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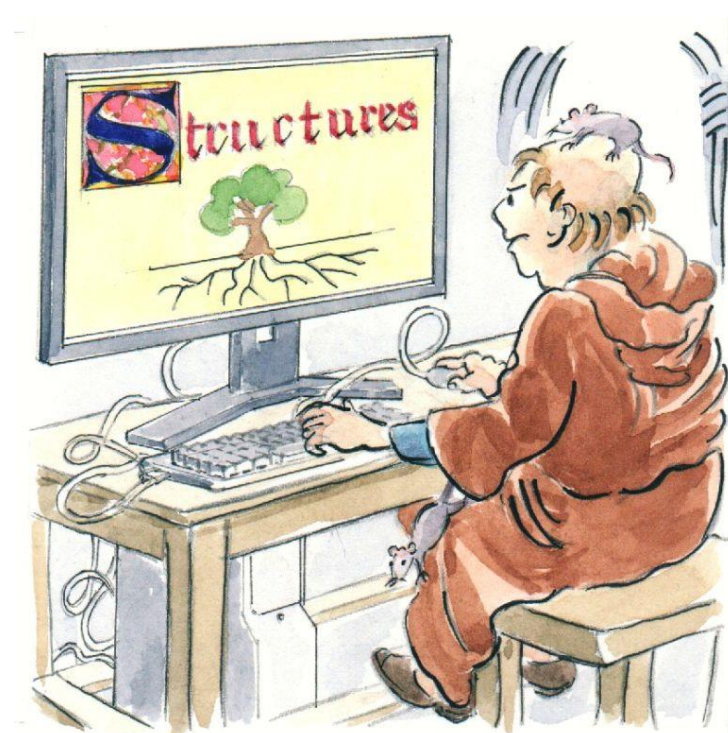
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Mission-shaped PCC

A new way of viewing your church council



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If you prefer to see these notes on screen, you may access the pdf at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/News> and then the item for today's date.

Introduction

In recent years there has been writing and action on the theme of a *Mission-shaped church*. But what about mission-shaped administration to support such a church? Where are all the ‘fresh expressions’ of PCC?

Today we consider the Church Council as a channel of mission.

Today is not concerned with many day-to-day aspects of PCC work: chairing meetings, the role of the Secretary, handling conflict, Standing Committee, structuring agendas, etc. Instead we address the one issue: what fundamentally needs to change about a Council if it is to serve a mission-shaped church?

This will be a cut-down version of an event I usually run for a church’s PCC or a deanery on an awayday or other special occasion. The material is divided into three sessions of input (and small-group discussion) plus time at the end for planning for subsequent action.

- 1 **The need for a clear purpose** Role not fudge
- 2 **The need for a big agenda** Church not club
- 3 **The need for an effective team** People not meetings

and when running it for a PCC I would add:

- 4 **The need for an agreed plan** Action not delay

So here is an outline of what such a day might look like. I actually have two different versions. Today I am showing you the one where the applications are more personal.

Space to jot down points you want to take special note of in the three sections that follow:

1: The need for a clear purpose

Mission-shaped focus: a clearly articulated and owned *ROLE*, rather than a typical *FUDGE*

We need to ask 'Why?' questions about the PCC instead of 'How?' ones.

Background

Mark 3:13-19 – one example of a clear group purpose

Three principles to follow

- 1 The PCC serves the church, so its agenda is driven by the **church's Christ-centred purpose and direction** – which of course the Council may define in the first place.
- 2 Council members **sign up to a clear PCC role** so that activity has a focus, business can be checked to see if this is the right body for it, and achievement can be assessed. Key points: [1] to seek God's will, [2] to work together, [3] to take action for the future.
- 3 This role is concerned with **leadership** more than representation, with **risk** more than with safety, and with **modelling discipleship** and decision-making for others.

Ten practical applications

- We are to know and follow the PCC's role and see how it complements that of the staff.
- We are to know the rules and understand the responsibilities of charity trustees.
- We are to pray 'your will be done' rather than follow our own desires or wisdom.
- We are to think servant leadership to enable change rather than representation to prevent it.
- We are to role-model the church's values rather than think 'reward' or 'status'.
- We are to be proactive in our thinking rather than waiting for something to happen.
- We are to welcome review for purpose and performance.
- We are to expect ongoing training: in purpose, agenda and teamwork.
- We might set up a small 'prophetic' group to listen to what God may be saying.
- We are to have a vision for what our PCC could become.

2: The need for a big agenda

Mission-shaped focus: the community of Christ's CHURCH, rather than a charitable CLUB

We need to ask 'Why not?' questions about the Council instead of 'Why should?' ones.

