

The Local Service – Updated June 2016

Introduction:

This material contains guidelines to assist elders, deacons and their helpers to conduct local meetings in an orderly manner. It is not intended to restrict or control the meeting. We have come out of what has been called the “old order” and we appreciate the leading of the Holy Spirit. We count it a privilege to attend meetings where the Holy Spirit is allowed to move and the one leading oversees.

Galatians 5:

1 Stand firm therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

1 Corinthians 14:

1 Follow after love, and desire spiritual *gifts*.

12 Seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church.

26 Let all things be done unto edifying.

31 You may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace.

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

Most of this material is compiled from notes taken at the elders & deacons meetings of 1986 and 1987 when Bros. Doug Whitter and Art Wagar covered this subject.

Some of the comments were added after the material was presented to local elders and deacons, including the meetings in Spokane in October of 2008.

The Purpose of the Meeting:

- For the assembling of ourselves together
- To encourage and help one another, not to scold or criticize!!!
- To enter in to the presence of God
- To teach the ways of the Lord and to learn of Him
- To give every member the opportunity to minister to the other members

The congregation should be at the meeting place early, if possible. They should come in quietly, sit down and start to enter in to the spirit of the service. They should leave a couple of rows at the back for late comers, or parents with small children.

If there is music before the service, it is to encourage reverence and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary, or desirable, to have music before every service, or to have the same person play every meeting. If you are falling into a rut in this regard, change it!

Everyone should be prepared to contribute to the service, especially elders, deacons and their wives. We set an example by always standing ready. If our ministry is not needed, our contribution can wait until another time.

We prepare by making ourselves available to the Holy Spirit during the week, prior to coming to the meeting place.

The meeting before the service:

It has been said that elders meeting for prayer before the service, but that term is a bit misleading. This is not a “prayer meeting”. There is a special purpose to this meeting and it is to find the will of the Lord for the service that is about to begin.

If someone other than an elder or deacon is asked to lead part or teach in the service, he should be invited to join the elders and deacons, before the service. The meeting before the service is to:

- Pray or meditate, asking God to reveal his will or direction for this service.
- Decide who is to lead the service (do not put pressure on deacons to lead)
- Ask God's blessing on the person who is going to start the service.

A general prayer for the service should not be part of this meeting. If we pray for the meeting or for special needs at this time, the congregation will miss it. Save it for the service.

Avoid casual, unrelated conversation. It is of utmost importance that we seek the Lord's will for the service during this meeting. An elder should take charge of this very important time and see that the purpose is accomplished.

Leading a Meeting:

If the meeting is opened in prayer, it should be done by a mature individual, usually an elder or a deacon, but there may be others who could lead in prayer at this time. Be careful with this choice, as it may set the tone of the meeting.

Determine who is comfortable at the piano or organ and give all of the capable musicians an opportunity to minister, not necessarily all in the same service. Don't get in the habit of calling the same person every time.

If there are people who are coming in late, it may be best to start with quiet singing to allow them to take their seats, so that they will not miss the opening prayer, or an important scripture reading.

Try not to start the meeting the same way every time. Think of how the Lord has been speaking to you and try to pass that on to the congregation.

You may feel to read a short scripture of encouragement, if so, read it clearly, projecting your voice, with minimal comment. This is not the time for a sermon.

If it is a special song, you can comment on it to convey what it means to you and then get started. **You will lose the attention of the congregation with too much commentary.**

If a song is started in the wrong key, change it. If it is being sung too slowly, ask the musicians

to change the tempo.

The worship service is to create a proper atmosphere for what is to come. Keep remarks to the point and **don't preach a sermon between each verse of a song.**

When leading the service, sing the melody (not harmony), projecting the voice slightly louder than the rest of the congregation so that others can hear you and follow.

If leading, make sure you are singing the correct words. Look it up in a book, if necessary.

If you are not a strong singer, you may ask someone with a ministry in song to come up and assist. However, you are still in charge. Don't turn the meeting over to the person who is helping with the singing. Be alert to keep the meeting on track.

The selection of songs should follow a theme.

The service is to meet the needs of the people. Try to be aware of who is in the meeting and what the needs are and determine to meet them.

Strive to be led by the Spirit. Don't take it lightly.

Encourage people to sing and play songs given by the Spirit. These are songs from the heart and should be encouraged as much or more than any other type of singing.

Special singing is very important to the service if done by the spirit and not to entertain. Use the talent available and encourage those who have a ministry in song, to stand ready. If someone sings a special song, listen to it and appreciate it. It is not always necessary for the whole congregation to sing along.

Don't keep people standing too long. Don't preach while the congregation is standing for worship. End each part of the service on a high note and move on to the next part of the service.

Ministering in the Congregation:

Always stand ready to support and confirm what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church in this service.

