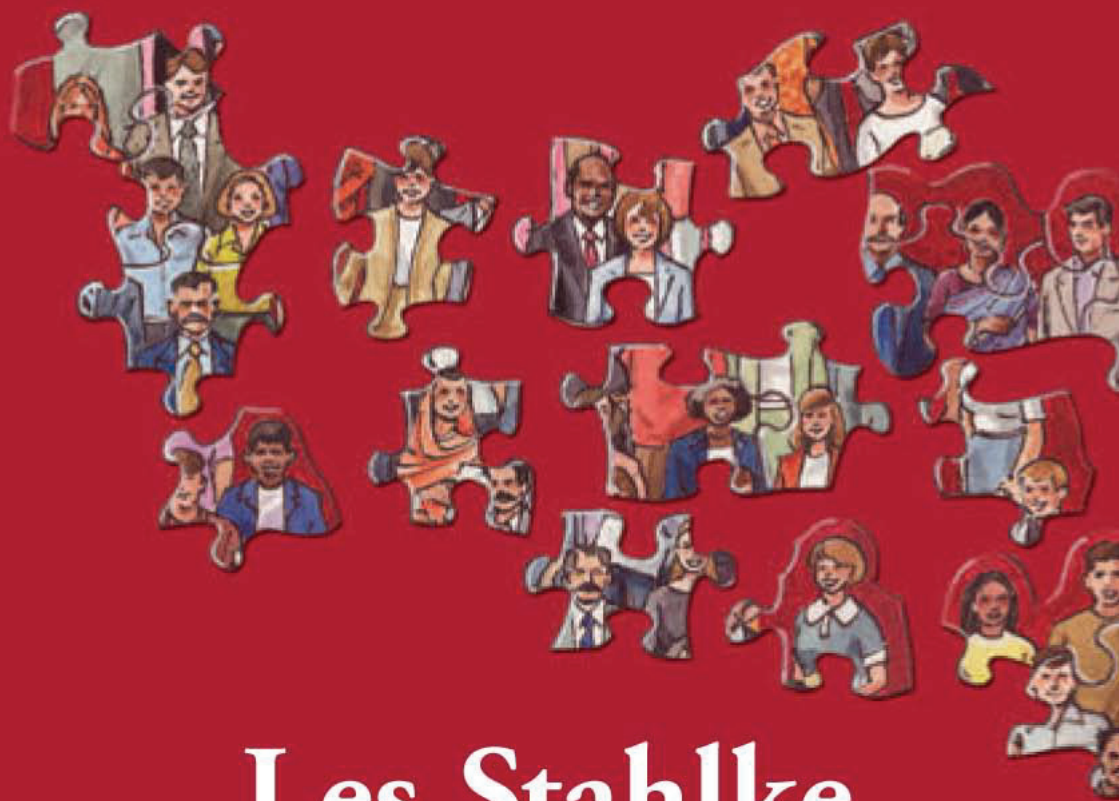

CHURCH GOVERNANCE MATTERS



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**

CHURCH GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Les Stahlke

Relationship Model™ of Governance,
Leadership & Management for Churches

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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.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father,

Otto F. Stahlke

September 23, 1906 – November 10, 1992

Theologian, Pastor, Professor, Musician, Linguist, Dad

He set me free to develop my God-given gifts by giving me choices.

Then he affirmed the choices I made.

Church Governance Matters

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I think of writing this book, the third in a trilogy of books on governance, as a process of downloading information from my brain. It has been a long and complex process. Without the encouragement and support of others it would not have been possible. I want to acknowledge the people who helped make it happen.

Co-workers and clients in Canada, the United States, Europe, Africa and Asia provided a broad exposure to governance, leadership and management issues in many cultures. I could list hundreds of people who have helped me develop this model. In particular I want to acknowledge:

The Council of South Abbotsford Church for allowing me to publish excerpts of its use of the Relationship Model™ in its church in British Columbia.

My sons, Thom and Paul, made significant contributions to this effort. Thom designed the prototypes of most of the illustrations in this book. Paul provided endless hardware and software support, enabling me to benefit from the technology vital to this process. Paul's wife, Kim, prepared the graphs that measure strategic outcomes (Chapter 14).

My colleague, Jennifer Loughlin, in the United Kingdom did the research that resulted in defining the competencies required by successful board members, chairs, pastors, and managers.

I'm grateful to colleagues whom I have licensed to consult in the Relationship Model™ and who have specialized in working with church boards. They include Kristen Corrigan, Rob Enns, Mark Hartburg, Roger Haugen, Phil Hink, Patti Kelm, Ernest Kennedy, John Knapp, Dwight Lawrence, Sye Van Maanen, Mark Marlowe, Harold Witte and Brian Wonnick. I have learned from each of them.

Thanks to Jamey McDonald, Executive Director of the Baptist General Conference in Canada, and to Pastor Mark Hartburg of St. Paul's Lutheran, Kitchener, Ontario, for their theological and historical perspectives.

Mike Lee is the gifted artist who designed the cover and the organizational chart in the form of a tree that has become the logo for the Relationship Model™. He also drew the three caricatures, which look more like me than I do.

My wife, Judy Bauer, has an eye for detail. Trained as an educator and later working several years in the educational publishing industry, she found opportunity for more correction and polishing than I thought possible.

Ronda Petersen and her team at Imperial Printing Ltd. put the final touch to all this effort by producing the beautiful volume you are holding now. Their knowledge of publishing and printing was invaluable in putting this downloaded information on to a printed page.

Other friends, co-workers and members of my family provided the ongoing encouragement that I needed to keep at the task. Whatever benefit that you receive personally and in your organization is the result of a complex team effort.

Les Stahlke
January 2010

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

The Relationship Model™ - The Operating System

PART One

The Trouble with Churches

PART ONE
CHAPTER

1

Effectiveness and Fulfillment in Balance

Two important passages in the New Testament set the stage for the Christian church to be what God designed it to be. The first is the Great Commission:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The second is a passage from the Gospel of John that summarizes a theme found throughout the Old and New Testaments:

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

Christ, the Head of the Church, wants two things for his Body: effective ministry and personal fulfillment. Effective ministry will result in what God wants for all people:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”
(John 3:16-17)

Enabling the Christian church to experience the balance between effective ministry and personal fulfillment is the singular purpose of this book!

It's too obvious to mention that simply embracing the Christian faith together is no guarantee that we won't have difficulties working and worshiping together. There have been disagreements within the body of Christ since the Day of Pentecost. My hope is that in this book we can identify some of the causes of our imperfection and also the solutions that will enable us to experience what God wants for all of us.

I am acutely aware that church governance issues are at the heart of many of the difficulties that Christian churches are facing today. How to deal with these unpleasant realities is another matter. That's what this book is about. But first...

What are those difficulties and challenges?

In my consulting practice I observe several recurring themes. They are not mutually exclusive, but tend to be related to one another. That's because they stem from a common source, as we shall see in Chapter 2. In any case, each of these themes is troublesome enough to warrant a chapter on its own.

Unclear Church Structures

How Authority Flows

We know that God has all the authority and that God poured out God's Spirit at Pentecost to empower the Church. *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...”* (Acts 1:8). That's pretty clear. What is less clear is how authority flows within the body of Christ once we are empowered by the Spirit.

It is equally clear that the body of Christ is made up of the universal priesthood of all believers. That is to say that no one Christian needs any other Christian to enter into the presence of the Living God. Christ has already earned that right for each of us. The reality is that Christians want to enter into God's presence together. We must decide how authority should flow among equals. This is where the challenge begins.

