



First Lutheran Church

Congregation Council

Governance Policy Manual



INTRODUCTION

The Council of First Lutheran Church, Fargo, ND, (“First” or “First Lutheran Church”) seeks, in coordination with the Senior Pastor and ministry staff, to provide effective leadership in furtherance of First’s mission to bring people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, and to help them grow in the Christian Faith. To do that, the Council must have a sound understanding of its role as trustees and disciples who work to discern and implement God’s vision for First.

This Governance Policy Manual (“Manual”) has been adopted to assist the Council in carrying out its responsibilities. This Manual should be interpreted in accordance with First’s Constitution and Bylaws, which provide basic information about the Council’s role and responsibilities. This Manual is intended to complement those documents, not to supersede or contradict them.

In this Manual, the Council seeks to state its values, vision, and general strategy for providing leadership to First Lutheran Church. The Council utilizes some of the principles of Policy Governance in this Manual,¹ and divides its guidelines and policies into three areas:

1. **Mission and Vision Statements.** The Mission and Vision of First Lutheran Church guides the Council in its discernment and strategic thinking.
2. **Council Governance Policies.** These policies state the Council’s philosophy and accountability, and the specifics of its role. Included in these policies is an annual planning cycle, through which the Council establishes a Master Ministry Plan.
3. **Council Relationship Policies.** These policies clarify the relationship with the Senior Pastor, and state the manner in which the Council delegates authority to the Senior Pastor, and ultimately to other pastoral leadership and staff.

This Manual does not specifically address First’s various ministry teams, committees, or other groups. (See Const. of First Lutheran Church, Chapter 14.) However, the Council attaches in an appendix the documents it has approved in establishing ongoing ministry teams pursuant to Section C14.02 of the Constitution.

¹ Many of the policies and provisions in this Manual are guided by the principles of Policy Governance®, developed by John Carver and Miriam Mayhew Carver. The Council especially thanks Boundary Management, a company owned by Lynn Walker, Ph.D., for the use of its generic policy manual, which was used in part as a base document in developing this Manual.

1. Mission and Vision Statements

1.1 Mission Statement of First Lutheran Church (“Mission”)

Our mission at First Lutheran Church is to bring people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, and to help them grow in the Christian Faith.

- 1.1.1. The Council will work intentionally to serve First’s Mission in each decision it makes.
- 1.1.2. The Council will work intentionally to serve First’s Mission through an annual cycle of discernment, planning, and implementation of ministry goals.

1.2 Vision Statement of First Lutheran Church (“Vision”)

Growing out of First’s mission statement is our vision statement. Our vision statement helps us put into action the different aspects of our mission statement. Our Vision is:

**To inspire through welcome and worship.
To equip through teaching and training.
To reach through serving and sending.**

- 1.2.1. The Council will use First’s Vision as a tool that will help to establish and evaluate the goals and objectives in an annually created Master Ministry Plan.
- 1.2.2. First’s Vision contains three key words: Inspire, Equip, and Reach. The Council understands them as follows:
 - 1.2.2.1. Inspire represents the emphasis of the Holy Spirit in all we do. We see our church as welcoming and providing outstanding worship opportunities. We want to use these gifts to invite others in and feed them spiritually in these ways.
 - 1.2.2.2. Equip represents the Bible studies, workshops, Sunday School, Confirmation, trips, and any other educational opportunities that we provide. We see these as important parts of building discipleship – a group of followers of Christ who will go out and use what they have learned.
 - 1.2.2.3. Reach represents that “going out” process of serving others and sending people out in mission. It is the place where the inspiration and equipping comes together in Christ’s name.

2. Council Governance Policies

2.1 Governing Style

The Council will govern with an emphasis on (1) discernment and accomplishment of God's vision for First; (2) strategic leadership more than administrative detail; (3) sensitivity to the respective leadership roles of the Council and Senior Pastor; (4) encouragement of diversity of viewpoints in its discussions; and (5) collective rather than individual decisions.

With that in mind:

- 2.1.1. **Scope of Activities.** All activities of the Council, its officers, committees, or members shall relate to the specific responsibilities of the Council and shall serve the Mission and Vision of First Lutheran Church.
- 2.1.2. **Group Action.** The Council shall exercise its governing authority as a whole. No individual Council member may exercise such authority except as instructed by the Council.
- 2.1.3. **Policy Review and Revisions.** Any Council member or the Senior Pastor may request that the President of Council place on the Council's agenda a review of or a change of specific policies.
- 2.1.4. **Monitoring.** The Council shall establish effective and regular ways of monitoring programs for relevance to and compliance with the Mission and Vision of First Lutheran Church, as well as for compliance with First's Constitution and Bylaws.

2.2 Council Role

The role of the Council is set forth in Chapter 11 of the Constitution of First Lutheran Church, including the following duties (see Const. § C11.04):

- 2.2.1. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do strategic thinking, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.
- 2.2.2. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
- 2.2.3. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions in service to God's mission.

