

## Chalice Meeting Best Practices

(we're talking about meetings, but we're also talking about team formation and performance)

Difference between a meeting and a gathering:

- Meeting has an agenda (implicit or explicit) and purpose, a desired course of action to pursue afterward, people leaving with actions to take
- Gathering is experiential, the gathering itself is the purpose—still needs a plan!

Concerns:

- Congregants who are parents of young children and/or have paid employment are protective of their time. Church meetings need to be meaningful and productive.
- Be thoughtful about how you welcome and orient new people onto your team and into your meeting.

Challenges of Leading a Church Meeting:

- Balancing social time with productivity
- Having enough time for meaningful discussion and connection while keeping the meeting as short as possible

Best Practices (from Council of Chairs discussion January 13, 2024):

- Building community and connecting with each other is important and part of every church meeting
  - Time for check-in is important
    - In large groups, check-in may need to happen in breakout groups (pairs or triads)
    - In some meetings, check-in may be the most important part of the meeting (depending on what congregants are carrying)
    - If time is short, invite people to share what they need to share to be fully present at the meeting
  - You may want your team/group/committee to have a purely social gathering once a year (or more)
- Shared clarity about the meeting
  - Everyone attending knows the purpose/mission of the group
  - Everyone attending knows the purpose of the meeting (okay to ask if/why an item on the agenda is appropriate business)
  - Everyone attending knows what time the meeting is scheduled to end
- Start and end on time
  - In small groups, it may be appropriate to wait for someone you know is a few minutes away
  - Structure the agenda from most important/urgent topics to least important/urgent, so if you run out of time, you can leave the less important topics for the next meeting

- You might want to structure the agenda so that items that may not be of interest to everyone come last, and disinterested people can leave the meeting before those topics are discussed
- 2 hour meetings used to be the norm for church meetings, nowadays aim for 90 minutes or less
- If you want to spend a few more minutes to finish a topic, check with everyone: “Can everyone stay 10 more minutes to finish this item?” Honor the wishes of people who need or want to conclude the meeting.
- You may want to periodically have a meeting to talk about your meetings! Rev. Sharon or other CT members will be happy to facilitate a meeting or mini-retreat for your group, to discuss how you do things together, mission, vision, etc.
- Everybody owns the meeting
  - Send out the agenda in advance, asking for additions (best to ask in advance; it can be challenging to add surprise items to the agenda)
  - The leader facilitates and moderates discussion
  - The more people in attendance, the more the leader(s) needs to guide moving through the agenda and observing time constraints
  - Invite people to give feedback on how meetings are going, ask if there are wished-for changes
  - Discussion and collaboration are what makes most meetings meaningful
  - Be mindful of how much time is spent on sharing information. Beware the “meeting that could have been an email.” AND...it is appropriate to share information so everyone hears it and has a chance to ask questions or provide input.
  - Everyone should be encouraged to participate. One technique is to use “mutual invitation”—this is a process where each person who speaks invites a next person to speak. You can read more about the mutual invitation practice here: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/inclusive-meeting-practices-talking-sticks-mutual-mark-smutny>
- Consider offering snacks (or ask someone to bring snacks) for in-person meetings

Additional thoughts from Rev. Sharon:

- Consider having time on the agenda (or meetings set aside) for education and team development.
- Team leaders shape how meetings go, but so do the attendees. When you attend meetings, consider how you can support the facilitator and use your power to effect positive change. Use I statements: “I am anxious we won’t have enough time left to talk about the agenda item that’s important to me.”