

# **Tomorrow River Lutheran Parish**

*Nelsonville Evangelical  
Lutheran Church*

*Peace Lutheran Church*

## **2026 Church Council Handbook**

## CHURCH COUNCIL 2026

As you carry out your duties this year in the Tomorrow River Parish, remember that you have been called to embrace God's hope and power to fulfill your purpose. As a parish we walk into the vision cast for us by previous leaders, you have the opportunity to take God's work here to new heights as a ***Joyfully, Committed Family***. What gifts do you bring; what passion have you been given to assist you with your work? With whom are you meant to partner in this work? **Pray for answers to these questions.**

The first chapter of Ephesians says that God has **“placed all things under his feet and appointed him (Jesus) to be head over everything for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”** You are filled and our church is filled for a great purpose ... **let's go!**

**Pray and act with great hope and love.**

**Peace to you,  
Pastor Gretchen for the pastoral team**

### **Vision**

The present vision for our parish is “Joyfully Committed Family.” Pray that the particular components of this vision get revealed in your work as a council member.

## GENERAL CHURCH COUNCIL INFORMATION

### **Prayer:**

All items of concern for council or congregation should be brought to the council with a prayerful spirit. If you have specific needs, either personally or in your area of ministry, alert the parish office via phone call, or send a text to either 715-252-5834 or 715-252-4018. You are considered a spiritual elder of the church. Your spiritual care of the church is of utmost importance.

### **Attendance at Council:**

You will receive emailed reminders; church council meeting materials are sent out the week prior to the meeting. Your presence at meetings is important because business cannot be conducted without a quorum. Please check the constitution about council member attendance at meetings.

### **Council Books:**

You will be given a binder to help you in your work. In it is the Constitution, the By Laws, and the previous minutes. You are responsible to fill your binder with ongoing minutes and financials and will return your binder to the parish office at the end of your term.

### **Committees:**

Your role in the committee would be one of liaison, representing the plans, visions, and budgets of and to the congregation. You are responsible to fill your committee and to convey to the committee chair that it is their responsibility to call and lead the meetings.

**Remind your committees to take minutes and to check with the office regarding the availability of the pastors before scheduling the meetings.** The Constitution states pastors should receive an invitation to every meeting. Please take a strong stand on this issue. It is a great step towards good communication.

### **Council Business:**

We encourage you to report to the council the activities of your committee. Make your report a brief summation. Go into detail only where there is action requested of the council. **Do not use council as a place to do committee business.**

**Dates:**

The Church Council meets on the second Tuesday of the month. All meetings will alternate between Peace and Nelsonville churches.

**All meetings start at 6:00 PM with devotions and a joint pastors report after which the two councils will split for individual business.**

2/9—February NV

4/14—April AM (Joint at 6:00pm, Peace and NV split following joint)

6/9—June NV (Fellowship event; Council business conducted at discretion of President)

9/8—September AM (Joint at 6:00pm, Peace and NV split following joint)

11/10—November NV (Joint 6:00 pm, Peace & NV split following joint)

12/8—December AM (Joint at 6:00pm, Peace and NV split following joint)

1/12—January NV (Joint 6:00 pm, Peace & NV split following joint)

**NOTE:**

Additional meetings can be called at the discretion of the president and pastor, or at the request of any council member.

**Budget Committee:**

October (Meeting **initiated by treasurers.** Date and time WILL BE determined TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE MEETING .)

**Education/Devotions:**

We will be encouraging you to grow as spiritual leaders in the church. We strongly encourage you all to take part in a Bible study series this year as part of your spiritual growth.

**Installation of Council Members:**

You will be installed during worship on **March 8, 2026.**

**Official Joint Meetings of Council:**

We meet jointly two times per year for joint parish business, however, councils will adjourn for separate agendas following the joint meeting.

### **Keys:**

Keys to Peace are available to leaders, staff, or people who serve in a position at Peace. This was voted upon by previous council. Nelsonville makes their keys available to any member who wants one. Contact the parish office.

### **Meetings & Minutes:**

All meetings of committees or task forces should prepare minutes from previous meetings. This ensures better communication. Include who met, who was absent, what your agenda was, an approval of previous minutes, and any actions to be taken. **End each meeting with this question:**

**“From this meeting, what do we need to communicate to the congregation?”** Send the parish office copies of your minutes for our file. The council secretary keeps all council minutes. Rough drafts are available for all council members. Approved minutes are available for the congregation.

- Please remember we have two pastors. Both need to be informed about committee deliberations. Provide minutes for both Pastors via email to daltonsavage@gmail.com and gretcheneve@gmail.com.
- **Committee heads are responsible for scheduling their meetings and must contact the Pastor to ensure they are available to meet.** One or both Pastors can be available one -half hour before the monthly council meeting for church business.

### **Minutes & Reporting:**

Approved minutes will be available to the congregation. Be sure that council has heard your committee business before you post it or make it available to the congregation. Communication with the full congregation, in the form of a newsletter article or bulletin announcement, must be approved by council and Pastors.