It is attempting to meet this challenge that has resulted in the five primary types of church polity or design for the flow of authority:

- episcopal — authority flows from one to several or to many
- presbyterian — authority flows from several to many or to one
- congregational — authority flows from many to several or to one
- brethren — authority is shared equally by many
- state church — authority flows from the state to the church

Let there be no doubt about how important the issue of church governance really is. It's so important that some Christians have named their denomination after their type of governance, as in the first four above. Notice, however, that the words above are not capitalized, because they are types of church governance first and names of denominations second.

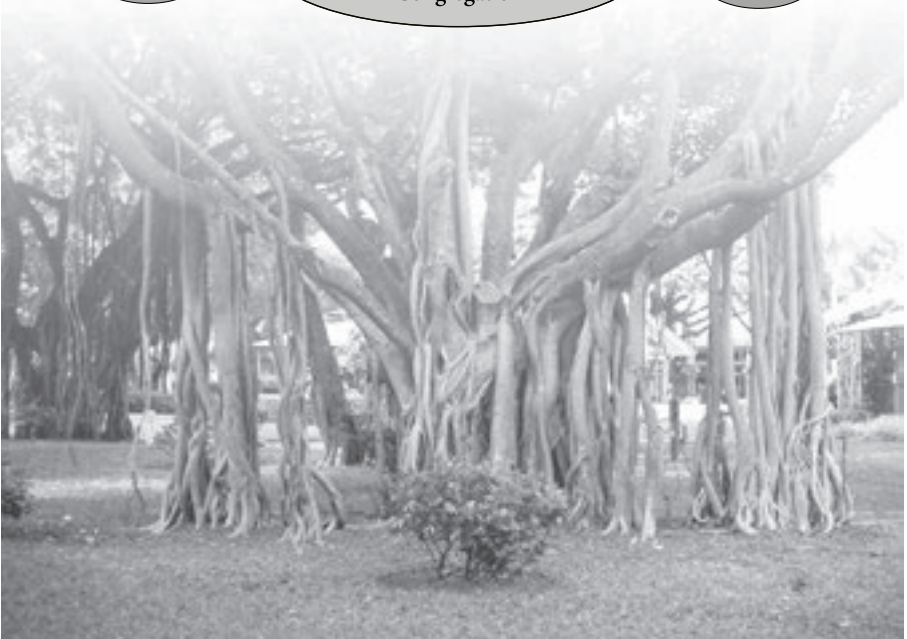
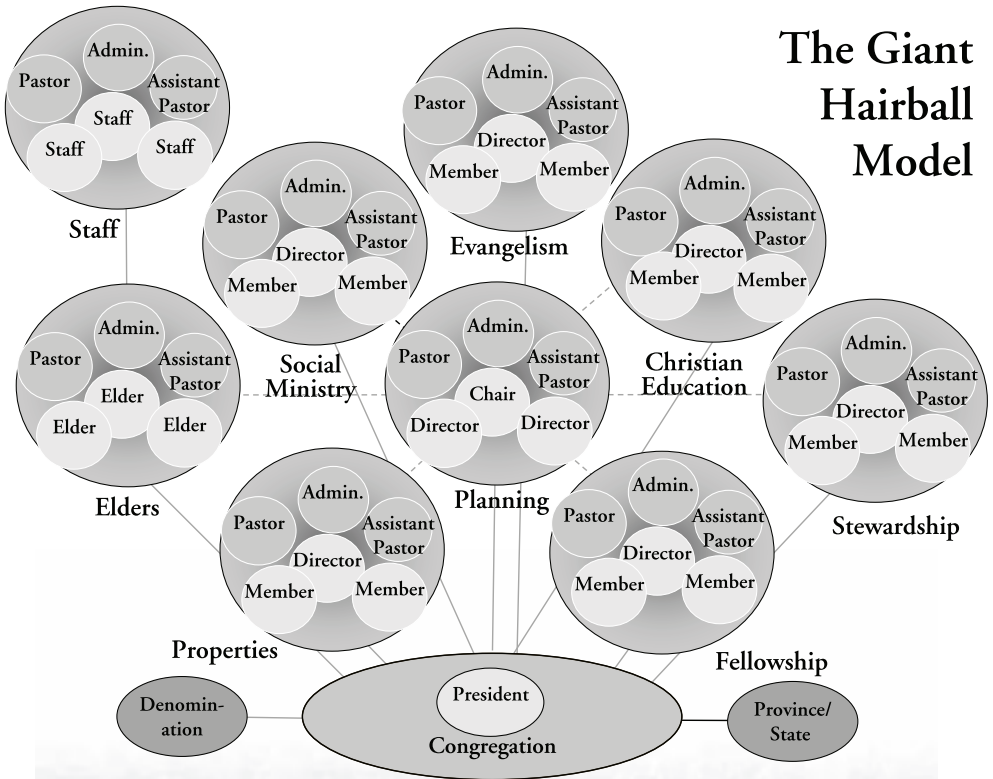
The first thing I ask when working with a church board for the first time is, "How does authority flow in your church?" The response is interesting. Sometimes people actually know, but usually there is confusion. I have examined scores and scores of bylaws and seldom find a clear expression of the flow of authority.

Sometimes I begin by asking the board to form several small groups to prepare an organizational chart for the church. Invariably, I get as many versions of the structure of the church as there are small groups. There are usually so many boards, committees, teams and individual positions that no one really has the definitive answer. We might call this model "The Giant Hairball Model." I even found the perfect tree to illustrate this model.



*We must decide
how authority
should flow
among equals.*

The Giant Hairball Model



By no means does this mean that the church is dysfunctional. Sometimes churches work with a significant degree of effectiveness, even when the leaders don't really know how authority flows, or who has how much authority or for what purpose. I have seen numerous churches where strongly-shared values and a commitment to one another can enable people to work well, even when the same people don't understand their own structure.

In cases like these they have invited me to assist them, because they know things could work better but don't know how to fix what doesn't appear to be broken.

How authority flows to the pastor and from the pastor to others is very likely the most confusing example of this problem. Sometimes it's also contentious.

I have read bylaws that don't even mention where the pastor gets the authority to be the pastor. I have seen organizational charts where the pastor is off to one side without any lines connecting the pastor to any source of authority. Where there is a good match between pastor and church, no one bothers with such details. It works, so the pastor has all the authority that the pastor needs. It's when the match isn't working that there is conflict about where the pastor gets authority.

The following poll was taken on www.relationship-model.com in 2009.

►
*It's when the
match isn't
working that
there is conflict
about where the
pastor gets
authority.*

For pastoral performance our pastor is directly accountable to:	Percentage
The Church/Congregation	20%
The Board/Council	56%
God	15%
Hmmmm. I'm not sure.	9%

Spiritual and Operational Authority Confused

This confusion is fuelled by another element—the different types of authority. There are at least three types of authority that churches must deal with:

- Spiritual/moral authority
- Strategic/operational authority
- Legal/regulatory authority

It's the first two types that complicate the problem of determining the flow of authority in local churches. (Everyone knows that the third one flows from the local, regional and national levels of government.)

It's quite appropriate for the church to delegate spiritual/moral authority to the pastor just as the New Testament Church did to the elders. Problems begin to arise, however, when differing assumptions are made by the pastor and members (or among the members themselves) that strategic/operational authority goes along with the spiritual/moral authority.

“We want a pastor with vision,” one member will say. Another will say, “We don't want the pastor to tell us what our church's priorities should be. That's up to us.”

How should these two types of authority flow in this relationship? And who should decide?

Who has how much authority is at the root of many of the problems I have encountered in churches. Confusing the two types of authority can make it worse. Very often the strategic/operational authority defaults to the pastor, simply because the matter has never been discussed and resolved. The result of that is illustrated in the box that follows.



