

# Guiding Principles FAQ's

Q. What are "Guiding Principles?"

A. Not specific rules, but a guide to give a foundation for our life as a church to be governed. It is important to seek "Intent" within the Principles rather than concern around "semantics" with which to make the discernment subjective according to the bias of each reader. The Parish Council on behalf of the Parish are responsible for the discernment of "intent."

## 1. The Council

1.1 **Formation.** The Council shall be formed from among the membership of JKR. The Council will consist of 7 in number. A majority of the council will be elders (at least 60%). Consideration should be given to representation from across the membership demographics, but this is never to be a determining factor in appointment to the Council.

Q. Where does the 60% elders come from and what does this look like?

A. The 60% comes from the book of Order 7.11 (1) which allows *UP TO 40%* on a council to be non-elders. On a council of 7, this means 2 can be non-elders. (3 or more would be *OVER 40%*.)

1.2 **Executive roles.** The Council Executive, comprising the Council Chair and Minister shall serve the Council by preparing the Council meeting agenda and initiating action in the name of the Council between Council meetings, where this is deemed necessary. The Executive's actions are always subject to review by the full Council.

Q. What if the Minister is the Chair?

A. Then it is the Ministers responsibility to fulfil the duties of the Executive.

1.3 **Council Chair:** The minister or his or her nominee shall be Moderator of the church council. (Book of Order 7.6 (1))

1.3.1 The Council Chair is responsible for ensuring the effective functioning of the council and that it discharges its responsibilities in accordance with its values.

1.3.2 The chair is responsible for the preparation and circulation of the agenda, chairing council meetings, accurate record keeping, establishing whether or not a quorum of Councillors is present (at least two - thirds of the Council must be present in order for any decisions to be binding), chairing the JKR Annual General Meeting, subsequent members' meetings and ensuring all administrative responsibilities of the Council are discharged in a timely fashion.

1.3.3 The Chair also leads the Council Executive and is the point of contact for those wishing to communicate with the Council.

1.3.4 The Chair has the authority to delegate any of these responsibilities to the Council Deputy Chair. Other tasks and responsibilities may be assigned to other Council members as appropriate.

Q. Is there a need for a Deputy Chair?

A. Only if the Executive feels this is the case. If so, the Deputy Chair is appointed in the same way the Chair is.

Q. Does the Chair have a voice in decisions?

A. The Chair cannot move or second motions and does not have a decisive voice where there is a vote and only if the Parish Council is evenly divided.

**1.7 The Book of Order.** The Book of Order establishes broad requirements for the Council in relation to governance. The Council is responsible for ensuring that JKR fulfils its Mission. Further guidance for Council in relation to meetings is in the PCANZ Handbook for Congregations.

Q. Where is this *PCANZ Handbook for Congregations*?

A. A copy can be downloaded from the PCANZ Website, [https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/for\\_parishes/Handbook\\_for\\_Congregations.pdf](https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/for_parishes/Handbook_for_Congregations.pdf)

### 3. Requirements for Council Membership

3.1 JKR recognises and accepts the biblical teachings that the Council is a high and responsible calling. Appointments to the Council are not made on the basis of reward, but rather on the basis of character and gifting in order that the ministry of the Body of Christ may continue and flourish. A majority of the Council will be elders (60%).

Q. What is meant by “Gifting?”

A. Skill mix, making sure there is an appropriate diversity within the Parish Council, but also the appropriate gifts to lead and govern.

Q. Why is the majority of the Council Elders?

A. This keeps consistency with the Book of Order that [7.11(1)] that allows for up to 40% of the council to be non-ordained elders.

3.2 Persons considered for the Council must be committed Christians and mature in life and faith to be a credible and known witness for Christ. Their personal life, character and belief must be consistent with the qualities Paul outlines in the New Testament. In addition, their skill mix and ministry strengths should be both recognised by, and valuable to, the work of the ministry within the local church and the wider Body of Christ.