### **Parish Messenger:**

The Messenger is intended to encourage, educate and inform members. All announcements for the Messenger must be submitted to the Office Manager no later than noon Wednesday in order for the article to appear in the next bulletin. The Messenger is available online at the parish website ([www.trchurch.org](http://www.trchurch.org)) and sent out weekly

to those who have requested a mailed copy. **We would hope council members would encourage their committee members to use the Messenger to highlight their ministries.**

**Annual Report:**

The annual report will be printed for distribution the Sunday before the annual meeting in January. You must provide your committee's report. Committee reports must be in to the office manager by the last week of December to be included. Financial reports must be submitted by the second week in January. If you are in need of additional time to complete your report, please make your request to the pastors.

**Presidents:**

Pastors and presidents meet monthly (as needed) to review the upcoming agenda for council and to pray about the future of the church. Presidents are responsible for sending agenda information to the Office Manager two weeks before each meeting.

**Executive Committee:**

Meetings are held upon call of the President and/or Pastor(s).

**Office Hours:**

Pamela Wagner is the Office Secretary and works for the congregations, supports the pastors in their work and is supervised by them in her service to the congregations. Published office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8:15 AM-1:00 PM. The remainder of Pamela's schedule is set in cooperation with the pastors. The office secretary will schedule meetings for you, if asked. Any additional work requested will need to be approved by the Pastors. The office also has a computer, copier, and email available to you.

**Mail:**

When mail comes into the church it is placed in your mailbox in the church office at Peace (behind the church office door in file folders), or near the upstairs coat-rack at Nelsonville.

**Email:**

Church email (trchurch@gmail.com) is opened Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday during office hours. Emergency and time

sensitive items should be dealt with through a phone call, not email.

**Communication with Pastors for Members & Others in Need:**

Your pastors work to provide you with maximum coverage. We are on call six days per week for emergencies. We juggle our schedules to meet the parish's needs. The parish office manager knows our schedule and can reach us for you. We do have scheduled times, day and night, where one of the pastors is available for appointments. We schedule our visits based upon people's needs and schedules. Emergencies are the pastors' top priority.

**Communication with Members:**

***Please read the following over many times in your tenure.***

**Communication Policy\* adopted by continuing resolution:**

1. If you hear of any concerns other than those that people have with you, we ask that you would encourage them to follow the Scriptural mandate for conflict resolution.
2. Refer them back to the individual with whom they have an issue.
3. Follow up to see if they have made the contact and articulated their concern.
4. If they refuse to do so, ask them if they would be willing to let you set up a meeting for them with the person and offer to attend.
5. If they refuse, tell them your "hands are tied" as you are following a parish communication policy modeled on Matthew 18.

You are a spiritual leader and must model good communication. If someone has concerns about church business, and the concern is not in your area of ministry, refer them to the person that is in charge of the area. The council meetings are open to any congregation member. The bulletin boards will eventually have the names of all council persons, committee heads, etc.

\*(This policy is based on spiritual principles spelled out in Matthew 18. All other communication is destructive to the Body of Christ)

**Telephone/Email Vote:**

In the event of an emergency where time is of essence, and an immediate decision is needed, the President can solicit a telephone/email vote from the Council membership. The President shall report the results at the next council meeting with everyone's vote. This system of voting should be used in only extremely rare situations as it does not allow for discussion and debate between Council

members, and it is impossible to contact every member in a timely manner. To go ahead with the vote it requires a majority affirmative vote of the sitting Council.

**Council Committee Descriptions and Assignments:**

**All council members serve as a liaison to an area of ministry. They are responsible for filling the committee and instructing them to appoint a chairperson for the committee. Some committees may be combined due to significant overlap in their areas. Some committee work may be accomplished by an appointed task force. Each council member assigned as liaison needs to track the annual activities already on the calendar that are assigned to that committee and are encouraged to find a growth opportunity for that area of ministry, lending and securing support where needed.**

**The Combined Social Concerns and Evangelism Committees:**

**Evangelism** – shall have special responsibility, in consultation with the Pastor, for the development of a sound program of outreach and hospitality. They will assess and make recommendations for the welcoming spaces of the church; assess information up on various platforms viewable by the general public (Facebook invites, website design/information/messaging); assess signage/posters, bulletin boards, the information booth materials/placement, announcements and messages on the monitor. They will suggest and/or plan events to which the community can be invited as well as support good building use policies designed to favor its use by the community. They will assist with outreach within the community, suggesting ways we can be more visible.

**Social Concerns** – seeks to assist people of the congregation and the community with their spiritual and physical needs. This may, under the direction of the Pastor, include policy matters.

This committee will oversee the work of the Tomorrow River Area Community Kitchen and make recommendations to the council of any additional ways the congregation could provide support to those in need. This committee may assist in communicating relevant state, national and world concerns to assist us with our mission. It will receive and disseminate any materials from the ELCA deemed helpful and relevant to the congregation's context.

