



Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group

Charter
September 8, 2015

Purpose of Charter: This charter formally establishes a Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (Lewinsville), as approved by a majority of the group so established and by the Session, with all rights and responsibilities that generally pertain to ministry groups ordered and approved by the Session.

Ministry Group Mission:

- To examine the economic, social and spiritual implications of significant issues facing our local and global community in a non-partisan and fact-based manner.
- To enable Lewinsville Presbyterian Church members and groups to engage public policy issues as faithful Christians.
- To provide a forum for open and respectful discourse about social justice and public policy matters.

Principles:

- *Discerning God's divine command:* The primary objective of Lewinsville's Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group is to support individuals and the church to discern God's commands regarding public policy issues. Keeping in mind that discerning God's commands is a function of our dialogue with God, scripture, and each other, Lewinsville's faith and public policy ministry will emphasize engagement as "conversation." Thought of in this manner, civil public discourse becomes a means of discernment, as well as a means to create and harness energy to engage on social justice matters.
- *Grounding in Christian love:* We know that in most, if not all, conversations about political issues there will be agreement and disagreement. When we walk through the doors of the church, or a Christian education class, or a faith and public policy breakfast, we come as Democrats, Republicans, Independents, or other. But first we come as Christians striving to discern God's will, agreeing and disagreeing in love and respect.
- *Seeking balance and integrity:* Lewinsville's Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group will strive to achieve political balance in its structural composition and education and information activities. Featuring diverse opinions and experiences will more likely yield a better understanding of and education about any particular issue and, thus, facilitate discerning God's call. And, by obtaining structural and procedural political balance, and

ensuring information integrity, Lewinsville's Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group will become recognized as a forum for open and honest public discourse and a model for others in the community. To achieve this goal, the Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group will also strive for balance of demographics, especially with an eye toward the inclusion of youth.

- *Building community by practicing community:* The broad effects of public policy on virtually all aspects of our lives require, by definition, that a Faith and Public Policy Ministry must appropriately complement other Lewinsville ministries. The goal is not duplication, but rather mutual coordination and integration, which offers the possibility of enriching the ministry activities for education, worship, youth activities, and mission and service outreach. This integration should extend beyond the church's four walls. By partnering and collaborating with other churches and non-church organizations, Lewinsville will enhance the education of its members, as well as strengthen its voice in the community.

Structure:

1. Administration:

- The group shall be composed of 10 to 15 members, the majority of which must be active members: membership to the Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group may not be constrained to Lewinsville Presbyterian Church members only. Group membership should reflect, to the greatest extent possible, the political, social, economic, spiritual, and cultural diversity of the congregation writ large.
- The Group shall be co-led by two members of the ministry group, who are members or active non-members at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, as nominated by the Nominating committee with input from committee membership, and with term limits consistent with the Session Handbook. To the extent practicable, the leadership should be composed of two members who hold diverse political views that reflect a majority of the congregation's political interests. The co-leadership team shall, among other responsibilities to be determined by the Group: a) call and chair Group meetings; b) establish Group meeting procedures and protocols; c) serve as the primary contacts for and representatives of the Group in intra- and extra-church activities, including church leadership and collective ministry group meetings; d) serve as the primary contacts to the local and national faith and social justice community, including the PCUSA Office of Public Witness; and, e) manage Group financial and other resources.
- A member of the Lewinsville Presbyterian Church Session shall be included in the Group membership, and will serve as the liaison to the Session, in coordination with the Group's leaders.
- The Lewinsville Presbyterian Church Director of Youth Ministries shall serve as the Group's staff representative.

2. Process management/issue and program development:

- The Group is responsible for managing processes and programs under its purview. Much of the substantive content of the Group's work will involve identifying issues of concern to the congregation, developing programs to educate and equip individuals and groups and facilitating advocacy.

3. *Information and communication:*

- The Group shall develop an effective and balanced information and communication program. The Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group at Lewinsville must become a part of the communications fabric of the church. Thus, the Group shall: a) identify one or more group members responsible for regularly submitting information and program items for the church bulletin, newsletter, and weekly update; b) establish analog and digital vehicles for congregants and non-members to access information about particular issues, using sources provided by the PCUSA Office of Public Witness, other Presbyterian denominational offices, major issue-oriented non-profit groups, think tanks, federal, state, and local governments; and, other church and non-church sources.

4. *Coordination and collaboration:*

- The ultimate acceptance, success, and effectiveness of Lewinsville's Faith and Public Policy Ministry rest on the Group's ability to build community through participating in community. To meet this goal, the Group shall: a) work with the Christian and Adult Education ministries to develop class, Salzman lecture, and Lenten study recommendations; b) work with Mission and Service Ministry Group to coordinate outreach activities of mutual interest; c) periodically report activities and concerns to church leaders, the Session, and the congregation; d) work with Lewinsville's pastors and the Worship Ministry Group to have faith and public policy matters raised in worship services and through other Lewinsville channels; e) work with the Parish Life and Care Ministry Group to organize congregation-wide and small group get-togethers focused on a social justice issues or advocacy opportunities; and, f) serve as the church's public policy "agent", developing and accumulating information about public policy issues from outside groups and sources for dissemination to the congregation, as well as representing Lewinsville in activities, coalitions, and ad hoc groups outside the church.