When Strategic Priorities Default to the Pastor

Rockwood Community Church still wants “a pastor with vision”, even after three pastors have come and gone with distinctively different visions.

The first pastor was an “MK” born to a missionary couple who devoted most of their lives to planting churches in China. This pastor grew up with a strong commitment to foreign missions and felt a very strong calling to lead people in the church to support missions with a passion. Within ten years Rockwood was allocating an impressive 30 percent of its operating budget on missions in no less than five countries, including China.

The first pastor was replaced by a second-career pastor, who had spent ten years in the world of technology, working with a major Internet search engine. The creativity with which this pastor adapted electronic technology to the church was simply amazing. Closed circuit television allowed worshippers in the overflow area to see everything on a large screen. Edited DVDs of the service were available to everyone by Monday noon and at no cost. Multimedia equipment and programming brought new families into the church. Mission work was expanding at home. The church still supported missions in three countries and allocated a quarter of its budget to them.

The third senior pastor came with extensive experience in the dynamics of small-group ministry and witness. This pastor developed an extensive network of small group “house churches” which ministered effectively within neighborhoods. The church grew, but the growth was less visible. Many people opted for small group ministry without attending Sunday services at the church. Others continued the more traditional worship without participating in small groups.

(cont'd on next page)

Now Rockwood Community's ministry is less focused on any one priority of mission. Technology no longer has the same priority in church growth. Much of the equipment is in storage, gradually becoming obsolete. Even though foreign missions are no longer a budget item, people can still designate their giving for that purpose. There is still a small presence in Cambodia. It's mostly the members who remembered the passion for China and foreign missions that have continued that ministry. The small groups aren't much involved in that, because they are encouraged to make their own neighborhoods the focus of their outreach.

This church has never developed its own sense of vision, delegating by default the responsibility of strategic planning to a succession of spiritual leaders. Instead of asking their pastors to provide the spiritual leadership that would enable them to achieve their own vision and mission, they choose to follow the "vision" of the next pastor who comes. When asked about it, they reply, "We want a pastor with vision."

Unclear Roles and Responsibilities

Not only is the source of authority unclear and the two types of authority vague, but too often responsibility is also unclear.

In any church, responsibilities are delegated to many boards, committees, and groups with a host of other names. In addition, there are many positions of responsibility assigned to individuals. Unfortunately, this assignment of responsibility is often left undocumented as things change. The result is that people are not sure who is responsible for what. This leads to confusion. Confusion leads to conflict. Conflict sometimes leads to brokenness.



Whose responsibility was it anyway?

The fire that occurred in the church kitchen happened the very week after the fire insurance lapsed without being renewed. The timing couldn't have been worse. It made for an interesting and painful "discussion" at the emergency board meeting that followed. Who actually is responsible for seeing to it that the insurance is paid?

The treasurer had casually mentioned to the member whose agency had provided the coverage that there was talk about shopping around at renewal time. He had heard that at a board meeting, he said.

It was true. The Properties Committee had wondered aloud at their meeting if it wouldn't be a good idea to reassess their overall insurance coverage and mentioned that in a report to the board. They left it there, though, because they thought it was the responsibility of the board to take it further.

The board had asked the administrator and the treasurer to look into what coverage the church had at the present time and report to the next meeting. That's as far as it went. The treasurer was a volunteer, so he figured the administrator would look after it. The administrator hadn't ever dealt with the insurance in the three years since she was employed, so she figured the treasurer, who did it every year since she started, would do it now. *(cont'd on next page)*



*The result is that
people are not
sure who is
responsible for
what.*

The member whose agency provided the insurance assumed that the church had found another provider and didn't renew it automatically, because he didn't hear from anyone that he should.

It started as a grease fire. In the panic of the moment no one knew where the fire extinguisher was. The kitchen was severely damaged, but fortunately the phone did work and the fire department came soon enough to save the structure. There was a lot of "smoke damage" to relationships, though, because of this confusion of responsibilities. The board asked the administrator, the treasurer and the Properties Committee to get to the bottom of the breakdown. Each figured the other would take the lead. There was a general feeling that the member whose agency provided the service had let them down pretty badly.

Lack of Accountability

Accountability is a broken word. We aren't very comfortable using it in the context of the church. It sounds mean. Besides, we've been taught to "forgive and forget." Our discomfort with accountability is another cause for difficulties in churches.

We tend to think of accountability as judgment, discipline, excommunication and the like. We seldom think of accountability as the simple process that it is—a neutral process of monitoring performance and behavior and measuring results.

We'll discuss later why we misunderstand the concept of accountability, but let's look at some of the symptoms of problems caused by our discomfort with that word.

Unwillingness to Delegate

Churches with a congregational form of church governance often become bogged down with details in their church meetings. Members seem to want to major in minors. This is what produces the 45-minute discussion about

the storage area. The resistance to delegating authority and responsibility for governance and management to the board is a symptom of a lack of accountability systems.

Delegating may seem like losing control of the matter. We may think that once the church delegates something to the board, we should just let go of it and trust the board to look after it. It feels like releasing a helium filled balloon without a string. It's just gone, and you have no more control over your own church. The string is the accountability system that maintains control. When the church has no means of monitoring the board's performance or measuring results, the members no longer have any control over the important things that they delegated to the board.

A common solution is simply not to delegate. Instead, church members want to put their hands on the balloon, lest it leave their control. It doesn't seem to occur to them to attach a string—to build a system of neutral and fair monitoring and measuring processes that will strengthen the relationship between the church and its board. Attaching the string seems like an unwillingness to trust.

Misunderstanding of “Trust”

We like to think that we should build our relationships on trust. We believe that trust is a value that we owe to one another and that others owe to us. Accountability seems like the opposite of trust. “Why do you want me to report to you? Don't you trust me?” This misunderstanding of trust as something that we should give to one another without anything coming back is another sign that accountability systems are missing or aren't working.

►
*Forgiveness is
free, but trust is
expensive.*

Forgiveness is free, but trust is expensive. The price of trust is the performance and behavior which demonstrates trustworthiness. Accountability is simply the process that confirms the trustworthiness. Think of trust as a beautiful statue. Trustworthiness is the pedestal of performance upon which the stature rests. Fail to

maintain the pedestal by ignoring accountability and watch how it weakens the relationship until trust is dashed to pieces.

When I meet with a church board for the first time, the board members invest a certain amount of trust into my “trust account.” After all, I’ve been invited by their leaders, and come with some credentials and a recommendation from another church. During my presentation, however, they will make their own assessment. This is the normal and natural process of accountability. If what I say demonstrates my willingness to listen and my ability to meet their needs, they may deposit more trust into my account. A contract to work with them usually follows. But were I to make light of their situation, insult them and demonstrate no sensitivity to their real needs, their deposit of trust would soon be “spent.” The negative balance in my trust account would result in never being invited to return.

Unresolved Conflict

Unfortunately, the lack of fair and loving accountability often leads to conflict and brokenness.

Sometimes churches split because conflict has been allowed to get out of hand. Relationships are broken for lack of a system that can accommodate change based on monitoring and measuring processes.

I can’t help but think of St. Luke’s, a country church where some members split off to form First St. Luke’s, directly across the road. When St. Luke’s engaged an organ tuner, the poor man tuned the pipe organ at First St. Luke’s by mistake. Then he sent the invoice to St. Luke’s, giving even more occasion for strife. It turns out that a lot more than the organ was out of tune.

Much more frequent, however, is conflict that doesn’t divide the church but goes unresolved. Relationships break and remain broken within the same church. People do the best they can, thinking there is nothing they can do about the feuds that simmer below the surface, slowly reducing the joy of fellowship to ashes.

