WRITING CHARTERS

WHAT IS A CHARTER

Think of a charter as a ministry description, much like a job description. It defines the committee's purpose and mission, while also outlining the responsibilities of its members. Just as a job description helps an employee understand their role, expectations, and authority in the workplace, a charter does the same for committees, commissions, and ministry teams in the church. It provides clarity, accountability, and alignment with the mission and vision of the church.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Every effective committee charter should include these ten+one essential elements:

1. **Committee Name** – What is the official name of the committee?
2. **Mission Statement** – This is a short, high-level statement that explains why the committee exists. It should align with the church's mission. It explains "Why we are here."
3. **Vision Statement** – A vision statement describes what success looks like and the future impact this work seeks to produce. It inspires and motivates members and helps to set a clear direction.
4. **Core Values** – Values guide the committee in making decisions and carrying out its work. Examples include: *stewardship, inclusivity, transparency, and collaboration*. Including values ensures everyone operates from the same foundational principles.
5. **Purpose / Function** – This defines the overall role of the committee — what it exists to accomplish in broad, functional terms. It explains specifically what the committee is responsible for. Example: "To develop and recommend annual mission projects, coordinate volunteer engagement, and oversee allocation of outreach funds." The Purpose Statement says, "This is what we do."
6. **Responsibilities** – The Responsibilities list says, "Here's how we do it." It breaks down the specific tasks and duties the committee performs to fulfill its purpose. List the main responsibilities and key tasks as bullet points. Keep them clear and actionable. Examples:
    - Develop an annual outreach plan
    - Coordinate with local nonprofits
    - Report monthly to Session on progress and budget
7. **Authority** – Clearly define what authority has been granted to the committee by Session; what it can do independently and what requires Session approval. Example: "May approve expenditures up to $500; all larger expenditures require Session approval." This prevents confusion or overstepping authority.
8. **Membership** – State how many members are on the committee, term lengths, qualifications, and any ex-officio roles. Example: "5–7 members, 3-year staggered terms, pastor serves ex-officio."
9. **Meetings & Reporting** – Describe how often the committee meets and how it reports to Session or other bodies. This keeps everyone accountable and ensures consistent communication.
10. **Review / Revision** – Finally, include the date it was last reviews as well as a date for the next review or revision of the charter. This keeps the charter up-to-date and relevant as needs change.
11. **(Bonus) Calendar** – - In addition to its stated responsibilities, the Committee shall maintain a calendar of regular and special events that guides its work throughout the year. This calendar identifies the annual cycle of tasks, start and end dates for major responsibilities, and the months in which key discussions, planning, or approvals take place.

WHAT THE CALENDAR MIGHT INCLUDE

For example, the calendar may include:

- **Annual Events** – recurring ministry programs, stewardship campaigns, mission drives, retreats, or seasonal activities (e.g., VBS in June, Advent events in December).
- **Start and End Dates** – beginning and conclusion of major projects (e.g., budget development starting in August, final approval in October).
- **Special Events** – one-time initiatives such as anniversary celebrations, building dedications, or mission trips.
- **Meeting Milestones** – designated months when specific items should be reviewed or approved (e.g., reviewing the annual financial report in February, evaluating program effectiveness in May).

WHY THE CALENDAR IS SO USEFUL

- Provides a roadmap for the committee/commission, helping members know what to expect each month.
- Encourages good stewardship of time, so important tasks are not forgotten.
- Makes it easier for new members to get up to speed quickly on the rhythm of the group's work.
- Helps align the group's efforts with the wider life of the congregation (e.g., avoiding conflicts with major church seasons or events).
- Serves as a tool for accountability, ensuring the body keeps on track with its responsibilities.

10 CORE VALUES

Here are 10 core values that are especially helpful for church committees and working groups:

- **Faithfulness** – Rooting all work in prayer and God's guidance.
- **Clarity** – Being clear about purpose, roles, and expectations.
- **Accountability** – Taking responsibility for commitments and decisions.
- **Collaboration** – Working together with respect and openness.
- **Transparency** – Sharing information honestly and openly.
- **Stewardship** – Using resources wisely and responsibly.
- **Respect** – Valuing diverse perspectives and voices.
- **Service** – Keeping ministry and mission at the center.
- **Integrity** – Acting with honesty, consistency, and fairness.
- **Commitment** – Following through faithfully and reliably.

Each of these values provides a shared mindset that shapes how members approach their tasks, make decisions, and treat one another.

SAMPLE CHARTER
WORSHIP COMMITTEE

MISSION Our mission is to glorify God and nurture the congregation's spiritual life by working with the pastor to support and encourage meaningful, faithful, and participatory worship.

VISION To see the congregation joyfully gathered in worship that is Christ-centered, Spirit-filled, inclusive, meaningful, and transformative for all who participate.

CORE VALUES

- **Faithfulness** – Rooting all planning in prayer and Scripture.
- **Collaboration** – Working closely with pastors, musicians, and volunteers.
- **Creativity** – Encouraging fresh expressions of worship.
- **Inclusivity** – Welcoming diverse voices and gifts.
- **Excellence** – Offering God our very best.

PURPOSE

The Worship Committee provides support, coordination, and guidance for the worship life of the congregation, ensuring that services are conducted with reverence, creativity, and participation from the whole church.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Collaborate with the pastor(s) and music director in planning worship services.
- Oversee preparation for regular Sunday worship, including communion and baptism.
- Recruit and schedule volunteers such as ushers, liturgists, acolytes, and communion servers.
- Care for and maintain worship supplies, paraments, banners, and communion ware.
- Plan and support special services throughout the year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, etc.).
- Encourage the use of music, art, and liturgy that enriches the congregation's worship.
- Evaluate worship regularly and make recommendations to Session as needed.

AUTHORITY

The Worship Committee is authorized by Session to:

- Approve expenditures for worship-related supplies and materials that fall within their annual budget.
- Recruit and train volunteers for worship leadership.
- Recommend major changes in worship practice, music program, or liturgical style to Session for approval.

MEMBERSHIP

- This committee will be made up of at least five people, two of whom are the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- The committee seeks a diverse membership that represents the congregation and brings talents that support the purpose and work of the committee.
- There will be a majority of church members on the committee and at least one Ruling Elder currently serving on Session.

- Term length: 3 years, staggered. Members may serve two consecutive terms.
- Pastor and Music Director serve as ex-officio members with voice but no vote.

MEETINGS & REPORTING

- Meets monthly or as needed to prepare for upcoming services and seasons.
- Reports regularly to Session on worship life and annually submits a written summary of its work.

CALENDAR OF WORSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Month	Key Tasks & Events
January	Review Advent/Christmas services; prepare for Lent planning.
February	Plan for Ash Wednesday and Lenten services; review worship volunteer schedule.
March	Oversee Lenten worship; prepare for Holy Week and Easter.
April	Easter worship evaluation; update spring/summer worship plans.
May	Pentecost service planning; recognize graduates in worship.
June	Plan for summer worship (possible outdoor services, simplified liturgy).
July	Mid-year review of worship supplies and equipment.
August	Begin planning for fall worship themes; recruit new volunteers.
September	Commissioning of teachers; fall worship schedule begins.
October	Begin Advent/Christmas planning; review worship budget needs for next year.
November	All Saints' worship; finalize Advent/Christmas details.
December	Oversee Advent and Christmas Eve worship; evaluate year-end worship.

REVIEW / REVISION

This charter was adopted by Session on [insert date]. It shall be reviewed every two years, with the next review scheduled for [insert date].