

Coquitlam Presbyterian Church

Session Responsibilities

Overview:

The Session of Coquitlam Presbyterian Church is the accountable body of the congregation and it is fully answerable for all the congregation's activities. (Book of Forms (B/F) 109.1) With the growth of the congregation, the role of Session has changed from active ministry involvement to encouraging and supporting practical ministry under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This will allow it to concentrate on its spiritual role and ensuring that good pastoral care is provided. Nevertheless, individual elders remain fully involved in practical ministry.

Particular Responsibilities

1. Prayer & Ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-4)

One of the primary tasks of Session is to form the bedrock of prayer for the entire congregation. Ample time should be set aside for elders to be engaging together in fervent intercessory prayer for the life and ministry of the church as well as individual needs within the congregation. These regular corporate prayer times should also be opportunities for elders to discern the Lord's voice and leading of the Holy Spirit for direction for the congregation.

Additionally, elders should be in the habit of studying scripture and other discipleship material together. There is power in the elders putting themselves under the authority of God's Word together in order that God might be able to forge specific elements of spiritual growth within the group context. The scriptural principle that leaders can only lead people spiritually where they themselves have first been should be a clear guiding notion in the life of Session.

Session has full accountability for the spiritual wellbeing of the Congregation. It must approve the founding of any new group and must ensure that that group is conducted in an acceptable manner and that its teachings, if any, are in accordance with the policies of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. (B of F 109.1)

2. Effective Worship

The content of Worship services is arranged by the Worship Director under the guidance of the Lead Minister, and operational matters are handled within the Ministry Team, Session retains overall accountability for the adequacy, or otherwise, of worship activity.(B of F 111)

3. Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care is strongly supported by the Life Groups and, for those outside these Groups, the Pastoral Care Team. This Team is led by five elders, who are supplemented by congregational members with visiting and people skills. If a situation arises within a Life Group, which the leader is unable to handle, the matter is referred upward to the Director, Adult Ministries, who, in turn, may call upon Session for assistance. The Pastoral Care Team will report to Session as and when required. (B of F 110).

4. Transformation.

The members of the Session must find ways through prayer, study, and research to keep in touch with the Holy Spirit in such a powerful way that they can fulfil the charge to "lead the congregation to discover what God is doing in the world and to plan for change, renewal, and reformation under the Word of God." □ If we truly are a denomination that is reformed and always being reformed "according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit", the local congregation must take the lead in being open to change, creative challenge, and the possibility of taking risks for the sake of the Gospel. The Session leads the way in actively trying to find out where Jesus Christ is going and joining him there. Rather than being threats to the old ways of doing things, change and reformation can bring out the best in us and force us to be fresh and new.

5. Ministry Team

The Ministry Team is, in effect, a standing committee of Session. It is currently led jointly by the Lead Minister and an elder. It handles all operational matters, normally dealt with by traditional Session sub-committees (eg. Worship, Education, Outreach) and it has a mandate under the direction of the Holy Spirit to operate freely in all areas of congregational life. It remains however fully responsible to Session and therefore answerable to Session for its decisions. There will be at least one joint meeting of Session and Ministry Team annually. (B of F 128)

6. Governance and Leadership:

The Session, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, will promote sound governance and leadership in all areas of congregational life. In order for Session to remain relevant, current and forward thinking, it will provide appropriate training for elders and other key leaders. Members of Session should annually have a time of re-appraisal to measure successes and weaknesses over the previous twelve months both on a corporate and on a personal basis.

7. Personnel

Session has a standing Personnel Committee, convened by the Session Clerk and also including the Deputy Clerk, the Co-Convenor of the Ministry Team and the Treasurer. It handles all routine personnel matters, reporting to Session as and when necessary.

8. Policy re use of Premises

Session is responsible for regulating the use of the premises. It must set appropriate guidelines but may delegate the booking of premises as long as the guidelines are understood and obeyed. (B of F 109.2)

9. Presbytery Representation

Elders will appoint a Presbytery representative and an alternate Representative annually. The Representative will report all noteworthy decisions and happenings to the next meeting of Session. (B of F 114.7 & 131)

10. Maintenance of the Membership Roll

The Clerks shall be responsible to Session for the upkeep of the Membership Roll and, by extension, for the computer list of addresses. (B of F 109.5 & 124)