3.3 Council Members are required to support the vision and mission of JKR

Q. What is the Vision and Mission of JKR?

A. Our Vision and Mission statements are:

- **Vision Statement:**  
Trusting in God  
Reaching out in Service and Mission  
United in Love  
Encouraging One Another
  
- **Mission Statement:**  
We believe we are called by God to work with others to make Jesus Christ known through:
  - Proclamation of the gospel
  - The nurture and teaching of people in Christian faith
  - Response to human need in loving service
  - Seeking to transform society
  - Care for creation

3.4 A person considered for appointment to the office of Council must be a full member of the PCANZ.

Q. Can an associate Member be part of the Parish Council?:

A. No, you must be a Full Member of John Knox Rangiora to be considered for the Parish Council.

3.5 The following section specifies the criteria for ineligibility for Council membership.

3.5.1 In order to avoid any perception of any conflicts of interest, all current paid staff and their spouses, are ineligible for Council membership. Where a Council Member is required to resign on appointment to the staff, the Council Member will be regarded as Retired. Note that the Minister and any person who from time to time may be on a casual contract as part of the preaching team are expressly excluded from this provision.

3.5.2 The spouse of another serving Council member;

Q. Why is a spouse ineligible?

A. There is a danger of real/perceived power bias and may lead to conflicts of interest where loyalty to one's spouse overrides clear and uncompromised discernment.

3.5.3 Members of the Ministry Leaders Team and their spouses;

See above 3.5.2

3.5.4 Any person whose lifestyle or attitude is not in accord with the *Statement of Faith*.

Q. What is the “Statement of Faith?”

A. For JKR it is our Creeds, the Kupu Whakapono, approved by Assembly Council in 2010.

3.5.5 A Council member who ceases to be a full member of the PCANZ;

3.5.6 Any person who in the opinion of the Council is unsuitable for any other reason.

## 4. Appointment to Council

4.1 Names brought forward will be considered prayerfully and in confidence by the existing Council. A person must be a Member of JKR and within the PCANZ to become a member of the Council.

Q. How are “Names Brought Forward?”

A. Names for potential Council Members can be brought forward, to the attention of the Parish Council through either discernment by the Parish Council or by enquiry from the wider JKR Parish. An Enquiry could be in the form of a nomination/second from within the Parish or as simply as a conversation, email, phone call etc. The method is not as important as the openness of which for any enquiries can be made to the Parish Council. Any enquiry has the Minister as the first point of contact on behalf of the Council. (See 4.4.1 below)

4.2 Council Membership is for a term of 3 years. The appointment is to be taken from the AGM they were appointed at. If they were appointed at a Congregational Meeting during the year, their 3 year term will be from the previous AGM.

4.3 Any Council Member can stand for a second term after a discussion with the Council Executive, but at the conclusion of 6 years, if they wish to stand for Council again, must stand down for 1 year before they can be brought forward for re-election.

4.4 If the Council determines that it requires further members, Council shall proceed as follows:

4.4.1 Discern the names of suitable people taking into consideration the Council’s current gifting and ability mix. If a member of the congregation wishes to be considered for the Council they should approach the Minister in the first instance. However, the final decision as to who is considered for the Council remains the sole prerogative of the Council.

Q. Why is it the Parish Council’s prerogative to determine who is and isn’t considered for Parish Council?

A. This is consistent with the limited instruction in the BOO around the appointment of Officers to the Council, see 7.2 (2) (c). See also BOO 9.41 and 9.42 for comparative discussion around appointment of Elders, also subject to the satisfaction from the Parish Council and election of the Parish.

Q. Why is the Minister the first contact for any member of the Congregation wishing to be considered for Parish Council?

A. The Minister's responsibilities to the Presbytery and Parish make them the most ideal first point of call. The Minister is also Chair of the Council or is responsible for the appointment of the Chair and carries the task of Teaching and Spiritual Guidance. It must also be stressed, *the minister is not the gatekeeper for any enquiries but merely the channel.* The Minister is a sounding board for any questions or considerations for Council. It is the prerogative of the whole Council to assess the suitability of any candidate.

4.4.2 Place the names of suitable people before the congregation at a congregational meeting. At least 80% of all "Yes" and "No" votes cast, that is, excluding the number of abstentions must be in favour in order for a person's nomination to be confirmed.

Q. Why is the figure 80%?

A. This is to ensure any candidate has a strong backing of the Parish before being appointed onto the Council. A 51% majority is not the best standing for a important position such as the Parish Council.

## 5. Relationship of the Ministry Leaders to Council.

5.1 A Ministry Leader may from time to time be invited to a Council meeting in order for the Council to receive input on aspects of their parish work and for the Council to provide support and encouragement. The person invited will not have voting rights. The Minister is responsible for issuing the invitation once Council has given its assent.

5.2 The Minister remains the Council's sole formal connection to the operating organisation of JKR. This provision may be relaxed during a period of Minister transition.

