
Moderating through Discernment

Creating space for healthy dialogue and decision-making as a Session, Committee or Board.

Guiding Statements:

“We spent two hours discussing what to do and left with no actionable steps forward.”

“We thought our decision would get more buy-in from the congregation. What did we do wrong?”

“I knew that idea wasn’t going to work from the moment it was proposed... I for one voted against it.”



1. Discernment is a process that takes time!

→ Planning

Moderators tend to be several steps ahead. You have to meet folks where they are.

→ Patience

Moderators must build in time for discussion and know when it is no longer productive.

→ Perseverance

Good moderators always have a “long view”



2. Interpreting & Responding to Resistance

- **What's the source of the push-back?**
What is the real issue. Often it's not the one at hand.
- **Allowing voices to be heard, but not dominate or control**
Ground rules for engagement are critical.
- **Insist on use of "I" language.**
Elders do not "represent" anyone but the will of Christ
- **Permission to Call People Out.**
...when people attack others' motivation



3. Specific Tools

- **Never Break a Tie Vote!**
- **Use Shared Decision-Making models whenever possible**
- **Agree to engage deeply**
- **Engage in Honest Prayer**
-



4. Know your Session/Committee/Board

In my estimation, there are 4 types of Sessions/Committees/Boards:

- **Too Busy for creativity/innovation**
Putting out the same fires or bogged down in minutia.
- **Let's form a committee**
...instead of owning their leadership role
- **Always "Yes!"**
...and let us know how it goes.
- **Tell us more...**
Curious and engaged with ideas. Thoughtful and supportive no matter what.