I’m thinking of a situation where a pastor and the church administrator have not spoken to each other meaningfully for years, because they gave up trying to resolve their conflict about authority and responsibility. Imagine the loss of effectiveness and the quality of Christian witness that flows from this situation.

Smoldering relationships are far too common in our churches. They result from broken trust that never nurtured relationships on a pedestal of trustworthiness. Accountability was viewed as “unchristian” and was therefore not part of the church’s life. In the rest of Part One, we shall see how the Relationship Model™ of church governance can maintain healthy relationships by building trust on trustworthiness and heal brokenness through reconciliation that includes both forgiveness and accountability.

Measurement of Results

Measurement of results is another form of accountability. Most churches measure tactical outputs, not strategic outcomes. The most common measurements of church health are the following tactical outputs:

- net annual growth in membership
- average church attendance
- average giving
- average communion attendance.

While we might be inclined to think that these measure the degree to which members are benefiting from the services of the church, they only obliquely measure what is happening in the hearts and lives of people. Mostly they just measure activity.



Measurement can be deceptive.

As a result of some rezoning, Rosewood Church is now flanked by two new senior high rise apartment buildings. The attendance has grown significantly because the seniors have found it to be physically easier to come to Rosewood rather than somewhere else.

The leaders are very happy, because they see the 50 percent increase in church attendance as a sign they are a successful, growing church. They think that church attendance is probably the best means of measuring effectiveness in ministry. If you're growing, you must be doing something right.

But the church has a contemporary service format designed for young families. There's lots of fast-paced music in a multimedia format. The music ministry team leads worship every Sunday. The seniors are frustrated with their worship experience. Most keep coming, only because there is no practical alternative. No one is asking how much of a blessing the worship services are to them.

Does the increased church attendance really mean anything positive? Is this a measurement of strategic outcomes or simply a measurement of activity?

There seems to be a natural resistance to measuring the degree to which a church is able to meet the needs of people. Some would say, "You can't look into the heart of a person. Only the Holy Spirit can do that." That is indeed true. But I can look into my own heart and make a personal assessment of the degree to which my church is benefiting me in worship, discipleship, fellowship, outreach and service. If I'm asked, I will share that information.

Later in Part Two of this book (Chapter 14), we'll see some examples of strategic measurement. I'll give you a hint, so you can read on instead of skipping 13 chapters. If you want to know the degree to which your church is benefiting the members of your church, just ask them. Chapter 14 shows how this can be done. This form of accountability can help a church celebrate the success of its mission and at the same time help the leaders see how "good" can become "better."

Size Outgrows Structure

You may be relieved to hear that some of the troubles that churches face are benign. They are not the result of abuse or brokenness. Rather they result from what people want most—growth and health in the Christian family.

Small churches are often informal. There is little distinction between governance, leadership, management and providing the services of the church. As these churches grow, some make adjustments to structure that develop with size and complexity, while other churches grow with the same structure. The problems of inadequate structure are the result of “sins” of omission, not commission. But the effect may be very similar.

Managing Paradigm

One of the more common symptoms of this problem is the church board that has not made the transition from being a managing board to a governing board. The managing board is often made up of the chairs of the various committees (often also called boards) that deliver the services of the church. Their meetings focus on the day-to-day operation of the ministry, the finances and all the details. There is little time to focus on the future. The future will come soon enough and the board will likely trip over the present and fall headlong into the future without anticipating the changes it will face.

Board members are very conscientious. They say, “I manage my work, I manage my time, I manage my money, my family, my life, and I want to do the best job that I can of managing the Lord’s work.”

They also become weary. The number of meetings and their length become real problems. Even the dedicated leaders become exhausted and have to leave their positions of leadership. Replacing them becomes more and more of a challenge. Word gets around about how demanding the work of the board has become. Besides, some of the best potential leaders don’t want to waste

time with management. These analytical “big-picture” thinkers want to focus on the future. Unfortunately, these churches have not yet sensed a need for governance. They are bogged down in the management paradigm.

I have been amazed on several occasions just how large, complex, and dynamic churches can become by taking the management paradigm to the limits. Even these finally reach the point where there is simply not enough energy to grow in effectiveness, efficiency, or size without leaving the management paradigm for the paradigm of governance.

One of the most taxing and time-consuming efforts is “overseeing” the health of the church. In other words, monitoring (and managing) risk. Without a governance approach to monitoring the management of risk by the pastor and staff of the church, the board is obligated to monitor by meandering through numerous reports from committees and individuals. Each board member hopes that the others will see the “red flags” that they may miss themselves. I think of the whole cumbersome process as “good people looking for trouble in a nice way and having difficulty finding it.”

Unwillingness to Change

Why does the managing paradigm last so long when the participants themselves know that the system is no longer meeting the needs of a growing church? Sometimes, it is simply the “boiling the frog” syndrome where the frog doesn’t notice that the water temperature is rising, because it happens so gradually. Size and complexity begin to overtake the board that doesn’t see it coming. One of the indicators that this change is occurring may be the number of years that have gone by since the church’s bylaws were changed substantially.

In some cases, however, there is a real resistance to change. In my practice I try to make it clear that changing the managing paradigm to the governing paradigm can be a shock to the system. Boards will have to make the decision that the gain of change will exceed the pain of change. There will be positive change, but there will also be some pain in the process. Ironically, it may be more comfortable to endure the “hot water” of trying to manage than to take the higher ground of governance.

Sometimes, the board may fear the reaction of the church members, who, they think, may not want to give up the management of the details themselves and who may never have heard of governance. Some board members suppose that they will be accused of grabbing even more power.

Some hesitate to risk the negative reaction of those who have elected them to positions of leadership.

Church — Business or Not

Another scary thought is that the transition to governance is turning the church into a business. The last thing that Christian people want is for their church “family” to become a church “corporation.” They want a pastor who is a shepherd, not a CEO. My assessment of this phenomenon is that what church members fear is the abuse of power that they have come to associate with “big business” and corporations. It is this fear that must be answered in a meaningful way. Church members do want their property and finances to be managed in a businesslike manner. They just don’t want any part of the church to be managed in the authoritarian manner that they associate with business. Making this distinction clear for people will support the members and the board in their decision to take the risk of making the transition to governance.

Summary

In this opening chapter, I’ve summarized the themes from which the most compelling problems and challenges of churches flow.

Structures are often unclear. How the two types of authority flow in the local church is unclear. Spiritual/moral authority and strategic/operational authority are confused, with the result that a clear and shared understanding of the flow of authority is difficult to define. Where the pastor fits into the structure is sometimes perceived differently. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined or documented as they change.

There is a misunderstanding of the role of accountability. The primary elements of monitoring performance and measuring results are sometimes thought of negative processes that should not be necessary in the church.

Healthy growth often offers its own challenge. More complex systems of governance and management are needed, but are delayed by not knowing what to do or being overcome with the day-to-day business that doesn't allow any time to devote to structure.

I've reserved the underlying and most compelling problem for Chapter 2, because it deserves a chapter all its own. (It's about power.)

For Reflection and Discussion

Of the problems that churches encounter mentioned in this chapter, which one(s) have you observed in your own church? Give some examples.

What is your reaction to the observation that the process of accountability is lacking in churches?

It's About Power

PART ONE
CHAPTER

2

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ Amen.” (Matthew 28:20 KJV)

Restoring a Damaged Word

We can fully understand God’s design of healthy relationships only when we understand how God wants us to use the power the Spirit has given us.

►
“Power” is a
damaged word.
It seems to carry
with it a sense
of abuse.