Q. Why is the Minister the Council's sole formal connection to the Operating Organisation of JKR?

A. The Parish Council is a governing BODY in that it discerns the direction of JKR collectively. The Minister is delegated responsibility by the Council to lead the Ministry Leadership Team and communicate any Council discussion/direction to the Ministry Leaders or Ministries. With a single point of contact for Ministry Leaders, it not only gives the Minister the support to provide leadership for the Ministry Leadership Team but reduces the chance that a member of the Ministry Leadership Team might pass a comment to a Council member believing that it will be discussed at Council level without the knowledge of the Minister.

This doesn't mean that individuals cannot correspond directly with the Council. This is detailed more fully in Guiding Principles Chapter 10. Chapter 5 is specifically for the Ministry Leadership Team.

## 8. Requirements for Eldership

8.2 Persons considered for Eldership must be committed Christians and of sufficient experience in life and faith to be a credible and known witness for Christ. Their personal life, character and belief must be consistent with the qualities Paul outlines in the New Testament. In addition, their skill mix and ministry strengths should be both recognised by, and valuable to, the work of the ministry within the local church and the wider Body of Christ.

Q. Do you need to be a specific age to be considered having *sufficient experience in life*?

A. No.

8.3 Elders are required to support the vision and mission of JKR

Q. Where would I find a copy of the vision and mission of JKR?

A. Either on the church Website or in the Annual Report.

8.4 A person considered for appointment to the office of Elder must be a full member of the PCANZ.

Q. Do I need to be a member of JKR to be ordained at John Knox Rangiora or can I be a full member at any church?

A. We will only ordain Elders who are members of John Knox Rangiora, but you are still recognised as an Elder so long as you are a member at any PCANZ church.

8.5 The following section specifies the criteria for ineligibility for Eldership.

8.5.1 Any person whose lifestyle or attitude is not in accord with the Statement of Faith and suitability for Eldership;

Q. What are the Statements of Faith?

A. The Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Kupu Whakapono. These can be accessed here:

<https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/index.php/about-us/statements-of-faith>

## 9. Council Decision-Making Principles

9.1 The Council Chair will ensure that the Council conducts itself with God-honouring discipline and integrity in fulfilling its calling.

Q. How do we understand what is God honouring or not?

A. This is at the discretion of the Parish Council Chair and is delegated to their responsibility.

9.2 Except as prescribed in Section 9.3 below, the Council makes decisions by consensus. Consensus has been reached when there is unanimous agreement to a proposal. Note that a proposal can only be agreed if at least two-thirds of Council members are present.

Q. If decisions are by consensus, why do we still vote?

A. A mover/seconded and Voter is the format by which we decide if a consensus is reached. If it is not a unanimous decision then refer to 9.3 below.

9.3 Managing Non-Consensus. When a council member is neither in favour of a proposal nor wishes to vote against it, then the member shall abstain from voting subject to the following:

9.3.1 It is assumed that the views of all Council members would have been tabled, fully debated and understood by the council and sufficient time allowed and attempts made to develop a proposal to achieve unanimous agreement, before accepting abstentions.

9.3.2 It would be understood that any council member opting to abstain does so on the basis that while they have reservations about the proposal, that outside of the Council meeting they will support the proposal in the same way as a council member who has voted in favour of it, if it is passed.

9.3.3 As any abstentions impact the quality of the decision, abstentions must be declared prior to a vote.

Q. What happens if the abstention is not declared prior to the vote?

A. Then the process of decision making goes back to the beginning and followed correctly.

9.3.4 If two or more members signal their intention to abstain, the matter will lie on the table for further consideration at a future meeting.

9.3.5 If at the future meeting, consensus still cannot be reached, the proposal will be decided by a vote. For the proposal to proceed, a minimum two-thirds majority of all Council members present (excluding any abstentions).

**9.4 Definition of an Impasse.** An impasse is reached when one or more council members signal their intention to vote against a proposal. These members would be invited to give reasons for their position and be open to questions. Under these circumstances, the matter will lie on the table for further consideration at a future meeting.

Q. When and how could an impasse be declared?

A. If the Parish Council Chair is aware that an Impasse is likely, (Whether before/during or after appropriate discussion) they can at any time seek confirmation that an Impasse is present and then decide when the next available opportunity for the decision is to be discussed.