Singing - Leading a song from your seat in the congregation can be beneficial, especially if it is one that you know better than anyone else. If leading in a song, sing the melody loud enough for others to follow.

Generally, we should not continue to lead from the congregation, unless the one leading the service is struggling or does not know the song, or is not a singer. Even then, **be careful that you do not take over the leading of the service, from the person who is in charge.**

If there is singing in the Spirit, it is our responsibility to continue to support that spirit of song, by humming our praise in song. Sometimes we can sing a song in the Spirit to encourage other

timid ones to sing in the Spirit. Sometimes, just a few words of encouragement in song is very helpful.

Prayer - Speak loud enough for everyone to hear. You are praying on behalf of everyone in the congregation. Everyone should hear what is said.

Prophecy - Speak loud enough for everyone to hear. You are speaking the words of the spirit, so everyone should hear. However, be careful of too much volume. Speaking too loud can make people uncomfortable, ***especially those directly in front of you.***

Don't preach a sermon in your prophecy. Prophecy is to build up the church. Many times your prophecy will inspire someone else to prophecy. Make sure you allow time for others.

Giving a Message or Teaching:

Be sure to assess what has gone on in the service and act accordingly. If you have prepared a message, but the service has been along another theme, or if there has been several exhortations that have formed a beneficial message for the people, save your message for another time. Don't be too quick to add something to someone else's message. You can spoil it by adding too much commentary.

I Corinthians 14:29 (Phillips) – Don't have more than two or three preachers either, while the others think over what has been said.

When you feel that you have the mind of the Lord for this service, take your liberty and give a message that will inspire. Talk of the positive things, not how bad the world is getting.

Hold your head up and project your voice to the people in the back row. If necessary, move a little closer to the congregation. However, don't walk out into the congregation, as this may be offensive to some people, or at least make them uncomfortable.

Enthusiasm is good, but too much shouting can offend people. Increased volume will not increase understanding of the content of your message.

Be aware of the microphone, if there is one. If you wish to speak softly, move closer to the microphone. On the other hand, if you feel to speak loudly, move away from the microphone.

In most local meeting places, there is no one controlling the volume of the public address system, so the speaker should try to adjust his distance from the microphone accordingly.

Wherever possible, read scripture instead of only referring to it. Use sparingly the words, "You know the story". The stories and lessons of the bible should be taught. Bible storybooks have their place but the message is much more effective if taught with the anointing and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The congregation may not remember all you have said, but will remember how they felt at the conclusion of the message.

Be aware of the attention span of listeners. Do not over minister! If you have spoken for 20-30 minutes, you have given as much as most people can take in. Save the rest for another day. Give someone else a chance to encourage the congregation.

Eliminate any critical tone of voice. Don't dwell on the negative or sinful things that people do, or that worldly people do.

Don't talk politics. Especially do not criticize politicians.

Not everyone has the same political views as you do.

You may be criticizing their favorite politician

Focus on the positive actions or attributes that we should seek after.

Do not scold! You will almost certainly offend someone by scolding. Children are especially sensitive to scolding. They may not understand the words that you say, but will understand if you are scolding and will wonder why. It may leave them with a negative feeling about the meeting. If we want our children to continue to attend services, we must do all we can to make it a positive experience for them.

Be aware of visitors and make adjustments accordingly. Know who is in the congregation and speak to their needs. However, avoid speaking directly to one or two people and causing embarrassment.

If you are at a camp and due to the length of other portions of the service, there is not time to complete your message before noon lunch time, make the decision to save your message for another time. It will not benefit the people if you decide to squeeze a 45 minute message into 20 minutes. Most people will not be listening if you are still speaking after it is time for lunch.

Praying for the sick:

If someone in the congregation asks to be prayed for, it should be done prior to serving the communion.

If praying for healing, anoint with oil. Make sure the bottle of oil is checked periodically to ensure that the oil is fresh and has not gone rancid. Elders should carry oil in their bible or brief case, so that it is available if called on to visit and pray for the sick. Be sure to check the oil that you carry to make sure that it is fresh.

When reading a written prayer request, be sure to mention who has submitted the request and who it is for prior to reading the request. If someone is away from the service because of illness, you should pray for them in the service. If possible, communion should be taken to them by an elder and his wife, or a deacon and his wife. This could be done later in the week, if not convenient on Sunday.

Communion:

If there are strangers in the meeting, give a short teaching on the communion to explain the reason that unleavened bread is used. We should also explain that we are using real wine and the reason for it.

Make sure your hands are clean before touching the bread or communion cup. Elders partake last, after the deacons.

There should be no singing, while the congregation is partaking of the bread. This is a time for quietly waiting on the Lord. An appropriate song may be used during the partaking of the cup.

