

The Function of the Chairman

Remember

Meetings of the church are for two purposes:

1. to worship God (Eph 3:21)
2. to build up the believers (1 Cor 14:26b)

The function of the chairman is to lead the assembly to the presence of a holy God with fear and trembling (Heb 12:28f). Guided by the Holy Spirit, the chairman should help prepare the hearts and minds of the people to receive the Word of God, as a farmer prepares a field for sowing the seed.

The role of the chairman is not insignificant. Assembly meetings are convened in God's name by Sudbury Bible Fellowship. Therefore everything the chairman says and does will reflect upon the Lord and upon this assembly. This makes the chairman's role a solemn responsibility.

Everything done and said by the chairman must be appropriate to the occasion, knowing that we are in the presence of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It is important to understand the chairman's role and the importance placed on it.

Clearly there isn't a lot of Scripture that directly addresses this subject. Therefore many of these thoughts are not absolute rules. Rather they are presented as guidelines that have been proven to be helpful and sensible through time and use.

"But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner." (1 Cor 14:40)

Format of the meeting

A suggested format:

1. Opening hymn
2. Prayer
3. Hymn
4. Announcements
5. Birthdays and children's choruses (on Sunday morning)
6. Scripture reading (if there is one)
7. Hymn
8. Introduce the speaker with care

Timing:

- Opening prayer and hymns 15 minutes
- Scripture reading and announcements 5 minutes
- Message 40 minutes

Hymns

- Open with a familiar hymn.
- Don't experiment with more than one unfamiliar hymn.
- Advise the pianist of your choices several days in advance. (This is a good practice for speakers as well if they desire a closing hymn.) Not giving the pianist enough time to prepare is very inconsiderate.
- Announce the number of the hymn clearly and loudly – at least twice.
- Clearly signal the pianist when to start.
- Consider asking people to stand – especially for the last hymn before the message, or for hymns with higher notes than normal.
- If the opening has taken longer than you expected, cut out some verses or even a whole hymn in order to avoid cutting into the speaker's time.

Prayer

- The main purpose of this prayer is to commend this particular meeting and this particular speaker to God for His blessing.
- Don't pray around the world. If there are some current situations that bear remembering – do so, but limit it.
- If someone else will be asked to open in prayer, obtain their permission before the meeting.

Announcements

- Be familiar with and have the announcements ready to share beforehand.
- Read. The. Bulletin. In. Advance.
- Get any clarifications you need in advance.
- Be careful that you have all the facts and that they are correct. Listening to a chairman stumble through announcements, ask for clarifications, get corrected, etc. isn't as amusing as some chairmen imagine.

Scripture reading

- Check with the speaker in advance to see if he has any particular section for you to read.
- Read through the section a few times in advance so that you don't struggle with it during the meeting.
- Just read it. Don't comment on it – that's the speaker's job.

Introducing the speaker

- Be brief and very considerate.
- Never say anything that could be embarrassing to the speaker.
- Give his name accurately.
- If he is a visitor, let him know that he is welcome.

Appearance

- Before a chairman has said his first word, he has spoken to the audience by his appearance.
- As has already been mentioned, these meetings are convened in God's name by this assembly – the chairman represents both God and the assembly so his appearance will reflect on God and on the assembly.

Speech

- Speak out clearly, slowly, loudly, and distinctly (1 Cor 14:8f). Don't mumble.
- Speak with enthusiasm. Don't convey the impression that you aren't interested in the meeting.
- Don't apologize for your shortcomings (being late, lack of preparation, inexperience, etc.).
- Don't ramble. If you have something to say, say it and get on to the next item.
- Don't try to be a stand-up comic, be flippant, or try to be cute.
- Don't preach a mini-sermon. Leave the message to the speaker.
- If you do wish to make a special point or tell the story behind a hymn, make sure you take it out of your opening time (15-20 minutes) and not the speaker's time (40-45 minutes).

Preparation

- You usually know well in advance when you are to be the chairman. So:
 - pray about it
 - prepare for it
 - present it "heartily as unto the Lord" (Col 3:23)
 - If you need to get a replacement, don't wait until the last minute.
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Leading a Wednesday night Bible study

- Prepare properly.
- One opening hymn seems appropriate.
- Try to finish your study by 7:30 to leave plenty of time for prayer requests and prayer.
- If others wish to contribute, please control the time so not to impact the prayer segment.
- Allow a brief time for prayer requests – say 5-10 minutes.
- Remind the men that it is good for several men to pray out loud and that this will require us to keep our audible prayers short in order to allow time for others.
- Close off the meeting by 8:00.

Notes to all men (i.e. not just the opener):

- Please make your prayer requests short, rather than telling long stories leading up to them.
- Keep your audible prayers short so that other men will have the opportunity to pray out loud.
- Don't forget to pray for the things mentioned as prayer requests.