

Presbytery Meeting Arrangements Guidelines for Host Churches

The Shepherding Council, grateful to the many Sessions who have welcomed the Presbytery of Long Island warmly over many years, is very appreciative of your invitation to have the Presbytery meet in your church.

The following suggested Arrangements Guidelines for facilitating the meeting of the Presbytery have emerged out of a variety of experiences over a number of years. The Shepherding Council hopes that these will be helpful to you in your preparation.

Coordination for Arranging the Meeting

The Session of the inviting church needs to appoint an Arrangements Team with an active and working chair/leader of that Team.

The leader of the Arrangements Team should be in contact with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery to review the Arrangements Guidelines. You will note that the guidelines are appropriate for some churches but not for others, in that all church buildings are architecturally different and all congregational lifestyles are unique unto themselves. The inviting church Arrangements Team leader and the Stated Clerk can review the guidelines and adapt them appropriately to each individual situation.

It is helpful when the host Pastor is a part of this initial organizational conversation.

Meeting Rooms or Areas

The Presbytery mostly meets or convenes in the sanctuary of the church. Often there are one or two committees of 5 to 15 people which meet prior to the meeting of the Presbytery, and frequently there are special workshops requiring space for 30 to 50 people. One handicapped accessible room needs to be made available for ½ hour during the registration time (for presbytery meeting orientation).

The Session-appointed Arrangements Team leader needs to be in touch with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery with regard to possible meetings and room size requirements prior to the meeting of the Presbytery itself.

It is customary to have a time for socializing and refreshments prior to the meeting and as such, a room or area that could comfortably accommodate an informal gathering of 6- 75 people is requested; it has also been beneficial, when resources permit, to allow for socializing and refreshments during breaks in the meeting.

Registration

The inviting church provides for a registration area that includes **three** tables, one for registration, one for name tags, and one smaller table for dinner reservations. **Sign-in sheets, name tags, and markers will be provided by the Stated Clerk.**

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It is helpful for three or four people from the inviting church (wearing identifiable name badges) to be in the registration area to assist with registration, dinner ticket sales, giving directions, and most importantly, to offer a warm welcome and greeting to visitors from around Long Island.

Provision for at least **four additional tables** (one for pre-Presbytery materials apart from the others) is necessary in the registration area for the distribution of printed materials for the meeting. **An additional table** (6 to 8 feet in length) is requested for the duration of the meeting for the display of materials from the Resource Center. There may be additional requests for tables; if so, the Stated Clerk and/or Advance Team liaison will notify your church office before the meeting.

The Presbytery requires that people register for the meal at least a week before the meeting and the host church will be notified at that time and given an estimate of the number of people expected. It is recommended that numbered meal tickets be available for sale. Having numbered tickets gives food preparers an accurate count of meals to be served. Have change (bills) available. As people gather for the meal, please have a volunteer and cashbox available to collect last-minute meal payments.

Socializing and Refreshment Period Prior to the Meeting

Ordinarily the Presbytery meeting convenes at 2:00 pm for weekday meetings and 9:00 am for Saturday meetings. Formal enrollment and registration of elders, minister, and guests begins **one half hour** before convening.

The time before the meeting of the Presbytery provides marvelous opportunities for meeting and greeting, and the inviting church is requested to provide light refreshments of its own choice for about 100 people. These do not have to be elaborate or expensive. Notwithstanding the aforementioned advice, host churches located in extreme western Nassau or eastern Suffolk counties have often acknowledged the long travel times of their colleagues, with the potential that a meal has been missed in order to arrive in time for registration for a weekday meeting. In those circumstances host churches that offer “finger sandwiches” and/or slightly more substantial riposte have received heartfelt blessings!

It is customary to offer coffee and tea, both caffeinated and decaffeinated. Cold drinks are welcome in warm weather. Finger food is most appropriate.

Churches will follow their own guidelines and conscience with regard to environmental concerns and use of renewable resources.

Ordinarily the refreshment and socializing period ends with the convening of the Presbytery meeting.

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Directions to Church and Parking

The leader of the Arrangements Team needs to assure the availability of clear and specific directions to the church for people who are arriving from different parts of Long Island.

As people arrive at the church it is helpful to have direction signs for parking and, if necessary, parking attendants.

Occasionally churches are able to make special arrangements with local law enforcement for on-street parking in restricted areas. Please provide at least 8 spaces for disabled drivers so that access to and from the building is as easy as possible. The availability of these spaces will also be helpful to those persons who deliver heavy equipment and materials for the meeting.

Setup for the Meeting Itself

It is necessary to have a large table in front of the sanctuary with chairs for the Stated Clerk and Assistant to the Clerk. If possible, the table should be behind the podium from which the Moderator will speak.

If one is already available, a PA system will facilitate discussions, reports, and debate during the meeting. Ideally there will be a microphone at the pulpit, lectern, and a standing microphone located in the front center aisle of the sanctuary.