“Power” is a damaged word. We are uncomfortable using it in the context of the church. It seems to carry with it a sense of abuse. We usually choose the word “authority” instead.

It’s interesting that in two of the most commonly used Bible translations, the opposite is the case. “Power” is used three times more often than “authority.”

In the King James Version the word “power” appears 272 times (120 in the Old Testament and 152 times in the New Testament). In the New International Version the word appears 276 times (155 in the Old Testament and 121 in the New Testament).

Meanwhile, “authority” is used only 37 times in the King James Version and 88 times in the New International Version. The gradual shift from “power” to “authority” over time is illustrated in the fact that the NIV, translated 360 years after the KJV, uses “authority” more than twice as frequently as the KJV.

In this book, I am using the two words as synonyms. I will make generous use of the word “power” because I think we need to reclaim the use of the word “power” that is so essential to understanding how to build and maintain healthy working relationships in our churches.

There is no shortage of abusive power in the Bible. There are literally thousands of examples of relationships broken by abusive power, starting with Adam and Eve. In fact, the only perfect relationships are those within the Trinity! Fortunately, we can learn as much about God’s design of healthy relationships from the broken ones as from the perfect ones.

Why “Power” and Not “Love”?

I’ve wondered why the Lord didn’t say, “All *love* in heaven and earth has been given to me.” Wouldn’t you think love is more important than power? On the basis of God’s love, we would be commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature. That certainly would be easy to understand.

At this crucial time, when Jesus was bidding a final earthly farewell to his disciples, he chose to emphasize the authority that God gave to him to establish the Church on earth. In this single sentence Jesus confirmed that he is the Head of the body, the Church.

Then Luke records in Acts 1 that Jesus instructed the disciples to stay in Jerusalem to await the promise of the Father. In these words Jesus prepared them for receiving some of the power that he received from God, the Father.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

It’s also interesting to note that Paul made the same appeal to his authority as an apostle. He knew that if he could not lay claim to his position as an apostle, he would not be able to speak with the Lord’s authority.

“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”
(1 Corinthians 9:1-2)

The importance of the role of authority in the Church is supported by Jesus, made real by the Spirit on Pentecost, and claimed by St. Paul in the early days of the Church. For these reasons, we will do well to understand, embrace and employ power in our churches according to God’s original design.

The Ways People Use Power



How we use authority in our churches can be displayed as a continuum of values. The three value systems that flow into each other, as illustrated above, are

- *laissez-faire* values (abdication and abandonment)
- relationship-oriented values (affirmation, involvement and servant leadership)
- authoritarian values (command and control).

◀
*Wouldn't you
think love is
more important
than power?*

Laissez-faire Values

Picture the *laissez-faire* value system on the left end of the continuum. Here people are uncomfortable with the concept of power, because exerting authority seems inappropriate and controlling. It is common for leaders guided by this value system to be indecisive and hesitant in making decisions and in taking action. To varying degrees, this value system exhibits lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities. Traditions and assumptions are more common than policies and goals. In its extreme form, *laissez-faire* is identified by a complete abdication of authority and abandonment of relationships.

Authoritarian Values

On the right end of the continuum is the authoritarian value system. We may observe this value system where “might is right” and where obedience produces rewards and where someone in authority is motivated by a desire for power. “My way or the highway” comes from this value system that produces abuse of power and real harm to healthy relationships. People who act in a dictatorial or autocratic manner would be extreme examples of the authoritarian value system.

Relationship-oriented Values

The dynamic center of this continuum of the use of power may be described as relationship-oriented or democratic. It is this value system that God demonstrated in relationship to Jesus. It is the same value system that Jesus used and taught in his relationship with the disciples and others. It is the foundation of successful churches. This value system insures a balance between member and staff fulfillment, fully incorporating the core values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership.

We may be drawn towards either end of the continuum, leading to problems that are all too common. By understanding these value systems we can

- comprehend the symptoms that we are observing
- identify the causes behind the problems we encounter
- learn how to change those underlying causes so as to improve the work we do and better fulfill those who carry it out.

Keep this continuum in mind during the rest of this chapter as I show you how a church’s value system impacts each of its core processes.

How the Continuum Impacts the Six Core Processes

Every church uses six core processes. Each one is affected by the church’s dominant value system. The core processes are

1. Communication
2. Conflict resolution
3. Decision-making
4. Planning
5. Delegating
6. Accountability (monitoring and measuring).

Let's observe the effect of each value system on each process, particularly the weaknesses. Then, in later chapters we will deal with each process in greater depth.

1. Values and Communication

<i>Laissez-faire Values</i>	<i>Relationship-oriented Values</i>	<i>Authoritarian Values</i>
		
<i>Sporadic & Unclear Information</i>	<i>Accurate & Timely Information</i>	<i>Controlled Information</i>

►
We define communication as the sharing of thoughts and feelings by written, spoken, electronic, and non-verbal means.

Communication is perhaps the key core process, since it is an inseparable part of every other process. We define communication as the sharing of thoughts and feelings (information and values) by written, spoken, electronic, and non-verbal means.

A pastor or lay leader's ability to communicate effectively is vitally important because that's how information is transferred. Information is one resource that people must have for successful and fulfilling work. (The others are people, money, and time.)

Communication expresses the underlying values that a leader holds towards those who look to him or her for authority. Those values will determine whether the leader's staff members and volunteers receive the information they need when they need it. How those values are expressed is decisive in whether the staff is successful, fulfilled, both or neither.

Laissez-faire Values

Communication driven by this use of power will usually be inadequate, because it fails to provide staff with information people need. It's not because the leader is controlling or manipulative, but rather that she or he has a tendency to shy away from the impression of being in control. The leader mistakes "distance" from staff, as staff empowerment. The critical importance of information is misunderstood, leaving staff members to obtain what information they can on their own. The result is a church where staff and volunteers feel neither empowered nor valued.

Authoritarian Values

When communication is driven by a value system where the leader espouses control, manipulation and/or abuse, the resulting communication process is often one in which

- information is deliberately withheld
- staff members and volunteers have to keep coming back for permission before feeling confident enough to act.

In this system the source of authority has, or takes, more power than needed to handle his or her responsibilities. This deliberate metering out of information inevitably reduces a church's success as well as the fulfillment of its staff.

Relationship-oriented Values

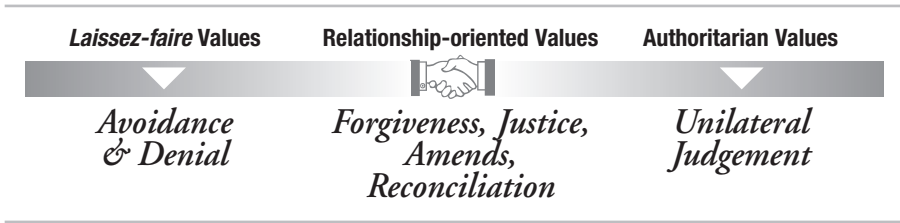
When affirmation, involvement and servant leadership are the values that drive the communication process, the leader's information is generous, accurate, and matched to staff and volunteer requirements. They are affirmed in their need to know, involved in determining what information is communicated, and supported in putting that information to work.

Observation

“Live and let live” and “might is right” value systems are equally dysfunctional. Incompetence or abusive power has the same effect in the communication process—the loss of productive and satisfying work. In order to manage effectively, leaders must recognize the characteristics of *laissez-faire* or authoritarian value systems in their own communications. Is the information incomplete, sparse, inaccurate, controlled, manipulated or false? In healthy working relationships leaders are accountable to staff for providing key information. In turn, recipients can support leaders by holding them accountable for a communication process that is committed to success and personal fulfillment.

