

NEWS FROM LYNNE PABST

Our Certified Christian Educator and POINT Partner

Announcement: The “Mandated Reporter Training” is rescheduled for Saturday, June 27, 2020 from 9:00am-noon at Grove Presbyterian Church, Danville, PA. It is our hope that by that date Grove can safely handle a small face-to-face group. The training led by Joan Mosier through the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance is free, but registration is required. Pastors, CPs, CLPs, Church Staff and volunteers can use this to keep credentialing up-to-date. Register for this event by calling the church office 570-275-0692 or emailing nurture@grovepres.org. Coffee and light snacks are provided.

VBS and Summer Children’s Programs Information – What are we to do?: Is anyone interested in a workshop/chat on what to do about Summer Children’s Programming during the pandemic, resources available, and help on deciding what to do? Let me know your interest and questions: nurture@grovepres.org I will then setup an informative zoom meeting to share some thoughts.

Moving From Crisis Mode to Best Practice Part 2

Operating in crisis mode for about two months now congregations worked out emergency tactics to maintain ministry. Many churches called emergency meetings to adjust quickly in response to the COVID19 pandemic and Commonwealth guidelines. Responsibilities were taken over by a smaller group of people with technological knowledge. Only key people met face-to-face when necessary so physical contact was limited. Meetings were held with no agendas. Since buildings and church offices closed, zoom meetings were setup from homes without consulting the church calendar resulting in meeting conflicts. In some cases, the larger congregation was not made aware that committees were active. All of this was necessary to keep ministries going in the crisis. As we settle into a new pattern of life or plan for re-entry, we need to think about best practices in the administration of church ministry.

Calendar: A central church calendar needs to be maintained and published for the church community. Just as one would not want face-to-face events to overlap so it is with zoom meetings. Meetings, even if virtual or set-up from a home office, must appear on the church calendar to be an official church event. This has been modeled to us by the Presbytery Executer. In each Presbytery Weekly News the Presbytery Calendar of committee meetings are listed even though on zoom. The whole congregation needs to be aware of the activity of the church. It is time to look again at the larger picture of ministries rather than the day to day survival.

Meeting Schedule: While emergency meetings were necessary, it now is time to get back into a pattern of living. When there is a routine, people can plan for the meeting in a more productive way. Do not feel the old pattern needs to be re-established. A new pattern can be created. The important factor is that there needs to be a regular schedule.

Use of Proper Meeting Decorum: Since virtual meetings are attended while still in the home and there is that technological wall, many people act and dress much more informally than if they were at the church in person. Whether on the computer or sitting in a room face-to-face, one must remember that these are formal meetings not a night watching a favorite movie with best friends. When people attend meetings from home, family members are around. Children go in and out. The question of confidentiality arises. Having a meeting behind closed doors is not as easy as it was before. Here are some general tips.

- Open and close with prayer
- Follow Robert's Rules of Order (Where is your copy these days?)
- Provide all members with the link and with the technology to be able to participate (No Session or committee member should be left out due to the lack of technology.)
- Provide an agenda (Due to the limits of technology, it takes longer to get through material online than it does face-to-face, so plan for this. Trim down your agenda to the most important. Technology allows people to attend wherever they are, so expect higher attendance which means more people talking and more time taken.)
- Make certain everyone has a voice
- Define procedure for establishing a quorum virtually
- Establish procedure for voting (Thumbs up, pushing raise the hand button, red or green button -- Does the platform you are using have a voting option?)
- Train all members in use of the meeting space (If members do not know where the mute icon is or the voting button is, they can not be effective members.)
- Inform members of confidentiality expectations (There will be information covered which is for Session, Deacon or Committee ears only. There needs to be a level of trust maintained.)

Review By-laws/Constitution: Many church constitutions were written with the assumption that meetings are being held physically in one place. This is no longer the case. Even when on the other side of this pandemic, now that churches know how to use technology more effectively, they will continue to use it. Blended meetings will become the norm where some participants are physically in one place and others are calling in from other locations. By-laws and constitutions must provide guidelines for these meetings.

Review Church Budget: It is now time to look at the financial needs for sustainability of live streaming, virtual meetings, upgrading equipment, increasing bandwidths, licenses, zoom accounts or maybe it is time to hire a tech person. Does a church provide iPads for all sitting Elders and Deacons so they are able to participate wherever they are? On the flipside it is time to ask are there any items in the budget which are now obsolete and no longer needed.

Review Nominating Procedure: When the person being asked to serve responds by saying what is involved, does the nominating committee not only respond by saying a meeting once a month but also include "You will need access to the internet, this software, a computer with a camera and mic and access to email and text in order to fully participate."

There is a lot to think about considering what has been learned and opened up to churches. Let us settle into best practices for carrying out the mission of Jesus Christ and sharing the love of God with all.

Blessings – Stay Safe – Don't forget to let me know about VBS interest

Resources Used in Writing this Article:

How to make certain your virtual meeting is legal:

https://www.churchlawandtax.com/web/2020/may/making-sure-your-virtual-church-meeting-is-legally-valid.html?utm_campaign=May%205%202020%20Webinar%20Email%201%20%28W8tJu8%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=May%205%202020%20Webinar%20Registration%20List&_ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJudXJ0dXJlQGdyb3ZlcHJlcy5vcmcilCAia2xfY29tcGFueV9pZCI6ICJMWWtyc0QifQ%3D%3D

Handouts on From Webinar on virtual meeting is legal:

https://store.churchlawandtax.com/making-sure-your-virtual-church-meeting-is-legally-valid/?utm_campaign=May%205%202020%20Webinar%20Email%201%20%28W8tJu8%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=May%205%202020%20Webinar%20Registration%20List&_ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJudXJ0dXJlQGdyb3ZlcHJlcy5vcmcilCAia2xfY29tcGFueV9pZCI6ICJMWWtyc0QifQ%3D%3D