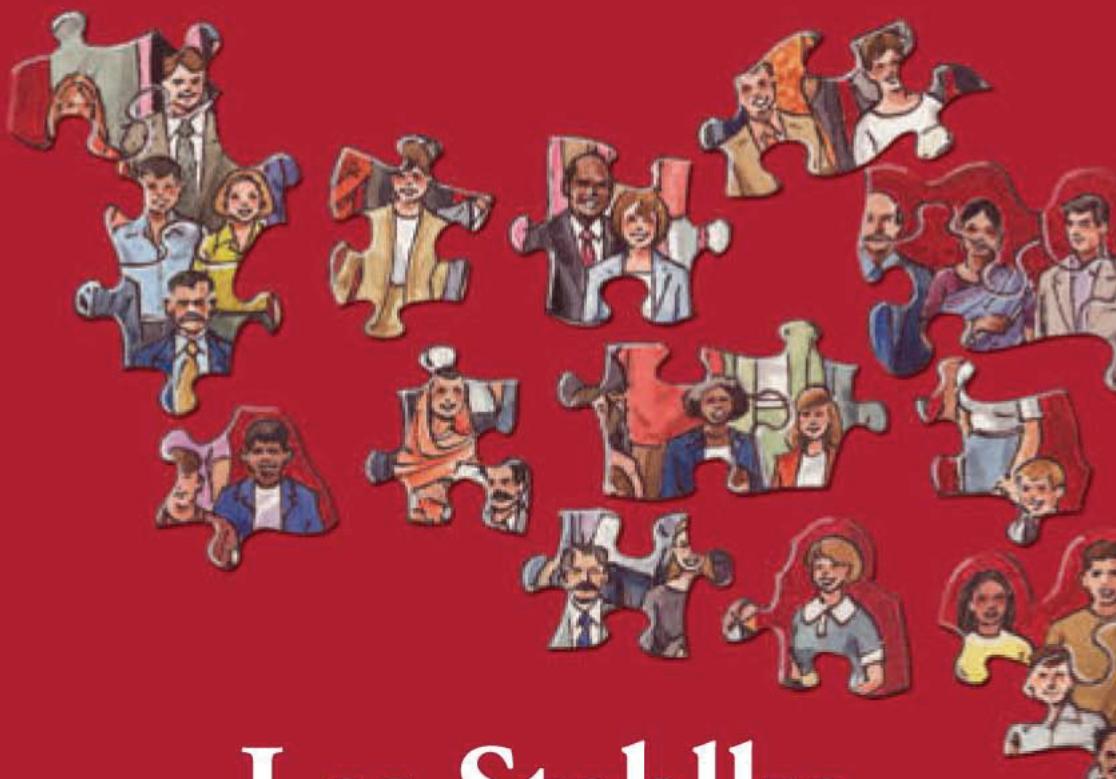

CHURCH GOVERNANCE MATTERS



Les Stahlke

Relationship Model™ of Governance,
Leadership & Management for Churches

“We’ve been on a journey here at Zion Church and School to learn and implement the Relationship Model of governance over the last three years and it has been a wonderful and challenging experience. We are seeing a shift from a complicated and cumbersome model which had the tendency to segregate and isolate portions of ministry to one that has a central, elected board who delegate responsibility appropriately and monitor the ministry’s progress in a realistic and healthy way. We continue to learn that it really is all about relationships that are genuine, that encourage, and that teach accountability. It’s exciting to be a part of a ministry that is developing a clear sense of purpose and a unity of vision. Our adoption of the Relationship Model of governance is helping us to do just that: grow as one.”

The Rev. Jeffrey Koenig, Senior Pastor
Zion Lutheran Church and School
Cloverdale, British Columbia

“The benefits of utilizing the Relationship Model, together with the development of a governance manual and bylaw revisions have been significant. Even with many years of service on various non-profit and church boards, this process of defining and documenting roles and relationships has been refreshingly valuable to me. The clarifications of roles and processes should well outlast current leadership and serve into the future.”

Mr. John Schroeder, Moderator
South Abbotsford MB Church
South Abbotsford, British Columbia

“I highly recommend the Relationship Model. Any local church will benefit from implementing it because it is based on the biblical example of servant-leadership rooted in Christ-centered consensus.”

The Rev. Dr. Roland H. Feltmate, D.Min.
Executive Pastor
Skyview Community Church of the Nazarene,
Calgary, Alberta (2002 - 2008)

“The Relationship Model of governance came at a critical time in the life of our growing church. With the initial guidance of Les Stahlke and subsequent implementation by our Church Board and Senior Ministry Team, we continue to be well positioned to maximize our ministry for Christ with the clarity of responsibilities and the satisfaction of healthy relationships among our leaders.”

The Rev. Dr. Les Somers, Lead Pastor
StoneRidge Fellowship Baptist Church
Lower Sackville (Halifax), Nova Scotia

“Having served as a parish pastor for over 20 years and as assistant to the president of the East District of Lutheran Church-Canada for four years I believe the Relationship Model is an excellent way to help congregations find focus and direction in mission and ministry. Where its values and principles are embraced I am convinced that church and community will be blessed and the labourers in the “harvest” will find joy in their work.”