9.5 If at the future meeting, consensus still cannot be reached, the proposal will be decided by a vote. For the proposal to proceed, a two-thirds majority is required (excluding any abstentions). For such a decision to be binding, at least two thirds of Council members must be present.

Q. What happens if there is only currently 6 members on the Parish Council?

A. The it is appropriate to require 4 members to be present for a quorum.

**9.6 Regular Council Meetings.** Council meetings are convened and presided over by the Council Chair. The Chair must give at least 10 working days' notice of a meeting in writing or at the close of the previous meeting, and be recorded in the minutes. Meetings must open and close with prayer.

**9.7 Special Council meetings.** The Council Chair may convene a special Council meeting in case of emergency, and give reasonable notice of the meeting. The Council Chair must call a special Council meeting if not less than three Council Members so request. The normal decision-making principles apply to Special Council meetings.

**9.8. Decision-making Outside Regular and Special Meetings.** In exceptional circumstances, Council may be required to make a decision outside of the normal monthly meeting cycle. Normally, a Special Council meeting would be convened by the Council Chair, but at the Council Chair's discretion, other options may be considered, for example, telephone or video (SKYPE) conferencing, or decision by email circulation. The normal decision-making principles apply to Special Council meetings. Any such decisions would be formally ratified and recorded in the minutes of the next scheduled Council meeting.

Q. What constitutes exceptional circumstances?

A. This is completely at the discretion of the Parish Council Chair who has been delegated this responsibility.

## 11. The Authority and Role of the Minister.

11.1 The Minister is accountable to the Presbytery in all matters of faith and practice.

Q. Who is the Minister employed by?

A. The Book of Order 6.8 (3) "Although a minister is appointed to work within a specific ministry, the minister is responsible to the presbytery."

11.3 The following specific authority, entrusted to the Council in accordance with the Book of Order, is delegated to the Minister:

Q. Why is this delegated to the Minister?

A. Within any governing body, there is usually delegations for specific tasks. This is just listing some of the delegations assigned to the Minister. This makes the PC time more efficient and focused.

11.14 The Minister shall not:



11.14.1 spend the reserves referred to in paragraph 11.8.3 without express and prior Council approval;

11.14.2 make a single purchase of greater than 5% of the annual budget, aside from staff and non-discretionary expenses without express and prior Council approval;

**Q. Is the 5% of the total Annual budget or of the individual category budget?**

**A. It's of the total Annual Budget.**

11.15 External funding may not be sought from sources that derive their income from any other source or activity that is unbiblical or unethical.

**Q. How is a source deemed unbiblical or unethical?**

**A. Any source that is illegal or is deemed harmful to society according to the Parish Council's discernment would be rejected.**

## **15. Congregational Decision-Making**

15.1 The PCANZ Handbook for Congregations provides limited guidance on this matter. Accordingly JKR voting processes will follow the following guidelines.

**Q. What does the BOO say about Congregation decision making?**

**A. Chapter 5 in the BOO contains all the functions and responsibilities of a Church Congregation.**

15.2 Congregational meetings that require a vote on matters regarding individuals will generally be conducted by secret ballot. Examples include confirming the appointment of an ordained Elder, appointments to Ministry Settlement Boards, confirmation of a call to the JKR Parish.

15.3. Votes on financial, property, annual reports, and budgets will be by voice, with a show of hands if requested from the floor of the meeting.

**Q. What happens if a Congregation Member asks for a secret ballot for a matter described in 15.3?**

**A. The Chair will refer to the GP's and will confirm the position of JKR in relation to Congregational decision making. The hope is that this will be advised well before the meeting so as to not distract from the purpose of the meeting. The Chair however in their capacity as Chair may make exceptions where necessary.**

15.4. Ad Hoc JKR committees (for example, building committees and fundraising committees) will be constituted from nominations from within the congregation and confirmed by the Council. The Council retains the final right of appointment to and dismissal from any such committee. Such committees will be dissolved by the Council on completion of the committee's work.

Q. Can nominations to a committee be made from anyone outside the congregation?  
A. Only as a co-opted member of a committee. A Co-opted committee member has no voting rights.

Q. Is the understanding of the term “congregation” in 15.4 synonymous with “Associate Member” or “Member?”

A. Yes. The term “Congregation” is used in place of Associate Member or Member.

20<sup>th</sup> February 2021

5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

17<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Chapter 1

21<sup>st</sup> November 2022 Chapter 8

15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 Chapter 9