Lights should be on “high” for churches with rheostat dimmer settings.

It is also requested that the telephone line be open and that someone be available at all times to answer calls.

Food Preparation

In very unusual circumstances (mostly due to severe inclement weather), the cost of food purchase sometimes exceeds the number of paid guests. So that a local church does not have to carry a significantly large debit, the Presbytery will negotiate the deficit with the Session.

The docket for the Presbytery meeting ordinarily allows for one hour for the meal (dinner on weekdays, and lunch on Saturday meetings). As such, the Arrangements Team is encouraged to plan for efficient movement in and out of the dining area during the meal. The Arrangements Team will need to plan traffic inside the dining area for quick and easy seating and serving.

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Menu and Planning

The Presbytery has been striving to conscientiously address lifestyle issues as they relate to its structure, meetings, and resources. The issue of lifestyle, and particularly the “lean lifestyle that befits a Christian and a Christian community,” is integrally related to the food that is purchased, prepared, and served at the meetings of the Presbytery. As you determine a menu, you are encouraged to reflect upon not only the economic and nutritional realities, but also lifestyle and ethics questions. In particular, it is hoped that churches will follow their own guidelines and conscience with regard to environmental concerns and use of renewable resources.

Buffet style and family style are the most efficient ways to serve a simple meal to a large group, and either style will be appreciated by attendees of the meeting.

The range and cost of a meal will naturally differ from church to church. We recommend that churches charge \$10.00 in order to cover the costs of the meal. Parents may purchase meal tickets for children at half price. The best guideline on cost is that the price should cover the cost of the meal and pre-presbytery refreshments.

Worship at the Meeting of the Presbytery

“Christian worship joyfully ascribes all praise and honor, glory and power to the triune God. In worship the people of God acknowledge God present in the world and in their lives. As they respond to God’s claim and redemptive action in Jesus Christ, believers are transformed and renewed. In worship the faithful offer themselves to God and are equipped for God’s service in the world.”
(The Book of Order, W-1.1001)

The responsibility for worship in its totality is that of the Advance Team of the Shepherding Council of the Presbytery. The liaison of the Advance Team and the Leader of the Arrangements Team need to consult with each other concerning logistics and/or physical requirements for a particular service of worship (lighting, screens, projectors, microphones, communion setup, liturgical colors, hymnals, bulletins, offering plates, etc.)

The host church is asked to provide ushers to receive the offering, and to provide a space in which to count the offering and one “gifted counter” to assist the Advance Team liaison in counting and securing the offering.

The Fall meeting of the Presbytery will celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper for which the host church supplies the elements and servers, unless other arrangements are necessary; however, in all cases the Advance Team coordinates the arrangements.

Ordinarily the organist of the host church is requested to play for the service of worship because of the obvious intricacies of the pipe organ and other musical instruments.

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The host church pays the organist up to \$150., and the Presbytery will reimburse the church for this honorarium.

Ordinarily it is not expected that the inviting church's choir will be asked to provide special music or anthems, but they may do so if they wish.

Access Advisory

The leader of the Arrangements Team in consultation with the Stated Clerk provides a written "access advisory" which is posted on the website in the meeting packet along with specific and detailed directions to the church and the agenda for the meeting at least ten days prior to the meeting.

The access advisory helps those who are disabled to make necessary plans for moving around the inviting church. In some cases churches are not accessible to persons with disabilities and, unfortunately, those disabled persons have to make arrangements to have a substitute commissioner. Local congregations have found that the review of their facilities in the light of accessibility has led to significant structural changes in order to become an accessible church.

If there is a difficulty in your church which hinders accessibility, the presbytery may be able to help you overcome this difficulty, please inform the Stated Clerk.

The following list of questions might serve as guidelines as you prepare an access advisory for the meeting. These were formulated so that churches could indicate the extent to which they believe their building(s) could accommodate those of us who have a disabling impairment of hearing, sight, or mobility.

- (1) Can a disabled person (one who walks with difficulty, uses a wheelchair, or who is visually impaired) enter and leave the building(s) unassisted by others, and in safety?
- (2) Once inside the building, can a disabled person get to the room where the meeting is to be held, to the rest rooms, to the dining room, and to the lectern?
- (3) Is the lectern area lighted well enough to enable persons whose hearing is impaired to see the speakers' faces well enough to lip-read?
- (4) Will at least six parking spaces near the building's entrance be set aside for the exclusive use of disabled drivers?
- (5) Can a disabled driver, particularly one who uses a wheelchair, get from street level to sidewalk level without having to negotiate a curb or similar obstacle?