Being aware of one's own value system, including a commitment to affirming, involving and providing servant leadership, helps ensure that the communication process does lead to effective change management. In turn, this paves the way for the church's growth and deep, personal fulfillment for staff.

2. Values and Conflict Resolution



Along with communication and decision-making, conflict resolution is often a process that affects all other organizational processes.

Conflict is part of life. Where difficulties arise, it's usually because any efforts to resolve conflict are sabotaged by the way we choose to use power.

Laissez-faire Values

Many of us have a strong desire to get along and have all our interactions be peaceful. The hallmark of this system is discomfort with conflict. To some, the presence of conflict means that there is something wrong in our lives. Thus, if conflict raises its head, we react by

- trying to avoid it
- downplaying its importance
- denying it, even when it's obvious to a third party.



In order to manage effectively, leaders must recognize the characteristics of laissez-faire or authoritarian value systems in their own communications.

With *laissez-faire* values controlling our behavior, we won't experience the healthy interaction and debate that conflict generates. More importantly, we will miss out on the opportunity to synthesize any benefits.

When conflict is destructive, our unwillingness to deal directly with it allows conflict to fester, smoldering like an underground fire that never goes out.

Authoritarian Values

The authoritarian has little patience with those who disagree with his or her point of view. "It's my way or the highway," or so the story goes. "I have the authority in this relationship, and that's the end of it." With authoritarian values dominant, no healthy challenge of ideas can take place, or even be heard. Such ideas challenge the source of power, depriving the church of any potential benefits.

In its extreme form, people suffer for even suggesting alternate views. In the political arena the *gulags* are evidence of this sad reality. In our arena good people who attempt to add value to their churches to whose mission they are committed, not only risk abuse, but possibly the loss of employment or the opportunity to volunteer.

Relationship-oriented Values

This value system is comfortable with conflict and encourages healthy debate. It recognizes that good ideas become purified when tried by fire. If unhealthy behavior creates havoc within a church, the relationship system will not hesitate to confront any person or group responsible. It does so, however, in a manner that seeks to maintain healthy relationships, and restore them where fractured.

When processed with affirmation, involvement and servant leadership conflict will benefit any church.

Specifically, affirmation takes the form of restoring the relationship back to health if it has become negative. Involvement invites the exchange of ideas and listens to expressions of dissent. Servant leadership seeks to support individuals even during conflict. A relationship-oriented church, therefore, enjoys the fruits that healthy dissent can produce while dealing directly and fairly with any conflict that threatens its welfare.

Observation

The conflict resolution process is often a part of the accountability process. We will be dealing more fully with both conflict and accountability in Chapters 5 and 6.

3. Values and Decision-making

Laissez-faire Values	Relationship-oriented Values	Authoritarian Values
		
<i>Unclear Parameters</i> <i>Uncertainty</i>	<i>Freedom Within</i> <i>Clear Limits</i>	<i>Permission</i> <i>Mentality</i>

Successful decision-making requires a balance between authority and responsibility. When that balance is in place, a church’s staff and the people they serve will be equally fulfilled. The quality of the process by which decisions are made, however, is determined more by the use of power than by any other factor.

Laissez-faire Values

This value system has a negative impact on relationships and the decision-making process. The absence of clear direction is a prime indicator that *laissez-faire* values are predominant. Left alone or even abandoned, decision makers are disempowered because they don't know either the extent of their authority or their responsibilities. The result can be a decision-making process where

- decisions fail to meet the church's overall needs
- the process is stalled
- the process is stopped, and no decision made.

Authoritarian Values

The dominance of this use of power can also be harmful to relationships and the quality of decisions. The most obvious indication is the failure to involve those directly affected by the decision. When someone in authority makes an arbitrary decision without including the talents, experience and wisdom of those affected, here's what can happen:

- The decision is rarely the best it can be.
- Expectations are unrealistic.
- The resources—people, finances, information or time—are insufficient.
- Good people become resentful.

Unfortunately, this “might is right” mentality of authoritarian leadership fails to see the need for involvement. Damage to relationships, reduced fulfillment and drops in productivity are the inevitable result.

Relationship-oriented Values

When affirmation, involvement and servant leadership form the basis of the process, the people affected by a decision know whether

- the decision is being delegated to them to make, or
- their source of authority wants input so he or she is able to make the best possible decision.

In either case, the involvement of those affected is significant to the process, affirming their importance. People quickly sense the support of the servant leader who is the source of authority. Instead of “lording it over” them, the servant leader ensures that decision makers have both the authority and the resources to make quality decisions.

4. Values and Planning



Planning is the fourth core process of a church. Both strategic planning (what the church does and what outcomes the members hope to achieve) and tactical planning (how the church achieves its desired outcomes) are vital to the success of the church’s mission.

Laissez-faire Values

On the “live and let live” end of the continuum, planning tends to get dropped out as we let our churches choose, by default, the path of least resistance. In strategic planning this results in stumbling into the future and tripping into our mission and its priorities. This approach is actually an abrogation of the authority and responsibility—the trust that has been invested in the board by the members of the church.

Authoritarian Values

At the other extreme, there is a one-sided planning process, often led by an individual founder, pastor, board chair or an “executive committee.” This can occur only when the church’s members or board share a *laissez-faire* system. By default, they allow planning to be driven by whoever wants to take the church in a certain direction. This process reflects the desires of a few. There is little listening to the needs of the members or the insights of staff and volunteers. It is a non-affirming, non-involving and non-supportive approach to planning.

It’s not uncommon for members, even whole boards, to believe that the strategic direction should be determined by the pastor usually referred to as “following the pastor’s vision.” Apparently the pastor has a more valuable vision than the collected wisdom of all members combined! This demonstrates that even a mildly authoritarian pastor can be tempted to fill a planning vacuum left by the congregation or board.

Relationship-oriented Values

This is the value system open to change. It encourages all members to propose, debate, create and manage any change necessary to adapt to a changing world. In so doing, it affirms, involves and supports change agents, enabling the best possible solutions to come to the forefront of the planning process.

5. Values and Delegating



◀ Both strategic planning (what the church does and what outcomes the members hope to achieve) and tactical planning (how the church achieves its desired outcomes) are vital to the success of the church's mission.

Delegating authority and responsibility is the fifth core process of a church. Within this process we see different but equally unsatisfactory experiences at either end of the continuum of how we use power.

Laissez-faire Values

The leader fails to provide clear boundaries when delegating authority to others. To compound the situation, expectations are not made clear either. This leaves recipients confused as to their responsibilities. Such leaders prefer to avoid conflict or accountability because they don't want to either be demanding, or to hurt people's feelings.

In its extreme form, authority is abdicated completely. The leader seldom sees the recipient and interaction is minimal. This can leave recipients

- feeling disempowered — "What authority do I have?"
- ineffective and inefficient — "I'm not clear what my responsibilities are."
- abusing their power — "No one's watching me, and they don't care anyway. I'll do what I want."

Authoritarian Values

Recipients are not given clear limitations to their authority. They, therefore, experience a “permission mentality,” constantly checking with those in authority to make sure that they have enough authority to act.

When it comes to responsibility, since they’ve not been involved in negotiating expectations, they fear that more work is expected of them than they can handle. And since the source of authority has a strong need to retain power, these recipients can also count on being disempowered.

In its extreme form, the lust for power results in complete disempowerment, i.e. enforcing impossible expectations that were never negotiated or even discussed.

Relationship-oriented Values

The delegation of authority is experienced as freedom and empowerment when founded on affirmation, involvement and servant leadership. Full responsibility is experienced as the ownership of clear and negotiated goals.