Pass the offering bag to everyone in the assembly, including children, to make them feel a part of worship.

Elders should stand reverently at the front until the offering bags have been returned to the table. Check your supply of communion bread regularly to make sure that it has not gone stale.

Closing the service:

Close the meeting on a high note. If it is not, sing a short uplifting song to create a positive message or feeling before closing. Don't ask, "Is there anyone else?" when the meeting is over. Better the service be a little short than too long. There will be another one.

Close the meeting with a prayer of benediction and blessing on the people. As with the opening prayer, this should be done by an elder or deacon, preferably the one leading the meeting.

After the service ends:

It is important that elders, deacons, and their wives try to greet everyone after the service. Elders and Deacons must make a special effort to go to the back of the room immediately after the service to greet those who are leaving right after the service.

Some who leave immediately after the service may have an important appointment. However, in many cases they are leaving because they don't want to see anyone. They may be depressed, or have an overwhelming problem in their lives and that is when they especially need your expression of concern and love. If you don't get to the back right away, you will miss the opportunity to sense a problem and try to correct it.

Avoid the inclination to always say, "How are you?". For people who are fighting depression or going through a difficult situation, this is a very hard question to answer. Usually they will say, "I'm fine" and then be down on themselves because they lied.

General:

We should know the gifts & ministries of each person in our assembly so that we can ask for certain people to minister in the service, or to others during the week.

We should ask ourselves, "What are we doing or saying that will inspire young people so that they will desire to attend meetings and enter into their ministry?" Can we honestly say that they should come to these meetings to have their spiritual needs met?

We should be aware of our body language, which can communicate more than our message - nervous hand gestures, such as touching hands to face should be avoided..

When speaking, especially one on one, we should not cover our mouth with our hands. It will

muffle the sound. Some people, especially the hard of hearing, depend on lip reading to fully understand what is being said. They will not be able to lip read if you cover your mouth.

As we get older and our hearing begins to fail, we tend to listen with our mouths open, to assist our hearing. This should be avoided if at all possible as it gives the impression that we do not believe what we are hearing or that we are not pleased with the direction of the conversation..

Don't give a lot of detail regarding health issues or illnesses as it may offend some. Don't use bathroom jokes. The word "**circumcision**" is over used. It can and does make some people uncomfortable. Find another word, with similar meaning to express what you want to say.

Be aware of and try not to use overused, redundant phrases such as - "just", "stuff", "you know", "you know what", "well anyway", "guys", "you guys", "eh", "and so on" can you think of more?

Under-ministry can be a result of a lack of confidence or depression. Such people should be encouraged and their contribution should be acknowledged.

Over-ministry can be a result of ego or misunderstanding. Both should be dealt with on a one-to-one basis, never in the service. We should never be guilty, ourselves of over-ministry.

Our goal should be to see the church flourish by way of ministry to one another. Our own personal need to be heard should be at the bottom of the list.

It is important to teach the order of the church, however, do not put the travelling elders on a pedestal. They are servants of Christ and the church, as everyone else is. They are not infallible.

The same applies to local the local elders, who are servants of Christ and the local church and are not infallible. They should never be put on a pedestal, as if they know everything and if you just do what the elders say you will be fine. Elders can and do make mistakes, just like the rest of us.

The members of the assembly should be encouraged to go to the elders when they have need of counselling. The process should be that there is open discussion and more listening than talking, which should lead to a good mutual decision as to what should be done. It should never be a case of elders "telling" people what to do.

Do not over minister on the role of the family in exclusion of the role of the individual. In most assemblies about 50% are singles, many of whom have little or no hope of becoming part of a traditional family.

Over ministry on the important role of families as the building blocks of the church will leave these singles wondering if they have any purpose in the church. Be ready to balance teaching on the family with a message on the value of the individual.

Do not minister as though "We" are the only people in the world that God is talking to. This can be misunderstood, as if the "We" applies only to those who attend Global Missions assemblies

and no-one else.

Ministry should exalt the God we serve and teach people how to walk with Him and get to know and understand Him.

Summary:

- As an elder in the home or in the church, we don't have to preach all the time.
- Set an example, rather than scold, encourage rather than criticize
- The goal should be to see others enter into their ministry
- Focus on the positive, not the negative things of the world.
- Discussing politics in public, even over lunch, has the potential to divide the church
- We are being led by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus, not the teachings of men.

Sharon Stars:

When a new Sharon Star comes out, it should be made available to the members of the assembly as soon as possible. Hand it out near the end of the service, then give a brief summary of each article and encourage the members of the assembly to read them.

Other Global Publications:

Other Global literature, such as pamphlets may be used as reference material. The assembly should be reminded of them from time to time. Members of the assembly should be encouraged to read them and to feel at liberty to discuss the teachings with the elders.