



## **Charter for Advisory Councils**

Local church councils will operate to accomplish at the local congregational level the stated mission contained in the denomination's Vision and Values document. They will operate within denominational parameters set by this charter, as well as the denominational Statement of Beliefs, and the Code of Ethics for Elders of the Grace Communion International. This charter is binding on those who accept membership of the council of a local congregation of the Grace Communion International (Australia).

Council members will seek to work together for the building of the church and the advancement of the kingdom. They will seek to do this in a spirit of godly humility and cooperation, endeavouring to follow Paul's admonition to "make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace".

The National Advisory Council (NAC) provides a model on which to base local councils.

A council seeks to bring together gifted people to broaden input into the congregational planning, development, decision and implementation processes. Unless otherwise defined, the council will operate to provide advice to the local pastor. Where there is no pastor, the council may need to make local decisions. Where possible, these should be made in consultation with neighbouring or sister churches, and the denominational considerations of the church development office.

In coordination with the pastor, the council will seek to identify, facilitate and coordinate the gifts and talents of the individual members of the congregation for the benefit of the body of Christ and the sharing of the gospel.

## **Selection**

The pastor may appoint council members. Or the congregation may provide a list of nominations from which the pastor chooses. Or, from a list of nominations provided by the congregation, the membership may be asked to respond by anonymous written vote for their choices. A minimum of four weeks' notice shall be given before this course of action is taken.

## **Selection Criteria**

Members of a local council will:

- Be members in good standing of the Grace Communion International.
- Have an established record of service and commitment to the fellowship.
- Be in full accord with the denomination's Statement of Beliefs and Code of Ethics for Elders.
- Be well regarded for their spiritual maturity and balance.
- Use their term on the council for service, not for the advancement of personal position or agendas.

Previous work on professional boards or committees would be an advantage.

## **Composition**

The council should be of appropriate size to efficiently represent the congregation.

To avoid operation becoming cumbersome and time consuming, less than ten members is a general recommendation. In very small congregations, the council may run best as a "town meeting".

As far as is practical, the composition of the council should aim to represent the various constituents of the congregation (both genders, youth, elderly, families, and so on).

## **Operation**

The council shall elect a chairman and secretary. Where decisions are called for, decisions should be made by consensus where possible, or by two-thirds majority vote. Major recommendations should be taken to the congregation for validation before a decision is reached.

Meetings shall be minuted. The council shall operate within the guidelines for financial reporting and control as defined by the national office (see Financial Procedures for Local Church Councils).

(In some situations, a congregation may decide to form a separate finance committee. This committee shall operate according to the guidelines for financial reporting and control as defined by the national office in Financial Procedures for Local Church Councils, and report to the pastor or pastoral team, and/or the administrative council.)

Under the national restructuring beginning January 1, 1999 (Australia), August 1, 1999 (New Zealand), councils are expected to provide input and advice to pastors (where applicable) for the development of a local Strategic Plan. This plan needs to be registered with the Regional Office prior to the receipt of funds. Funds should then be used in accordance with the plan. Each council should define its own local approval processes prior to the expenditure of monies.

Councils shall meet as often as local needs require. This may be more often in the set-up and transition stage. From then on, once every two months may provide an appropriate time frame.

Meetings shall be open to the whole church at least from time to time.

Appointment shall be for a limited period of time (one or two years as a recommendation). It is best to rotate only a portion of the council at any time so continuity can be maintained.

### **Commissioning**

Once selected, the local council will be commissioned through prayer by the pastor or a denominational representative. This will be done in the presence of the local congregation.

This commissioning represents the public statement of acceptance of this charter by each member of the council, and in turn the congregation's recognition and acceptance of the local council. Regular prayer - both public and private - for God's guidance and blessing on the council is enjoined.

### **Attitude and Approach**

Councils should always meet in a prayerful attitude, mindful of the grace of God. Each meeting should begin with prayer and scripture reading. The guidance of the Holy Spirit should be sought in direction and action.

Pastors and councils should strive to work together in a spirit of cooperation and harmony that edifies the body of Christ. Where there is significant conflict between a pastor and a council, redress may be sought through church development and the denominational grievance process.

Councils should never become a source of disunity in the fellowship. In accepting the responsibility of service, council members agree to conduct themselves in humility and grace.

Every effort should be made to ensure that business is conducted to the glory of God and for the nurture of the fellowship.

The council will at all times be accountable to the congregation, the pastor, and the Regional Office of the Grace Communion International.

The council's efforts and input should be guided by the church's vision of "Living and sharing the gospel". Desired outcomes should aim at the development of a caring, Christ-centred community, which promotes a high level of personal worship, and the equipping of the saints to use their spiritual gifts in ministry and evangelism.