6. Values and Accountability



Accountability is the monitoring of performance, behavior, and risk and the measurement of results. For a number of reasons, lack of accountability is the most common, yet difficult problem faced by churches—an odd paradox given that, in fact, accountability ought to be the gift we give one another.

The problem lies partly in the word itself. A common word, accountability frequently appears in front page headlines, but almost always in a negative context. Someone’s done something wrong, or they haven’t kept their word. Whatever it is, the consequences mean some kind of punishment. For this reason we do not see it for the empowering role it can play and certainly not as a gift!

Laissez-faire Values

In working with many churches over the years, I’ve found that *laissez-faire* is

the most common value system behind a lack of accountability. Many people simply don't understand what accountability means. To emphasize the point in the previous two paragraphs, they associate accountability with words like punishment, discipline, or being fired, ostracized, or excommunicated. In response, they choose to avoid holding people accountable for the commitments they make and the results they produce.

Authoritarian Values

We all know of situations where accountability was punishing and unfair. It's what can happen when the source of authority assumes a position of unilateral power. A "boss" may bully, blame, discredit, humiliate, embarrass and emotionally abuse a person whose productivity doesn't meet expectations. You can be sure that the expectations were never negotiated. The person in charge probably "presented some goals" without being sensitive to either the available resources or the recipient's ability to carry them out.

Relationship-oriented Values

Effective ministry and personal fulfillment are the results when affirmation, involvement and servant leadership are the foundation for an understood, agreed upon and fairly applied process of accountability.

The "Seven Deadly Sins" of Christian Churches



Lack of accountability is the most common, yet difficult problem faced by churches.

I made a fascinating and helpful discovery related to the use of power in churches. It happened when I documented the most common problems that I encounter in my consulting practice. The experience provides an insight into the connection between "the trouble with churches" that is discussed in Chapter 1 and the way we use power.

I have chosen to refer to the most common problems I encounter as "the seven deadly sins of Christian churches." The good news is that they are not always deadly. The bad news is that there are more than seven.

“I don’t know why I stay here.”

“Our problem is that people who have gifts that they want to give to the Lord don’t have the freedom to give them. I don’t know what to do.

For example, our pastor is responsible for worship. We all accept that. In fact, we count on it. Our members love the sermons. They are so real and so rich with examples from the real world and our everyday lives. Sometimes I get goose bumps and sometimes I wipe tears from my eyes.

But we also have a Minister of Music, who is very gifted. Sharon knows and loves church music more than you can imagine. She can instantly mention hymns that speak about any topic you can think of. Her greatest desire is to give her gift to God’s people to help them give glory to God.

The sad thing is that our pastor picks the hymns and gives them to her on Saturday. It is so frustrating to have to play hymns that don’t fit. So frustrating. I know she feels frustrated and disempowered. Believe me, I know. I’m Sharon.

I hope you can help us with this when you come.”

Sharon

Minister of Music

Here are the “seven deadly sins” and the core processes in which they appear:

The First Deadly Sin

Weak Governance, Leadership and Management

Symptoms

- How authority flows is not defined or clearly understood.
- Decisions are not documented clearly.
- Little or no monitoring of performance or measuring of results happens.

Result

- Staff and volunteers are frustrated at lack of clarity.
- Quality and effectiveness of ministry suffer.
- Personal fulfillment of staff and volunteers is lacking.
- Good people leave and aren’t missed.

The Second Deadly Sin

Abusive Governance, Leadership and Management

Symptoms

- Decisions are made with inadequate consultation.
- Meddling occurs in the work of others.
- Relationships are broken.
- There is control and manipulation of information.
- Personal agendas are forced on the entire group.

Result

- Individual rights are violated.
- People are abused, discouraged, unfulfilled.
- Good people leave.
- Effective service delivery suffers.
- Without accountability abuse increases and becomes chronic.
- Culture is damaged.

The Third Deadly Sin

Vague Strategic Direction

Symptoms

- The church has no statements of Values, Vision or Mission or they exist but are outdated, unknown and/or without ownership.
- Future is based on “what we’ve always done” instead of careful planning.
- Issues are over-spiritualized, sometimes replacing common sense.

Result

- Strategic direction is assumed by the pastor instead of being led by the board.
- Confusion and/or disagreement of purpose and priorities lead to unfocused ministry and waste in the use of resources.

The Fourth Deadly Sin

Unclear Roles and Responsibilities

Symptoms

- Who has responsibility, and for what, is unclear.
- Few or no current job descriptions exist.
- There is a reliance on precedent and tradition.
- Assumptions differ.

Result

- There is a significant duplication of effort.
- Some responsibilities are not covered.
- Confusion leads to disagreement and strained or broken relationships.
- Members are frustrated and unfulfilled.

The Fifth Deadly Sin *Unclear Expectations*

Symptoms

- Goals are not established for strategic outcomes or tactical outputs.
- Goals are established by the source of authority but not negotiated with staff in proportion to available resources.
- Expectations are assumed but not expressed.

Result

- Differing assumptions are made.
- Pastor, other staff and volunteers have no way of knowing when they have succeeded.
- Differing expectations lead to misunderstandings, a sense of failure and breakdown of relationships.

The Sixth Deadly Sin *Square Pegs, Round Holes*

Symptoms

- First available warm body willing to accept staff or volunteer position is accepted.
- Inadequate orientation/ training of volunteers is provided.
- Skills are not matched with needs of the positions.

Result

- Poor quality of work occurs because of lack of ability of the staff/volunteer assigned.
- Work is unfinished.
- Staff and volunteers are unfulfilled and demoralized, wanting to make a positive contribution but without “the right stuff.”

The Seventh Deadly Sin *Lack of Accountability*

Symptoms

- Measuring results is poorly planned or isn't done.
- There is a misunderstanding of what accountability is and what it involves.
- Poor performance or behavior is tolerated, treated with “understanding” and overlooked.
- Annual performance reviews for the board, pastor and staff are rare or non-existent.

Result

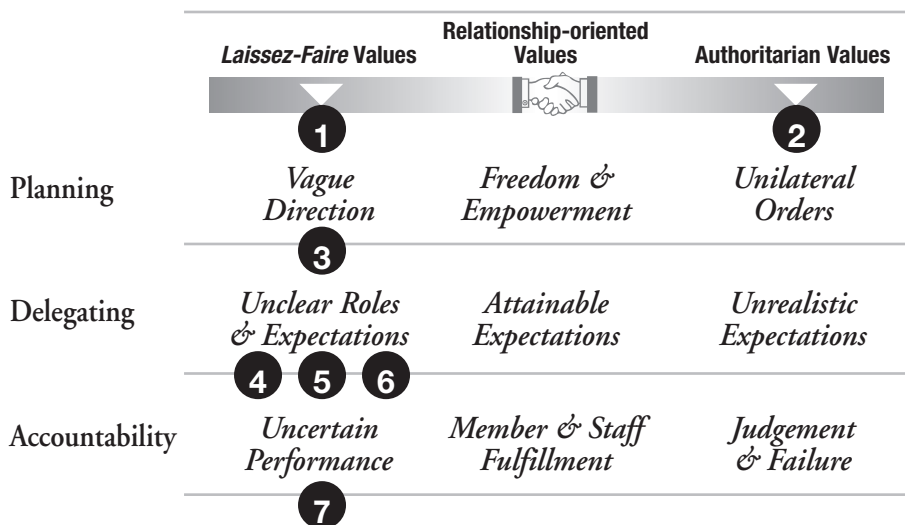
- Successful staff and volunteers are not affirmed.
- Weak staff and volunteers are not supported or redirected.
- When change in unacceptable performance fails to occur, behavior, judgment and unfair dismissal may follow with accountability never happening.

