated vote counters. Any absentee ballot submitted by U.S. mail to the office shall indicate on the outside of the envelope the following: "Attention: Clerk of Council;" and the office administrator shall be instructed not to open such envelopes, but instead forward them to the Clerk of Council. Absentee ballots may be cast via electronic means (including via Google Forms, PDF fill in form, or email). The deadline for written Absentee ballots shall be the time that the congregational meeting is called to order by the POC. The deadline for electronic ballots shall be noon of the day prior to the congregational meeting.

The absentee and regular ballots shall be prepared as follows:

1. Where the number of nominees is equal to the number to be elected for a particular office, the Council may, in its discretion, present these nominees on the ballot either individually (listing all names as separate selections and instructing members to vote for them individually) **OR** may present them as a slate of nominees to be voted on together, indicating approval or disapproval of the entire slate (a "Yes"/"No" vote).
2. Where the number of nominees is greater than the number to be elected for a particular office, the ballot must list each nominee individually instructing voters to select among them the number to be elected.
3. Examples of how ballots should be prepared:

Example #1: 4 Elder Nominees, 2 Elders to Be Elected

Name of Elder Nominee #1

Name of Elder Nominee #2

Name of Elder Nominee #3

Name of Elder Nominee #4

*** Please select a maximum of two (2) of the four (4) nominees.**

Example #2: 2 Deacon Nominees, 2 Deacons to Be Elected

Name of Deacon Nominee #1

Name of Deacon Nominee #2

*** Please select all nominees who meet with your approval.**

Example #3: 2 Deacon Nominees, 2 Deacons to Be Elected

Note: This is the same situation as above except it is presented as a slate of nominees for election purposes.

Name of Deacon Nominee #1 Yes No

Name of Deacon Nominee #2

*** Please indicate whether you approve of this slate of nominees.**

VIII. Other Preparations for Congregational Meeting

- A. Designation of Vote Counters** - Prior to the meeting, the POC shall designate two (2) deacons and two (2) members of the congregation to serve as vote counters at the congregational meeting.
- B. Prepare Budget** - POC shall contact Chair of Finance and Treasurer and instruct them to prepare a draft budget for Council's approval. This should ordinarily occur in late August or early September with informal discussions beginning in late August.
- C. Solicit Church Reports** - POC shall contact the following individuals to solicit the preparation of the following reports to be presented at the congregational meeting:
 - 1. Chair of CES - CES Report
 - 2. Chair of Finance - Housing Fund (Parsonage) Report
 - 3. Chair of Finance/Treasurer - Budget Report
 - 4. Senior Pastor - Pastoral Report (State of Congregation)
- D. Collate Reports and Prepare Final Report** - POC, with assistance from the church office administrator, shall collect all reports and prepare them for presentation to the congregation in print or digital form.
- E. Arrange for Technological Equipment** - POC shall arrange with the appropriate staff for the necessary technology (computer, projector, etc.) to present the reports for the congregational meeting.

- F. **Arrange for Set Up of Meeting Room** - POC shall contact the church sexton and/or church administrator to arrange for the proper set up of the meeting room for the congregational meeting.
- G. **Selection of Other Participants** - POC shall select appropriate individuals to prepare the opening devotion and to conclude the meeting in prayer.

IX. Sample Agenda for Congregational Meeting

The agenda for the congregational meeting shall ordinarily be set at the October meeting of Council and shall ordinarily include at least the following items:

1. **Opening Devotion** (assigned to member of Council)
2. **Taking of the Roll** (POC shall direct all present members to count off so as to have a total number of those present. This number shall be added to the number of absentee ballots received to determine the total number of votes cast in case a matter voted upon at the meeting requires a majority vote.)
3. **Designation of Vote Counters** (POC presides – there shall ordinarily be four vote counters, two of which will be deacons appointed by Council and two of which will be members of the congregation in attendance at the congregational meeting and appointed in the sole discretion of the POC)
4. **Election of Elders and Deacons** (POC presides)
5. **State of the Church Report** (Provided by Senior Pastor)
6. **Deacon Report** (Chair of Deacons)
7. **CES Report** (Chair of CES)
8. **Housing Account Report** (Chair of Finance)
9. **Proposed Budget Review and Discussion** (Chair of Finance)
10. **Budget Vote** (POC presides)
11. **Closing Prayer** (assigned to member of Council)
12. **Doxology** (assigned to gifted musician)

X. Terms, Procedures & Thresholds for Elections

- A. **Terms of Council Members** – Council members will ordinarily serve for a term of three (3) consecutive years.
- B. **Method of Voting for Church Officers**
 The vote shall be conducted by written secret ballot. Prior to the meeting, the POC shall direct the church office administrator to prepare ballots for the meeting. Such ballots shall be in substantially the same form as the absentee ballots. During the meeting, the designated vote counters, at the direction of the POC, shall distribute the ballots at the appropriate time, the vote shall then be conducted, and the vote counters shall then collect the votes from the voting members of the congregation. The Clerk of Council shall provide the vote counters with all absentee ballots duly submitted by the congregation. The vote counters shall then proceed to a private area to count the votes and prepare a written tally of the results.

Incorrectly completed ballots, as defined in Article X (C), shall not be counted.