**The Stewardship Committee** shall have special responsibility, in consultation with the Pastor and in accordance with scriptural principles of stewardship, for the responsibilities assessing and supporting the congregation giving efforts. It assists the congregation members in fulfilling their duty as a member of the congregation as spelled out in the constitution C8.04: *to make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and Sacrament, to live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the churchwide organization of the ELCA.* The committee will provide feedback and evaluate the current education provided to the congregation in the area of giving. It will provide programs that further the spiritual growth of the members as needed. It assists the council to evaluate all fundraisers and make recommendations to the council; council makes the final approval for all fundraising in the congregation. It assists the congregation to follow best practices for financial management. It works with the pastor to review giving patterns of the congregation and make recommendations for educating the members about the financial status of the congregation. Assist the leadership to best utilize the various platforms to teach members about their duties and opportunities in both financial support and service to the congregation. They support an annual distribution of a Time and Talent survey for members to be used by committees and leadership, not only to assist in getting work done but to provide members, particularly new members, with opportunities to serve. It may be asked to do asset mapping activities that will assist long range planning. They also spearhead membership matters that spur involvement and connections, reviewing the membership lists and addressing needs regarding the maintenance of such records.. They will receive and disseminate any relevant materials from the ELCA

### **The Combined Lay Ministry and Worship Committees:**

**Worship** – together with lay ministry they shall be responsible

for securing people to serve in various capacities for worship services (i.e. ushers, greeters, lectors, cantors, communion assistants, altar committee, etc.) They also have responsibility to consult with the Pastor in matters pertaining to worship and shall make recommendations to the council. They will be involved in discussions regarding any changes to worship time, number of services, space considerations, seasonal installments, etc, working cooperatively within the parish for all shared services. It will receive and disseminate any materials from the ELCA.

**Lay Ministry** addresses the broader inreach ministry of the congregation. It focuses on providing logistical support for worship and service within the congregation. It works cooperatively with the Stewardship committee to identify and utilize skills and gifts of members in the congregation's mission and ministry. Lay Ministry also is concerned with ministering to the homebound and hospitalized: Provide oversight and support to ministries to shut-ins including lay communion distribution, CARE, fielding special requests for special needs (helping families with equipment needs, transportation, yard work, computer support). It will receive and disseminate any materials from the ELCA.

## **The Combined Education and Youth Committees**

**Education** shall have responsibility, in consultation with the Pastor, for the education of children and adults. Areas of concern include support to the Sunday School program and Young Blessings preschool; promotion of adult education; and support for educational opportunities for the youth of the congregation. They will have input on any themes and materials used; provide support for church camp experiences and vacation Bible School. They oversee the scholarship programs within the church. With the pastor they have oversight of all Bible studies offered within and promoted by the church. They shall assess the educational programs of the church and make recommendations to the Council. It will receive, utilize and promote materials vetted by the ELCA; it will provide materials deemed useful to the congregation in the area of education.

**Youth Activities** shall have the special responsibility, in consultation with the Pastor, for the development of a sound and effective Youth Program in the Congregation, and shall make recommendations thereon to the Council: Promote the

spiritual development and fellowship of our youth. They shall coordinate and recruit leadership for youth activities including mission trips. They shall work cooperatively for the parish's shared programming. They shall assist to provide opportunities for youth to be mentored in service, in the development of their leadership and service gifts, and in the congregation's mission. Provide support for any social justice activities (ie: 30 Hour Famine and Awareness of Human Trafficking, etc) They shall assist in the best use of social media. It will receive and disseminate any materials from the ELCA

**The Fellowship Committee** is encouraged to plan social activities for the entire congregation and to seek ways to integrate all members into the Christian fellowship of the congregation: coordinate activities that provide an opportunity for the congregation members to get to know one another, to build relationships with the end goal of supporting one another and doing ministry together. In conjunction with the Stewardship Committee, and when asked, it will participate in planning support for the New Members' classes and plan new member activities designed to help new members actuate and connect with the congregation. It will include the following: Family Advent Night. Parish & Congregation Suppers, Bon Fires, Lent soup suppers, Social Sundays, New Members Class Meals Etc. It will receive and disseminate any materials from the ESCW/ELCA,

**The Property Committee** shall have special responsibility for the care of all church property and shall make recommendations to the Council. The Property Committee is responsible for determining adequate insurance on the property, assessing the general status of the building, ensuring safe working environments, addressing any building/grounds needs, assisting the congregation to be good stewards of the property, coordinate with the custodians annual fall/spring clean up, assist with wise storage of church property and space utilization.

**The Long-Range Planning Committee** has the responsibility to study the mission and ministry of the church, the needs of the congregation with local/regional/national/global concerns in mind. They may be asked to assist with planning for future personnel, program and building needs. They will collect any long range planning ideas in their field from the various committees. It will receive and disseminate any materials from







