

POSTING COUNCIL MINUTES _OR NOT

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In working with a managerial team in a major corporation, one manager told me, “We have only three problems here; communication, Communication, and COMMUNICATION!” Congregations face a similar challenge. **How do we inform the congregation of the issues, projects and concerns that the council is addressing?** Many congregations have a practice of posting the minutes of the council meeting in the narthex. Some print the minutes monthly in their newsletter. I want to warn against these practices.

The main concern centers around the fact that the minutes of the May meeting, for example, are not officially the minutes until they are amended, corrected and approved by the council. This does not occur until the June meeting. For the secretary to publish or post them before they are approved can, and will, contribute to mis-communication, hurt feelings and problems.

We have each experienced the approving of the minutes from the previous meeting. We correct names attributed to what was said, motions made or actions reported. Minutes are also amended with clarifications being added to the abbreviated summation of a reported purpose behind an approved action.

Plainly said, the publishing or posting of council minutes before they are officially approved is inappropriate and not a good communication practice. It is not a practice that fosters health in the congregation.

On the other hand, “highlights” of council action should be reported and posted. The highlights might also include projects on which the teams, task forces or committees are working. Focusing on the challenges, the plans and the projects as they are being addressed at the “committee level” invites members to be involved. Invite involvement early on in the process.

The highlights also include the “lowlights.” Pastors and councils tend to avoid the “bad news.” We hope next month will be better, that things will turn around, that the festival offering will pull us through. And it doesn’t. What will help pull us through and turn things around is honesty and frank talk about the challenges that face the congregation. Secrets do not contribute to good health, nor to healthy communication.