C. Incorrectly Completed Ballots Defined

The bias of this provision is in favor of inclusion of votes whenever possible and thus any ambiguous matter of interpretation regarding the validity of a ballot shall be construed in favor of inclusion of the ballot rather than disqualification of the ballot. Given this bias towards inclusion, the following situations shall not result in a ballot being deemed incorrectly completed and thus disqualified:

1. A ballot containing votes for elders or deacons which **are less than** the number of maximum votes allowed. **Example:** There are four candidates for two open elder seats. If a ballot displays only one vote rather than the two vote maximum allowed, such ballot shall not be construed as incorrectly completed and the vote shall be counted.
2. A ballot incorrectly completed with regard to the vote regarding one office, but correct as to the vote of the other office. **Example:** The ballot contains more than the maximum number of votes for the office of elder, but contains votes equal to or less than the maximum number of votes for the office of deacon, such ballot shall not be construed as incorrectly completed and the vote shall be counted as to the office of deacon, but not as to the office of elder.

Clear cases of when votes should not be counted are when the votes cast are more than the maximum allowed for a particular office, when the ballot is completed in a manner that makes it impossible to decipher the voter's intent, when an absentee ballot is lacking a signature or when an absentee ballot is submitted after the commencement of the congregational meeting.

D. Thresholds for Election

1. Case #1: Nominees Equal to the Number to Be Elected

If Council presents a slate of nominees for a church office and the number of nominees is equal to the number to be elected to such office, then the threshold for election shall be the simple receipt of fifty-percent (50%) or more the total number of ballots cast (not the total number of votes cast). This threshold shall apply regardless of whether the nominees are presented to be voted on individually or as a slate of nominees.

2. Case #2: Nominees Greater than the Number to Be Elected

If Council presents a slate of nominees for a church office and the number of nominees is greater than the number to be elected to such office, then the threshold for election shall be based on ascertaining the nominees who received the highest total number of votes overall without regard to achieving an underlying minimum percentage of votes. In this case, the vote counters shall list the

nominees in ascending order of total votes received, and those with the highest totals shall be elected to office to fill the number of open positions. In the case where a tie occurs with regard to the last open position, then a second election shall be held with only the tied nominees appearing on the ballot. Any election to resolve a tie shall be conducted in accordance with the procedures set forth herein, except that absentee ballots shall not be counted.

Example #1: Four Nominees for Two Open Positions (50 Total Ballots Cast)

Candidate #1 – 30 votes (elected)
Candidate #2 – 30 votes (elected)
Candidate #3 – 21 votes (not elected)
Candidate #4 – 19 votes (not elected)

In this example, Candidates #1 and #2 were elected based on the total number of votes they received. Candidates #1 and #2 also received a majority of the total ballots cast.

Example #2: Four Nominees for Two Open Positions (50 Total Ballots Cast)

Candidate #1 – 35 votes (elected)
Candidate #2 – 24 votes (elected)
Candidate #3 – 21 votes (not elected)
Candidate #4 – 20 votes (not elected)

In this example, Candidates #1 and #2 were elected based on the total number of votes they received. Candidate #1 received a majority of the total ballots cast, but Candidate #2 did not receive a majority of the total ballots cast.

Although not required for election, the POC, in his or her discretion, may advise the congregation when all elected officers received a majority based on the total ballots cast.

E. Reporting and Ability to Request Audit of Results

After counting the votes, the vote counters shall return to the meeting and present the written tally of the results to the POC. The results shall be reported separately by office (elder and deacon) and in descending order of number of votes received by each candidate, with the candidate with the most votes being listed first and the candidate receiving the least votes being listed last (e.g. similar to how the examples are displayed in Article X (D)(2) above). The POC shall notify the congregation of those elected, but shall not disclose the actual number of votes received by nominees at the congregational meeting. Subsequent to the congregational meeting

any nominee shall have the right to make a written appeal to Council to review the official tally. Such right to appeal shall expire fourteen (14) days after the date of the meeting. The Clerk shall maintain a record of the official voting results until the expiration of the appeals period at which point the ballots shall be destroyed.

F. Budget Approval Vote

Generally, the budget approval vote shall be conducted by voice vote unless Council determines that it should be done by secret written ballot. If the voice vote results in uncertainty regarding the outcome of the vote, then the POC shall "Call the Vote," and members shall be required to indicate their vote via the raising of hands or other suitable method determined at the sole discretion of the POC. Absentee voting shall not be allowed for the approval of the budget because the budget is subject to amendment during the congregational meeting.

G. Voting by Secret Ballot for Sensitive Matters

The Council may designate that any sensitive vote of the congregation, in addition to the election of officers, be conducted by secret written ballot. Such ballots, absentee and regular, shall be prepared in accordance with the directions contained herein. Members of the congregation may also make a motion that any vote at the congregational meeting be made by secret written ballot. Such motion shall be made and considered pursuant to the rules of order (see Article XIII).

XI. Policy Regarding Staff Dismissal During Budget Discussion & Vote

The POC shall instruct all paid staff of the church to excuse themselves from the congregational meeting to allow for an open and free discussion of staff salaries and benefits. This excusal shall occur during the budget discussion at the time identified as appropriate by the POC. This excusal shall also extend to the spouse and/or children of staff members. All excused parties will be invited to return to the meeting, and participate in the vote, at the time determined at the discretion of the POC.

XII. Post Congregational Meeting Reporting

In a reasonable time after the conclusion of the congregational meeting, the POC, the Senior Pastor, or the Clerk of Council shall advise the entire congregation of the outcome of the officer and budget elections, and of any other relevant decisions made at the congregational meeting which impact the life of the congregation. Such advisement may be made in print, digitally, and/or verbally during a worship service.

XIII. Rules of Order & Procedure

The expectation is that the Congregational Meeting will be run in an informal manner so as to encourage feedback from the congregation. However, if greater formality is required based on the determination of the POC, or because a controversy arises during the meeting, then Robert's Rules of Order shall be employed and enforced.