

University Lutheran Church of Hope

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Suggested Guidelines for Writing Meeting Minutes

***Disclaimer.** This document has been prepared on my own volition. No one asked me to do this. Much of what is stated here is opinion, specifically, my opinion. If you do not agree with my opinions and suggestions, you are welcome to continue writing minutes as you see fit. If you choose to present your views to me on this topic, I would welcome that. Please take this in the spirit in which I am offering it.*

The purpose of meeting minutes is to remember what happened during a meeting and fix responsibility upon those accepting it at that meeting. Let me give you some examples of weak writing and suggestions as to how it might be improved.

Weak – “It was suggested we look into getting a choir director.”

Problem – This sentence is in the passive voice. Active voice is much more specific.

Better – “Bob Hope suggested we look into getting a choir director.”

Another problem – This sentence still does not make some things clear. For instance, Will we look into getting a choir director? Who will look into it? When will that person report? If we find a volunteer, will the person asking that volunteer have the authority to actually assign him or her to the task? If we do not find a volunteer, then what?

Best – “The committee authorized the creation of a position of choir director. Bob Hope will seek a candidate to serve and will report back at next month’s meeting.”

Weak – “Art reported he will make the funds transfer soon.”

Problem – What does “soon” mean? This afternoon? Next week? Next fall?

Better – “Art reported he will make the funds transfer no later than Tuesday, April 28, 2001.”

See how I stuck that complete date in there? “Tuesday” all by itself won’t mean a lot when you’re re-reading these minutes next year.

Another problem – Who is Art? State his full name. If he has an official position germane to the discussion, say so.

Best – “Art Carney, the treasurer, reported he will transfer the funds no later than Tuesday, April 28, 2001.”

Weak – “Fred Astair and Ginger Rogers installed the new loudspeakers.”

Problem – What? During the meeting?

Better – “Fred Astair and Ginger Rogers reported they have installed the new loudspeakers.”

Weak – “The Property Committee will paint the Sunday school office.”

Problem – When?

Better – “The Property Committee expects to paint the Sunday school office by June 1, 2001.”

Minor grammatical nitpick – The committee doesn’t do it, its members do.

Best – “Members of the Property Committee expect to paint the Sunday school office by June 1, 2001.

Weak – “The Board decided we should proceed by fixing the roof, patching the plaster, and to repaint the walls.”

Problem – The writer failed to maintain a parallel structure.

Better - “The Board decided we should proceed by fixing the roof, patching the plaster, and repainting the walls.”

Weak – “Point 1. The Board voted to repair the roof.

Point 2. Voted to repair the sidewalk also.”

Problem – The writer is mixing a style using complete sentences with one that does not. Choose one style and stick with it.

Better - “Point 1. The Board voted to repair the roof.

Point 2. The Board voted to repair the sidewalk also.”

Weak – Purchase gift certificates for Sandy and Karen who worked so hard to with the choir. MSC.

Problems – 1. Who are Sandy and Karen? 2. Where are we to purchase these gift certificates? 3. What is the value of the gift certificates? One should be able to use minutes to take action.

Better – It was MSC to direct the administrator to purchase at Target two \$100 gift certificates to be given to Sandy Jones and Karen Smith in appreciation for their work with the choir.

As I previously stated, this document represents suggested guidelines. I would be happy to alter or expand it based upon your suggestions.