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Welcoming the Presbytery

Very early in each meeting the Arrangements Team of the inviting host church welcomes the Presbytery to its church. Ordinarily this is a brief two to three minute welcome that indicates something of the church's history, ministry, and any last-minute arrangement details related to the church's physical plant or meal planning ("where are the bathrooms?"). It is helpful for the leader of the Arrangements Team and the Stated Clerk to consult on the content of an appropriate and brief welcome.

Child Care

The responsibility for providing child care has emerged out of a growing awareness of the diversity of family lifestyles, family configurations, and employment patterns of elder commissioners and minister members, as well as guests of meetings. It is vitally important that elders and ministers and others who are parents of young children have available to them an ongoing child care option so that parents are not excluded from the decision to commit a full day to attend a meeting of the Presbytery. The Presbytery will assist the church in providing two child care workers trained in Child Protection Policy.

Requirements for Child Care

The following guidelines are provided for use by the host churches when arranging their child care for Presbytery meetings and pre-Presbytery workshops. Parents considering use of the services shall be provided with a copy of these guidelines as an indication of what they can expect.

The following provisions of the Presbytery's Child protection Policy will apply:

- A. Number of caregivers required:
 - (1) A minimum of two child care workers/adult advisors will be assigned. No child, group of children, or group of youth should ever be alone with a single worker.
 - (2) One child care-giver will be assigned for each 3 children under the age of 2; one care-giver for each 6 children aged 2 - 11.

- B. Indoor Space:

The host church is responsible for providing adequate space for the number and ages of children registered as of one week before the event. The space should:

- 1. Be clean, including floors clean enough for children to crawl upon.
- 2. Have a consistent, comfortable temperature and ventilation.
- 3. Be secure. (Out of traffic areas with no exits to outside areas.)
- 4. Consist of rooms with visible access and subject to observation.
- 5. Contain cribs with clean linens, facilities for changing diapers, sanitary, age-appropriate toys.

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6. Have access to bathrooms.
7. Have access to telephone, including list of emergency numbers.
8. Contain a first aid kit.
9. Display information about a fire escape route, location of fire extinguisher, etc.
10. Electrical outlets should be covered.

C. Outdoor Space and Off-site Play during meetings:

If outdoor space is used, it should be completely and securely enclosed, and contain only that equipment specifically designed for the children who might use it. Prior parental permission must be obtained for any activity outside the specifically defined space.

D. Log:

- (1) Presbytery will provide a sign-in sheet and log to be used for any child left in its care. This log must be completed by an adult leaving the child in care, and will state clearly who may pick up the child. The caregiver will release a child only to a person whose name is on the log.
- (2) Any time a child leaves the childcare area, an adult must sign the log. At meal times, the adult must sign the child out and sign in again at the conclusion of the meal.

E. Provision of food if necessary:

Neither the church nor the caregiver is responsible for providing food for children unless specifically requested by Presbytery. If a child is to eat with the adult group, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to accompany the child and supervise the child during the meal hour.

F. Activities:

1. Appropriate stories, music and craft activities will be planned for both pre-school and school age children, in addition to toys for free play.
2. Supervised outdoor playtime will be included when weather permits and a safe play area is available, away from traffic.
3. Caretakers are encouraged to use a loving style of discipline to control any disruptive behaviors that may occur.
4. Parents will be contacted during the meeting if their children do not calm themselves within a half hour after being brought to the playroom (unless parent leaves other instructions).
5. Parents can purchase meals for their children at half the adult rate during the scheduled dinner hour; children will eat with their parents.

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6. An additional nutritional snack will be provided for the children several hours before or after the meal.

Having read these guidelines, you probably have developed a dozen more questions to ask. Obviously no one list can answer all the possible questions or address all the logistical issues. These are open-ended guidelines and any suggested additions emerging out of your experience as an inviting congregation would be received with great appreciation by the Stated Clerk.

The final word to every inviting church and Arrangements Team is a word of thanks and deep gratitude in advance from the Presbytery of Long Island for your many hours of thoughtful, careful, and loving planning and preparation.

Approved for distribution by the Presbytery Council October 1984

Amended:

January 1987; September 1989; May 1990; October 1990; May 1991;

November 1993 (worship at beginning- January-June) ;

May 1993 (child care at pre-presbytery); May 1994 (175-150 planned and 150-125 paid dinners)

September 1994 (Presbytery agenda governs what transpires at meetings)

September 1995 (sample news release) November 1998 (recommended change charge for dinner from \$5-\$6.)

January 2002 (Small editorial changes, plus addition of sentence "Requests for childcare...page 5, end of paragraph two.)

March 2005 (Changes to Child Care to bring in line with the Presbytery Child Protection Policy and changes to Worship section to bring it more in line with current practices.)

September 2006 (Recommended charge for lunch or dinner changed from \$6 - \$8.)

April 2012 (Recommended charge for lunch or dinner changed from \$8- \$10. recommended honorarium for organist \$100. - \$150., recommended compensation for child care worker from \$7.- \$15.)