- 2.2.4. To maintain supportive relationships with the Senior Pastor and to annually evaluate the fulfillment of the calling, appointment, or employment.
- 2.2.5. To act in a supporting and collaborative manner with the Senior Pastor in maintaining a supportive relationship with other pastors and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling, appointment, or employment.
- 2.2.6. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
- 2.2.7. To promote a congregation climate of peace and goodwill and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.
- 2.2.8. To form a call committee to facilitate and recommend the call of Senior Pastor. To serve as the call committee for and facilitate a call to qualified candidates based on the recommendation of the Senior Pastor.²
- 2.2.9. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of a pastor.
- 2.2.10. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide units of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- 2.2.11. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as they adhere to the values and mission of First Lutheran Church.
- 2.2.12. To seek out qualified candidates for ordained ministry.

Additionally, pursuant to Section 11.05, the Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation. Thus:

- 2.2.13. The Congregation Council shall be the board of directors of this congregation and as such shall be responsible for maintaining and protecting its property and the management of its business and fiscal affairs. It shall have the powers and be subject to the obligations that pertain to such boards under the laws of the State of North Dakota, except as otherwise provided herein.
- 2.2.14. The Congregation Council shall not have authority to buy, sell, or encumber real property unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation.
- 2.2.15. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts as permitted in the Bylaws.

² See Sections C9.01 and C11.04.h of the Constitution.

- 2.2.16. The Congregation Council shall prepare an annual budget for adoption by this congregation and shall supervise the expenditure of funds in accordance with the adopted budget and in accordance with the Bylaws. The budget shall include the congregation's full-indicated share in support of the wider ministry being carried on in partnership with the synod and church wide organization.
- 2.2.17. The Congregation Council shall ascertain that the financial affairs of this congregation are being conducted efficiently, giving particular attention to the prompt payment of all obligations and to the regular forwarding of benevolence monies to the synodical treasurer.
- 2.2.18. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for this congregation's investments and its total insurance program.
- 2.2.19. The Congregation Council shall act as the Human Resources Committee in all areas regarding employment and employment-related issues, including but not limited to the hiring, retaining, training, disciplining, and terminating of employees, and the establishment and execution of appropriate personnel policies and procedures for all rostered and nonrostered staff, unless otherwise addressed in Chapter 9 of the Constitution.
- 2.2.20. The Congregation Council shall retain competent and qualified professionals to conduct an annual audit of the church's financial recordkeeping and affairs.

Pursuant to Section C11.06 of the Constitution, the Council has additional duties to:

- 2.2.21. Provide for an annual review of the membership roster.
- 2.2.22. Submit a comprehensive report to this congregation at the annual meeting.
- 2.2.23. Meet on a regular basis in accordance with guidelines in the Bylaws.

Finally, the Council shall:

- 2.2.24. Appoint leadership responsibilities upon the extended leave of absence of the Senior Pastor.

2.3 Council Members' Code of Conduct

Council members have a personal responsibility to be good stewards and disciples of Christ. As did those of the early Church who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, the members of Council shall commit themselves to "the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42. In this commitment, the council members have responsibilities to God, to the members of First Lutheran Church, and to each other. Thus, they shall carry out the role as set forth in Paragraph 2.2 of this Manual.

They shall also comply with the following:

- 2.3.1. They shall attend Council meetings regularly and shall consider that missing two successive regular meetings without cause serves as their automatic resignation.
- 2.3.2. They shall be prepared for the Council meetings.
- 2.3.3. They shall become familiar with this Manual, the Constitution of First Lutheran Church, and its Bylaws.
- 2.3.4. They shall make informed decisions by requesting complete and accurate information.
- 2.3.5. They shall participate in discussions and voting.
- 2.3.6. They shall show respect for others and their opinions and shall respect the right of others to disagree.
- 2.3.7. Once the Council has made a decision as a whole, they shall support that decision.
- 2.3.8. They shall actively monitor themselves by ensuring that Council actions and conditions are consistent with First Lutheran Church's Mission and Vision, First's Constitution and Bylaws, and this Manual.

2.4 Governing Processes

- 2.4.1. Policy Review Calendar. The Council shall review its policies at least once a year and amend as needed.
- 2.4.2. Council Self-Appraisal. In order to monitor itself and its efforts, the Council will conduct an annual self-appraisal, committing part of one meeting to discuss the following areas and identify areas and action for improvement:
 - 2.4.2.1 The Council's performance in carrying out the Mission and Vision of First Lutheran Church.
 - 2.4.2.2 The Council's openness and communication among its members.
 - 2.4.2.3 The Council's ability and skill in developing and monitoring policy and objectives for the ministry of First Lutheran Church.
 - 2.4.2.4 The Council's policy-based leadership.
 - 2.4.2.5 The Council's working relationship with the Senior Pastor and the other pastoral staff.