Background

Colossians 1:9-14 – not a bad prayer for the year for a PCC

Three principles to follow

- 1 PCC members devise and follow a **distinctively Christ-centred** agenda for the year, and so seek to unlearn what many are used to in normal secular meetings.
- 2 The PCC takes a **big-picture overview** of all of church life: worship, community, outreach, leadership and support, resisting every pressure to pull back into the safer territory of detail and, often, trivia.
- 3 **Mission** is not so much items on the agenda as the agenda itself, with all business seen in that context.

Ten practical applications

- We are to be people of prayer and those who treasure the Scriptures.
- We are to be disciples not business executives in our meetings.
- We are to be people seeking God's future not living in our past.
- We are to be part of a body that is a change-agent rather than a maintenance group.
- We are to take an overall perspective on each item instead of a departmental one.
- We are to have courage to stay in big-picture mode rather than revert to trivia.
- We are to highlight the mission dimension in every agenda item.
- We are to have an attitude of trust for the small groups that handle detail.
- We are to be 100% trustworthy with confidential information.
- We are to be channels of communication with church members in both directions.

3: The need for an effective team

Mission-shaped focus: a team of godly PEOPLE, rather than the dates of business MEETINGS

We need to ask 'Who?' questions (singular and plural) about the Council, instead of 'When?' ones.

Background

1 Timothy 3:8-13 – the importance of the person profile, yet we often ignore this

Three principles to follow

- 1 The PCC is a clergy/lay **team** that exists 24/7, not just at meetings. Meetings become special events in the life of the team, means to enable the team to function, never ends in themselves.
- 2 The team is seeking to **achieve something for Christ together**, not to be a forum where groups aim for dominance or rubber-stamp others' decisions. This means the team itself needs leadership (a different role from chairing a meeting).
- 3 As Scripture teaches, **character** becomes a vital characteristic for the members, and **love** for the body as a whole. The expectation is for members to grow in **discipleship** through PCC service, so membership is a challenge for everyone.

Ten practical applications

- We are to expect to be tested by the annual meeting for suitability for our role.
- We are to learn the art of team-working: love, humility, trust, vulnerability, listening, etc.
- We are to be concerned for team seating, body language and each other's welfare.
- We need to keep the PCC relatively small in number
- We are to role model Christian character to the church.
- We are to pray for each other concerning both teamwork and PCC responsibilities.
- We are to recognise and respect the role of 'team leader'.
- We are to work well under a 'meeting enabler'.
- We are to own the decisions that have been taken, even if we disagree.
- We are to embrace diversity, work collaboratively and handle conflict well.

4: The need for an agreed plan

Mission-shaped focus: ACTION for the future, rather than repeated DELAY

We need to ask 'What?' questions about the PCC, instead of 'Whether?' ones.

These notes are provided to show you the questions I would ask a specific PCC.

For each of the sessions 1 to 3 in turn

- 1 What (if anything) particularly excited you within the three principles and in the light of the Bible passage?
- 2 Which aspects of the three concerned you in any way: what did you disagree with and why?
- 3 Which of the 10 applications do you feel your PCC needs to take special note of and, if necessary, make changes in?**

For the final session

- 1 What is each person's overall reaction to the whole of this event?
- 2 Which of the nine principles do we need to take special note of?
- 3 Which of the 30 practical applications did people mark for special consideration and why?
- 4 What do we need to do next and when, in order to take today forward in an appropriate way? In particular, how will we bring any PCC members not present today on board?

*Some of the resources on my **website** (which you may download and/or print out free of charge) may prove helpful background to sections of today. In the following list, A refers to the Articles pages and TN to the Training Notes ones. <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources>*

A24 Mission-shaped Church Councils *(on which today has been based, although the applications I have used in today's version have been a bit different as you will see)*

A5 How to chair meetings

A20 Annual meetings can be different

A40/41 Going deeper into meetings

TN8 Major decisions: a new approach

TN13 A purpose statement for those who chair

TN32 What do you mean by vision?

TN38 We've got news for us!

TN41 What makes a group a team

TN45 Are you sure it's minutes you need?

TN48 Let's get purpose statements right

TN58 Beware committees

TN61 Mapping out a meeting

TN71 Seatings for meetings

TN79 'One another' teams

TN88 Advice to a new committee member

TN97 How to minute a meeting

TN118 Why, exactly, are we meeting?

TN128 Effective staff meetings

TN136 Restructure your committees

TN141 A church council 'Code of Conduct'