

Work Together for Good
St. Lydia's Rule of Life

This Rule of Life serves as St. Lydia's bylaws, defining the how and why. Certain structural and legal issues are addressed in our congregation's constitution.

The Congregation

Purpose

St. Lydia's is a holistic, neighborhood church that dispels isolation, reconnects neighbors, and subverts the status quo, all around the kitchen table.

Composition

For all purposes other than those where voting is restricted to voting members as required by the synod and outlined in our constitution, full participation in the congregation of St. Lydia's will be considered open to all who attend.

The Leadership Table

Purpose

Our community is guided by the Leadership Table which, directed by the Holy Spirit, reads the spiritual compass of the community, measures the bearings of all that has come before, and take soundings of what lies beneath. The Leadership Table stands at the helm of the ship and keeps their focus on the horizon to plot the way ahead. The healthy growth of our community is based upon a relationship of trust between the congregation and the Leadership Table.

Composition

The Leadership Table is made up of six to nine individuals who participate in the life of our community through committed attendance at worship, active engagement in the community, and a cultivated practice of financial stewardship. Just as the body of St. Lydia's has many members, all with different functions, Table Leaders reflect a diversity of gifts and roles in the community.

Serving on the Leadership Table

The call to serve on the Leadership Table originates with the movement of the Holy Spirit discerned by the individual, which is then affirmed by both the Leadership Table and the congregation (following the decision-making processes for Leadership Table meetings and Community Meetings described in this Rule). Those who feel called to serve are invited to present themselves to the Pastor at least one month before the Leadership Table meeting which will occur at least a month prior to the Fall Community Meeting. After meeting with the Pastor and engaging in a discernment process, they may present themselves to the Leadership Table and attend a Leadership Table meeting. If affirmed by the Leadership Table and still desiring to become a Table Leader, they are presented to the congregation to be affirmed, along with continuing Table Leaders, at the Fall Community Meeting.

Table Leaders serve for a period of time identified through their discernment process, with a

maximum of three consecutive years (with a minimum of one year off between successive terms). Should the Leadership Table have an opening midyear, a congregant may present themselves to serve as an interim Table Leader by engaging in the discernment process as outlined above.

St. Lydia's staff attend Leadership Table meetings at the invitation of the Pastor. Prospective Table Leaders, after being affirmed by the Leadership Table but not yet affirmed at a Community Meeting, will attend intervening Leadership Table meetings. The Pastor, staff and prospective Table Leaders have voice in stage one of the decision making process, but refrain from participating in stage two of the decision making process at Leadership Table meetings.

Leadership Table Chair

A Chair is selected by the Table Leaders. Prospective Chairs may either be nominated by a Table Leader or self-nominate by informing the pastor of their desire to serve as Chair. The Chair is elected by simple majority through secret ballot at the next regular Leadership Table meeting subsequent to the Community Meeting where the slate of members is affirmed. The Chair and Pastor work collaboratively to plan and facilitate meetings.

The Role of the Pastor

The Pastor is the shepherd of the congregation. The Pastor's office flows from the committed practice of prayer and the study of scripture. Together with the Leadership Table, the Pastor keeps an eye trained toward the horizon, listens to God's call for the community, and sets that vision before the congregation. The Pastor preaches, teaches, directs, and presides over the liturgical life of the congregation. The Pastor is responsible for the health and fruitfulness of the body, as well as the spiritual care of the individuals that comprise it, nurturing and nourishing the gifts of each congregant.

Meeting Schedules

The congregation meets twice yearly in the Spring and Fall at Community Meetings, which are open to all who wish to attend. Community Meetings will be announced for a period of two months prior to the event. If necessary, additional Community Meetings may be called by the Leadership Table (following the Decision-Making Process, below), or at the request of a group of congregants made up of at least 60% of the average service attendance in the preceding month. Congregants may also informally request that the Leadership Table schedule an additional Community Meeting.

The Leadership Table meets six times each year, on the second Wednesdays of January, March, May, July, September, and November. The schedule for Leadership Table Meetings is made available to the St. Lydia's community. The Pastor or the Chair may call an additional Leadership Table meeting to address business that is time-sensitive and/or vital to the health of the congregation.

Communication between the Congregation and the Leadership Table

Table Leaders will be listed on the St. Lydia's website, so that they are known to the congregation. On the occasion that a congregant comes to a Table Leader with an idea or concern, the Table Leader's first task is to listen, discerning the pastoral implications of the conversation and remaining attuned to the movement of the Holy Spirit. After the conversation, the Table Leader may ask the congregant, "Would you be interested in attending a Leadership Table meeting to speak to this?" If yes, the congregant may e-mail the Chair. Congregants may also send an e-mail to the entire Leadership Table through the general address posted on the website.

Ideas for new projects may be brought directly to the Pastor, who will discern if the project can begin immediately or should first go to the Leadership Table for consideration.

Table Leaders, as well as congregants, may request a place on the agenda by e-mailing or speaking to the Chair.

Decision-Making Process

The criteria for decision making at St. Lydia's is based on the following:

- a. God called our ancestors in the faith to follow; we seek to follow God's call for our congregation.
- b. John 15 provides us with an image of God as the vine grower in a vineyard, caring for and pruning branches so that they might bear more fruit. Our congregation seeks to make decisions that promote both health and fruitfulness of the body.