- 2.4.3. Annual Council Planning Cycle. To accomplish its objective of continually working to discern and implement God's will for First Lutheran Church, the Council will follow an annual planning cycle in partnership with the pastoral leadership. This planning cycle will involve intentional discernment, as well as planning and implementation of goals and objectives to serve God's will. Attached as Exhibit A is a guiding schedule to "re-set" objectives and goals annually.
- 2.4.4. Council Agenda. The Council shall conduct its meetings pursuant to an agenda, which will establish a basic structure for the meetings.
- 2.4.5. Types of Council Sessions. The Council shall have three types of sessions:
- 2.4.5.1 Open. Open sessions allow Council members and non-Council members to be in attendance.
 - 2.4.5.2 Closed. Closed sessions allow only Council members, the Senior Pastor, and those invited to be in attendance. Except for actions taken, there shall be no reporting about these sessions.
 - 2.4.5.3 Executive. Executive sessions allow only Council members and those invited to be in attendance. There shall be no reporting of these sessions, and the Council shall take no actions during these sessions, other than personnel actions.
- 2.4.6. Quorum. A quorum for the Council's transaction of business shall consist of 5 of the voting Council members.
- 2.4.7. Personnel Committee. When acting as the Personnel Committee, the Council shall conduct its meetings in executive session.
- 2.4.8. Officers of the Council. The Officers shall have the responsibilities established in Sections 12.01 through 12.04 of the Bylaws of First Lutheran Church.

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3. Council Relationship Policies

3.1 Delegation to the Senior Pastor.

- 3.1.1. The Council has delegated authority and responsibility to the Senior Pastor to lead First Lutheran Church in its ministries and mission, including the work toward goals of the Master Ministry Plan. The Senior Pastor has authority, in turn, to delegate authority and responsibility to other members of the ministry team and staff.
- 3.1.2. The Senior Pastor is authorized to make decisions, take actions, and develop activities as long as they are consistent with a reasonable interpretation of Council policies, the Constitution and Bylaws, the Mission and Vision of First Lutheran Church, and the Employee Manual.
- 3.1.3. The Senior Pastor will exercise delegated authority and carry out delegated responsibilities, while maintaining the prophetic (truth-telling) voice held in office of pastor.
- 3.1.4. The Council will coordinate with the Senior Pastor and other pastoral leadership to support First's ministries, including the work toward the goals of the Master Ministry Plan.
- 3.1.5. The Senior Pastor will communicate with the Council regarding decisions affecting programming and activities, so that the Council is informed and able to support and coordinate with the pastoral leadership and other staff.

3.2 Unity of Control and Accountability of the Senior Pastor and Staff

- 3.2.1. The Senior Pastor is accountable to the full Council, not to any individual Council member, and has full access to the Council as a whole.
- 3.2.2. The authority of the staff is delegated through the Senior Pastor. Therefore, the staff is accountable to the Senior Pastor, who in turn is accountable to the Council. All pastoral leadership shall maintain the prophetic (truth-telling) voice held in the office of pastor.
- 3.2.3. The Senior Pastor will supervise the work of the staff. The Council will not give instructions to persons who report, directly or indirectly, to the Senior Pastor, unless in coordination with the Senior Pastor.

- 3.2.4. The Council will evaluate the performance of the Senior Pastor by the work in furtherance of the Mission and Vision of First Lutheran Church and faithfulness to the Master Ministry Plan.
- 3.2.5. Evaluations of staff other than the Senior Pastor will be conducted primarily by the Senior Pastor; however, the Senior Pastor will coordinate with the Council in its capacity as the Personnel Committee.

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EXHIBIT A

ANNUAL COUNCIL PLANNING CYCLE

February – April: Phase 1 – Stabilization/Research For Following Year

- Council orientation.
- Listen to the staff and congregation.
- Construct and learn from focus groups as needed.
- Conduct community research as needed.
- Prepare and review statistical analysis of First Lutheran as needed.

May – August: Phase 2 – Big Picture Planning For Following Year

- Conduct group visioning with pastors and other staff.
- Imagine mission results and seek to discern God's will.
- Develop master ministry goals for the following year.

August – October: Phase 3 – Build the Master Ministry Plan for Following Year

- Complete the Master Ministry Plan for the following year.
- Engage stakeholders in conversation about the Master Ministry Plan for the following year.
- Build Senior Pastor's annual objectives in accordance with the Master Ministry Plan.
- Establish coordinating groups as needed to support pastoral leadership in implementing the Plan.
- Set the following year's budget, incorporating the Plan.

November through Following Year: Phase 4 – Execute the Master Ministry Plan

- Continue to support and coordinate with the pastoral leadership in the execution of the Master Ministry Plan.

November- January: Phase 5 – Evaluate/Reset

- Evaluate the ministry of past year, based on objectives and the Master Ministry Plan for that year.
- Conduct Council self-appraisal.
- Conduct review of Council policies and amend as needed.