

Church Council – Toolkit

Mission First. The Church Council leads year-round administration that serves the mission of Jesus Christ in your community. It envisions, plans, implements, and annually evaluates ministries—always amenable to the charge conference (the local body with ultimate authority).

1) Purpose & Posture

- Keep nurture, outreach, and witness at the center.
- Use prayerful discernment; prefer consensus; speak with one voice after a vote.
- Remember: the charge conference oversees the council.

2) Core Responsibilities (at a glance)

- Plan & evaluate ministry strategy and outcomes.
- Budget & resource the work (Finance recommends; Council establishes; see §7).
- Leadership development across committees and teams.
- Steward the church's organizational and temporal life.
- Meet at least quarterly (more often during budget season or major projects).

3) Who's at the Table

- Members typically include: chair, lay leader, chair of SPRC, Finance, Trustees, treasurer, lay member to annual conference, youth/young-adult reps, and pastor(s).
- Chair is elected by charge conference; may attend other committees unless restricted.
- Quorum: those present and voting at a duly announced meeting.

4) Guardrails (Know Your Limits)

- Closure authority: The charge conference (not the council) holds authority to act on church closure; the council may recommend only.
- Compensation: The charge conference sets clergy/staff compensation; the council recommends based on SPRC input.
- Apportionments: Treat as the church's first benevolent responsibility; budget accordingly.
- Property: Trustees manage property and legal matters; council coordinates mission and strategy with Trustees' fiduciary work.

5) Standard Meeting Flow (90 minutes)

1. Opening (5) – Prayer/devotion, covenant reminder, approve agenda.
2. Mission Moment (10) – A quick story/metric tying admin to mission.
3. Consent Agenda (10) – Minutes, routine reports.
4. Finance Snapshot (10) – Income/expenses vs. plan; apportionments on track?
5. Trustees & SPRC Highlights (15) – Key decisions or recommendations.
6. Strategic Items (30) – Decisions that move the mission (limit to 2–3).
7. Calendar & Assignments (5) – Who does what by when.
8. Closing (5) – Next meeting, prayer.

Tip: Put big mission decisions before routine updates. Time-box reports; use written reports whenever possible.

6) Annual Rhythm (What to do when)

- Q1: Ministry evaluations; confirm goals/metrics; apportionment plan; audits/start financial review.
- Q2: Mid-year course-correction; leadership pipeline check; property maintenance plan.
- Q3: Budget drafting (Finance leads); compensation recommendation pathway begins (SPRC → Council → Charge Conference).
- Q4: Adopt next year's budget; ministry calendar; year-end generosity; charge conference items.

7) Budget & Compensation Workflow (Cheat-Sheet)

Finance → Council → Charge Conference

- Budget: Finance prepares → Council establishes/adopts → Implement & monitor.
- Compensation: SPRC recommends → Council reviews/forwards → Charge conference sets.

8) Quick Motion Templates

- Budget: "Move that the Council adopt the 2026 operating budget as presented by Finance."
- Compensation (forwarding): "Move that the Council forward the SPRC 2026 compensation recommendations to the charge conference."
- Apportionments Priority: "Move that apportionments be treated as first benevolent responsibility in all disbursements."
- Recommendation to Charge Conference (closure/merger/major action): "Move that the Council recommend to the charge conference that it consider [action] and, if approved there, proceed pursuant to the Discipline."

9) Best-Practice Checklist

- Start with mission; end with clear assignments and dates.
- Use written reports & consent agenda to protect decision time.
- Keep a master calendar and review it every meeting.
- Track participation & impact metrics, not just dollars.
- Protect conflicts-of-interest; recuse when appropriate.
- Minutes record actions (who/what/when), not every comment.
- Apportionments on time; audits/reviews up to date.
- Council chair stays in sync with Finance, Trustees, SPRC chairs between meetings.

Quick References

- Church Council: ¶1252; Context: ¶¶1246–249, 251.
- Related Roles: Finance (budget), SPRC (compensation recommendations), Trustees (property).
- Key Principles: charge conference oversight; council recommends on compensation/major actions; apportionments prioritized.