Decision Making on the Leadership Table

Decisions within the Leadership Table are made by consensus, meaning that each Table Leader present can accept and affirm the decision and no member believes it is contrary to the health and fruitfulness of the body. Though less-weighty decisions may be addressed quickly, it is important that each Table Leader be given an opportunity to register their affirmation or lack thereof, so that the Chair and Pastor are not making assumptions about whether the group supports a decision. In facilitating the meeting, the Chair and Pastor may employ any of a variety of methods as part of the decision-making process, such as "temperature taking" with thumbs up or down, asking each Table Member to offer their own thoughts on the issue, asking if any Table Member has a concern or thought before moving forward, or a straw vote. Silence and prayer are integral parts of the decision-making process.

If, on a particular decision, consensus is not reached, the Chair will ask, "Are we ready to make this decision?" If the sense of those Table Leaders present is that they are not ready, the issue is postponed to the next meeting or another specified time. If they are ready, the Chair employs the following two-stage discernment process:

Stage 1

- Invite each Table Leader to share their individual perspective on the issue, if it has not already been represented in prior conversation.
- Observe a time of listening to God's prompting through silence and prayer.

Stage 2:

- Invite Table Leaders to share what they believe is best for the health and fruitfulness of the body.
- Ask if each Table Leader present can accept and affirm the decision *and* believes it is not contrary to the health and fruitfulness of the body.

If consensus is not reached at this point, the Chair and Pastor have the authority to decide how to proceed. They may:

1. Put a temporary structure in place until consensus can be reached.
2. Put a process in place to aid discernment on the issue.
3. Postpone the issue until the next meeting or another specified date.
4. Table the issue indefinitely.

Decisions that directly impact the entire body of the congregation, such as calling a Pastor, changing locations, taking a significant new direction for the congregation, or changing St. Lydia's purpose statement, should be made by the congregation at a Community Meeting. If two or more Table Leaders feel that a decision should be made by the full community, it must be added to the agenda of a Community Meeting.

Time-Sensitive Decisions

When there is the need to make a significant decision quickly, the Chair or Pastor may collect opinions and get the go-ahead from the Leadership Table by e-mail, provided that consensus of the entire Leadership Table can be reached. (If a Table Leader is for some reason unavailable by e-mail, the decision may be made without the input of that Table Leader). If consensus is not reached by e-mail, the issue will be added to the agenda for the next Leadership Table meeting, or a special Leadership Table meeting may be called. The Chair and Pastor may also informally invite advice or perspective from Table Leaders on a particular issue via e-mail.

Decision Making at Community Meetings

As at Leadership Table meetings, at Community Meetings we gather to listen for God's call for our community and steward the health and fruitfulness of the congregation. Community Meetings may have up to four purposes.

1. Share information with the community about the health and fruitfulness of the congregation through updates, reports, and announcements of future plans.
2. Decide issues that directly impact the entire body of the congregation, such as calling a Pastor, changing locations, taking a significant new direction for the congregation, or changing St. Lydia's purpose statement.
3. Solicit feedback from the community about a particular issue or idea.
4. Provide time and space to strengthen the bond of the community or process a congregational experience.

Community Meetings are planned by the Leadership Table (or designated Table Leaders) and facilitated by the Chair and Pastor. In general, individuals who have worked on a particular item are the ones to present it to the congregation, with the Chair and Pastor facilitating the ensuing discussion.

All congregants are welcome to attend Community Meetings and, as outlined by the agenda, to

speak. Congregants who want to participate in the meeting are asked to fill out and submit a slip of paper at any St. Lydia's service during the four weeks preceding the meeting. The slip of paper will have two check boxes, either or both of which may be selected by the congregant: "I want to attend and participate in the meeting" and "I am a committed congregant of this community and feel ready to vote at this meeting." Congregants who are unable to attend any St. Lydia's service in the four weeks prior to the meeting due to extenuating circumstances may communicate their situation to the Pastor and the Chair, who will decide if they may attend and/or vote.

When making a decision, we seek the *accord of the community*, meaning the assembled voting body is of one heart and one mind on the decision and does not believe it is contrary to the health and fruitfulness of the body.

Prior to the decision, the Leadership Table will determine both if the decision is "routine" or "significant" (thus, which process, outlined below, may be used to make the decision) and the percentage of Voting Congregants that will constitute *accord*.

Routine Decisions

if a decision is routine, or if a vote needs to be recorded for legal reasons, the following procedure may be used:

1. The Chair or a designee presents the proposal, then the Chair opens the floor for discussion, encouraging participants to restrict comments to their thoughts and concerns about the proposal, not responses to other comments. Participants may also address questions to the presenter, Chair, and Pastor.
2. When the discussion period is complete, the Chair asks for a show of hands of anyone who objects to the proposal. If no one objects, the Chair announces the proposal is accepted, and the result is recorded as unanimous.
3. If there are objections, the number of hands is counted, and those in favor are then asked for and counted, as well. If accord, as defined by the Leadership Table prior to the meeting, is reached, the proposal is accepted.

Significant Decisions

Significant decisions are made by way of a two-stage discernment process with the following process:

Stage 1:

- Invite all congregants present to share their individual perspective on the issue, if it has not already been represented in prior conversation.
- Observe a time of listening to God's prompting through silence and prayer.

Stage 2:

- Invite all congregants to share what they feel is best for the health and fruitfulness of the body.
- Ask if each Voting Congregant present can accept and affirm the decision and believes it is not contrary to the health and fruitfulness of the body.

If accord, as defined by the Leadership Table prior to the meeting, is reached, the proposal is accepted.

If accord is not reached, the Leadership Table may confer and decide how to move forward. They may:

1. Put a temporary structure in place until accord can be reached.
2. Put a process in place to aid discernment on the issue.
3. Postpone the issue until the next meeting or another specified date.
4. Table the issue indefinitely.

The Leadership Table must reach consensus about how to move forward. If they cannot reach consensus, the issue is automatically tabled.