

CHAPEL HILL GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

Purpose of this Overview: This overview is intended to give Elders a general context within which to better understand Session's governing role in leadership at Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church (CHPC) and the structure/governance that organizes that leadership.

What is policy governance?

Our CHPC Session uses a form of internal governance to "organize itself," as the Book of Order directs, for the advancement of the ministry of the Church and the mission of CHPC, "Working together to present everyone mature in Christ." It is a policy-focused form of leadership, rather than a committee/operational focused form of leadership, and is in compliance with the EPC Book of Order and our CHPC By-Laws.

Why Policy Governance?

Prior to 2004, after significant study, the then-Session at CHPC observed that governance by committee was not effective. The staff could outwork committees and sometimes committees gave staff conflicting priorities and direction. The committee structure created an "authority without accountability" situation. At times, staff had to try to navigate between conflicting direction from the Senior Pastor and direction from committees.

A more strategic role for Session was needed. Elevating our Session to a directing body that sets policy was determined to be the best way to be an Elder-led church at a more strategic level. Policy governance was adopted in 2004 to enable Session to more strongly fulfill its role of acting on behalf of Jesus Christ and discerning His will at all times, with responsibility to lead, manage, and inspire its leadership, staff and congregation for spiritual growth and making disciples.

About Policy Governance

The purpose of setting up a system of policy governance is to enable our Session to be a directing and leading body. When Session functions as one strategic body, each Elder lays down their operational role in the church in favor of operating as one body to strategically guide and direct the church, focusing on discerning and operationalizing the will of Jesus Christ through strategic goals (called "Ends") for CHPC. To ensure that CHPC achieves or progresses toward these goals or Ends, policies exist which define Limitations, Processes, and the Support relationship between Session and the Senior Pastor in order to reap the greatest possible results.

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Session Role:

Session has a two-faceted role in this governance system: Responsibility and Accountability. Policies include those that are specifically assigned to Ruling Elders and those that are specifically assigned or delegated to the Senior Pastor. Session members are “responsible” for their assigned or designated policy work, but are “accountable” for all the policies. That means that Session is to hold itself accountable for all policies: those assigned to/retained by Session as well as those delegated to the Senior Pastor. The Session uses a structured monitoring process to assure and understand the level of accomplishment for each policy.

How does this work?

Our policy governance is enabled through the careful establishment of strategic goals (Ends) and operational policies which reflect our values and perspectives in regards to our ministry for Jesus Christ. In general, the governance structure has two major categories:

1. Identifying major strategic focus or goals, referred to as “**Ends**” to be achieved.
2. Outlining operational direction and guidance in three areas: **Limitations, Processes, Support** (relationship between Session and the Senior Pastor).

In summary, as a governing body, Session’s role is to identify, define and establish CHPC’s **Ends, Limitations, Processes, and Support** policies. In addition, Session’s role is to assign responsibilities, implement, monitor the level of achievement and then determine what the information or results might mean in terms of any changes.

Policy Functions: Our Session sets and implements policies that include four functions that are durable until changed or modified. This gives consistency of direction to the church independent of the people who fulfill leadership, staff, or volunteer positions. The four functions within this governance system are:

1. Identify and define the church’s **Ends** (the major strategic focus areas or goals)
– Ends are aligned with the mission and derived from discerning the will of Jesus Christ as it pertains to providing strategic leadership, oversight, and supervision of the entire life of the local church. (Please refer to the Strategic Ends Document.)
2. Establish **Limitations** – These policies prescribe principles of prudence and ethics that specify limits in the choice of means or methods to guide and direct the Senior Pastor and Session. Example: “**Financial Planning/Budgeting/Operations**” provides specific details to direct the Senior Pastor regarding budgeting, cash reserves, etc.
3. Specify the **Processes** – These policies give more detail on the strategies and processes to guide Session’s function as a governing body as it sets,

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implements, and monitors policies. Example: *"Session Job Description"* provides details on specific tasks, roles, and responsibilities for each Session member and the Session as a body.

4. Define the **Support** (relationship between Senior Pastor and Session) – These policies define and specify how Session and the Senior Pastor work together. Example: *"Communication and Support to Session"* provides detail on how the Senior Pastor is to provide communication and support for Session to do its work.

NOTE: A complete list of all the existing policies by policy number and also in alphabetical order can be found in the index.

Monitoring: Monitoring is a scheduled review or "check-up" of actual performance data or information as it pertains to the implementation of each policy in order to better understand the overall health, well-being, progress, and current status of our church. The monitoring form is part of each policy document.

Every adopted policy is monitored at least once annually, and some policies are monitored more frequently. Policies are assigned to either the Senior Pastor, individual Ruling Elders or Session Teams for monitoring. Session sets the monitoring schedule each year. Any monitoring report notes will provide updates and specific information, which, in turn, support improved and clearer understanding, leading to better decision-making by Session.

Bottom line: Monitoring informs Session whether or not it (Session) is "In Compliance" with the policy. The goal is usually to be "In Compliance." However, being out of compliance is not necessarily a negative thing. Rather, it should be viewed as an opportunity to determine appropriate actions regarding the non-compliance, such as a revision of the policy or revision of practice/procedure. Regular review is important in that it keeps the policies "healthy" and up-to-date. Expect to make some changes in policies during your Session term! The life of our church evolves as we continue to pursue maturity in Christ Jesus.

Also important to remember: Data that does not specifically relate to a policy is not considered to be "monitoring data." However, this unrelated data may be very significant and useful data during Ends Education or Strategic Conversations, serving as an essential and important guide as the Session fulfills its strategic leadership role in determining how to best meet the needs of the CHPC as they seek to follow the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Session Member Expectations: To be effective and successful with this form of governance, it is essential for all members of Session to know, understand, and support each other in the following:

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- Understanding the EPC Book of Order, particularly as it pertains to Session.
- Understanding the CHPC By-Laws.
- Understanding all policies and how these policies direct our church.
- Understanding how to monitor the policies.
- Using or applying the information in Session decision-making.
- Understanding how to add/change/revise policies as needed.
- Attend a minimum of 10-12 meetings per year. A call-in is permissible.
- All Elders should attend the Session Retreat.

How to proceed:

- Training in this leadership structure is scheduled for new Elders, with review for experienced Elders.
- Ask questions! Contact someone on Session or perhaps a former Ruling Elder who may be able to assist.
- Try it out.... you are probably closer to "getting it" than you think!

If this is overwhelming, take heart! God has anointed and blessed you for this leadership role and you are specially equipped to fulfill it with grace, mercy, and wisdom.

KEY CODES:

E – Ends (Strategic Ends)

S – Support – Linkage Relationship between Session and Senior Pastor

P – Process

L – Limitations