The Rev. Mark Hartburg, Pastor
Historic St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Kitchener, Ontario

“The adopting of the Relationship Model by Lutheran Church Canada’s Central District Board of Directors has resulted in board meetings that are energized with strategic planning and guided by critical discussions on how well the services we provide to member congregations are addressing their needs. Clarity in the roles and relationships between the board and senior staff has not only empowered the staff to move forward with implementation of strategic directions but also removed intermediary committees that at times confused the flow of authority. The Relationship Model is helping us address a changing internal and external environment while respecting our theology and practices.”

Mr. Michael Maunula, Chair, LCC – Central District
Executive Director
Lutheran Community Care Centre
Thunder Bay, Ontario

About the Author



Les Stahlke

Les Stahlke has spent his entire 40-year professional career in leadership positions in churches and not-for-profit organizations. Following six years as a parish pastor in Alberta, Canada, he led in the founding of the Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots (LAMP). During his 25 years as CEO, LAMP became an international organization with two boards and expanded to serve people scattered over more than one million square miles of northern Canada and Alaska.

In 1995, he accepted an appointment to serve as the CEO of Mission Aviation Fellowship Europe, a consortium of ten European national MAFs, providing air transport services in four east African countries plus Chad, Madagascar, Bangladesh and Mongolia.

Les has served on numerous not-for-profit boards as a director and chair. The Relationship Model is supported by many years of leadership experience, personal observation, research and analysis.

Since 1999, Les' company, GovernanceMatters.com Inc., has offered the Relationship Model to churches, faith-based and values-based not-for-profit organizations in North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. He presents the Model in person and via the Internet.

This is the third in a trilogy of books for churches and not-for-profit organizations. He published Governance Matters for faith-based not-for-profit organizations in 2003 and Not-for-profit Governance Matters for values-based not-for-profits organizations in 2006.

A long-distance cyclist, Les celebrated his 70th birthday in 2008 by cycling the 1200 kms. (750 mi.) from his home in Edmonton, Alberta, to Vancouver, British Columbia. Les and his wife, Judy, live in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Les has four adult children and 11 grandchildren.

Church Governance Matters

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Prologue

To my surprise most of the clients who read my first book, *Governance Matters*, were leaders of churches. (60 percent of my clients are churches.) That surprised me, because that book was written for faith-based not-for-profit organizations. It seems that the need for an understanding of governance in churches is even greater than in charities. In any case, there are a lot of both—about 1.5 million churches and charities in North America alone.

The challenge of supporting churches with governance is more complicated because of the significant differences in governance among denominations. You are well aware that many Christian denominations are named after their form of governance. You may recognize your own form of governance in the list below. I deal with this challenge in more detail in Chapter 7, but I should at least mention it before we get started. The five primary types of church governance are

- episcopal
- presbyterian
- congregational
- brethren
- state church.

It means that this book may be more helpful to some than to others. But here's the surprise in store for you no matter what your denomination.

The Relationship Model™ of church governance is a combination of an operating system (like Windows™) and applications like governance, leadership, and management.

The operating system of values, structure and process is applicable to every Christian regardless of denominational orientation. In fact, you will find that the operating system applies also to the relationships of marriage, parenting, farming, small business, large corporations, schools, government, and every other type of relationship. The surprise is that you are guaranteed to find application in your personal and professional life, even if you don't find application for governing your church.

The application of governance will be particularly beneficial to churches using a form of congregational polity. It will benefit other types of church polities with the modifications that you may contemplate. Best of all, it will benefit all leaders in understanding how to ensure productive and fulfilling relationships in church work. My hope is that the time you spend among these pages will be worth your time and a real blessing to you in your personal, professional and volunteer life.

Les Stahlke

Ten Principles of Governance in the Relationship Model™

1. A balance is maintained between the fulfillment of the staff and volunteers of the church and the fulfillment of the spiritual needs of the members of the church.
2. The affirmation, involvement and servant leadership of every individual and group at every level in the church are vital to the success of the church's mission.
3. Decision-making proceeds from shared values, vision and mission, not unilaterally from the board or the senior pastor. Decisions are made as close as possible to where they are implemented.
4. Authority, responsibility and accountability are the primary components of all relationships. Limitations (of authority) and expectations (of responsibility) are the secondary components.
5. Circles of authority and responsibility are defined clearly and are maintained equal in size by placing limits on authority and/or by negotiating expectations of responsibility.
6. The board, acting on information from all members, is accountable to the church for governance including designing board structure and process, strategic planning, delegating authority to the senior pastor and for measuring results.
7. The ministry and administrative staff are responsible for management, delivering services to the members in accord with stated priorities and for achieving the strategic goals within the limitations of the authorization and resources available.
8. Each individual member is responsible for creating, owning, understanding and implementing the mission of the church.
9. The church is results oriented. Indicators and measurements of strategic results are identified and applied. Monitoring progress towards results and monitoring compliance with limitations form an ongoing process involving the board and the staff and volunteers.
10. Accountability is mutual. The board is accountable to the staff for providing adequate authority and resources. The senior pastor is accountable to the board for achieving strategic results.