The Connection between Our Use of Power and the Seven Deadly Sins

The fascinating surprise is the common pattern into which most of these classic mistakes fall. Look at the bar charts below. Six of the “seven deadly sins” are on the *laissez-faire* side of the continuum. It’s a helpful observation, because discovering a common root to numerous problems means that it’s possible that there is a common solution as well.

My observation is that the most common problems in Christian churches have their roots in a *laissez-faire* use of power. Fortunately, many churches work from the values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership. Members of these churches are generally enriched and productive. It’s when productivity and fulfillment are lacking that a tendency towards sloppy governance, leadership and management is often apparent.

There is one “deadly sin” that flows from the authoritarian use of power—Abusive Governance and Leadership. Ironically, the main reason abusive behavior continues is that the majority find the *laissez-faire* use of power more comfortable. Many people don’t know how to deal with the abusive power in their church. Or, they have a tendency to overlook or ignore any behavior causing stress. Few are willing to call their fellow members or their pastor to account.



Summary

Understanding the role of authority in our churches is a key to building and maintaining healthy relationships that result in a balance between effective ministry and personal fulfillment. Restoring the damaged word “power” can help us deal with the important issue of how we use power in our churches.

Our use of power may be described as a continuum with a *laissez-faire* use of power on one end. Here people are uncomfortable with the concept of power, because exerting authority seems inappropriate and controlling.

On the other end of the continuum is the authoritarian value system, where someone in authority is motivated by a desire for power. “My way or the highway” comes from this value system that produces abuse of power and real harm to healthy relationships. People who act in a dictatorial or autocratic manner would be extreme examples of the authoritarian value system.

The dynamic center of this continuum of the use of power may be described as relationship-oriented or democratic. It is this value system that God demonstrated in relationship to Jesus. It is the same value system that Jesus used and taught in his relationship with the disciples and others. This value system insures a balance between member and staff fulfillment, fully incorporating the core values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership.

This connection between the difficulties that we are experiencing in our churches and the way in which we use the power that the Lord has delegated to us sets the stage for the next four chapters. The design of healthy relationships consists of three components:

- Values—affirmation, involvement, and servant leadership (Chapter 3)
- Structure—authority, responsibility and accountability (Chapter 4)
- Processes—the six core processes (Chapters 5 and 6)

For Reflection and Discussion

Where would you place your own use of power on the *laissez-faire* to authoritarian continuum? Are you comfortable with your assessment?

Where would you place your pastor(s), board chair, lay leaders on this continuum? How does their use of power affect the relationships in your church?

Relationships — the Original Design

PART ONE
CHAPTER

3

*“I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.”
(Luke 6:47 – 48)*

Introduction

To build a strong church we need to start with a solid foundation. God’s design of healthy relationships is that foundation, giving us a practical, empowering base for the Relationship Model™ and a healthy church.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify those values and components common to what we understand to be God’s design for healthy relationships between God and people and between us people ourselves. Notice that we say “what we understand to be” God’s design. There has been a tendency over the centuries to search for evidence in the Bible to “prove” whatever we want to believe. The objective is to give divine stature to a purely human concept. Even theologians are not immune to this kind of manipulation.

By putting the principles in God's design of these relationships at the heart of our model, we will be able to build relationship-centered churches. We can then apply these principles to our understanding of governance, leadership and management.

It is important for you to test the validity of this chapter by measuring its contents against your own beliefs, theological framework, research, and personal experience. I invite you also to put the Relationship Model™ to another important test—that of common sense. In this way you may satisfy yourself that this material is worth your time and effort, enabling you to build working relationships that produce value and enrich lives.

What I have observed is a consistent pattern in successful relationships from the Hebrew, Greek and Roman cultures, as well as in other biblical cultures. In the Old Testament we will focus primarily on the relationship between God and Adam and Eve as well as God and Joshua. The New Testament presents the rich relationship between the Father and the Son and that between Jesus and his disciples. These relationships are filled with teachings that apply to the design of healthy relationships today.

Not surprisingly, we can learn just as much from biblical examples of unhealthy relationships where mistakes, problems, abuses, and brokenness abound. How these issues were addressed teaches us a lot on how to diagnose and cure our own unhealthy relationships.

Wouldn't it be great if we could check a biblical index and get our answer under "Relationships, Theology of"? It isn't that easy. Beginning in Genesis and throughout the Old Testament, the truths and mysteries of God are told in story form. Jesus continues the tradition in the New Testament by teaching through stories and parables.

Our western minds have a deep need to synthesize the truths that we glean from stories. We do this in order to create a model, an analytical and theoretical blueprint, which will allow us to build our own definition of healthy relationships. I work with the Relationship Model™ in a similar way so as to reduce a very large body of material from several cultures, written over many centuries, to a few simple and clear guidelines.

Almost everything written about the Word and work of God is about relationships. However, you're unlikely to find books and articles about a theology of relationships. For us to uncover the principles that might form such a theology, we must work our way through the Bible to uncover threads common to the design of all relationships.

It's About Power

This was the subject of Chapter 2, but now I want to focus on the way God uses power throughout the Old and New Testaments, and how God wants us to use the authority that the Spirit first poured out upon the Church at Pentecost.

Genesis 1:1 contains a major claim of divine power:

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
(Genesis 1:1)*

Most of what follows is about how God

- handles God’s own authority
- delegates that authority
- wants us to use authority.

In the New Testament, the Son of God makes another very significant claim:

*“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.”
(Matthew 28:18)*

Authority is one of the most important and common subjects of the Bible. No relationship is mentioned without some indication of how authority flows in that relationship. At the very least, we will always know the direction of flow, i.e. who has more power in the relationship. Perhaps the parties about whom we are reading don’t agree, but we can usually tell whether one has more power than the other, or whether they are peers.

Where the Values Fit

The values that God displays are essential to understanding God’s design for healthy relationships. We will now put those values into a context that forms the structure of the relationship:

- God gives each of us human beings some of God’s authority, but that authority is always limited in very specific ways.



Almost everything written about the Word and work of God is about relationships.

- God gives each of us responsibility, and that responsibility is always accompanied by expectations.
- Every one of us is accountable to God for our performance and behavior.

What gives our relationships such effectiveness and enrichment is the set of values that we enjoy as God's creatures. It is in understanding these values, well documented throughout the Scriptures that God's design takes on its meaning. These values, as we discussed in the last chapter, are

- God's affirmation
- God's involvement of us
- God's servant leadership.

These values are foundational in that they encompass all other values within them. In Chapter 2, we defined those values. In this chapter, we show by example from the Bible how God demonstrates and solidifies these values.

God Affirms Us

Affirmation is the first and most awesome of God's values. God is love. There is no clearer or more repeated message in the Bible. Affirmation is the value that caused God to

- create the world
- promise the Messiah
- keep that promise in Jesus
- take us back to God for all eternity.

Affirmation is first expressed in Genesis Chapter 1 when God announces the decision to create man and woman:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" (Genesis 1:26)

It's difficult to think of a more awesome example of love than to be created in the image of God.

Throughout God's relationship with Israel, God repeats the promise of love and faithfulness, continually renewing the people's hope for a land of their own. Through Jeremiah, the Lord declares:

"When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:10)

Another powerful reference to the eternal plan of God's affirmation is found in Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." (Ephesians 1:3 – 6)

It seems that the people of God have always had difficulty holding on to God's promises. As a result, God has found it necessary to reassure us time and again. The Scriptures constantly remind us of God's unilateral decision to bring us into a relationship with God in Christ. First, from Isaiah:

"But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.' So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:8–10)

Second, the words of Jesus from St. John's Gospel:

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (John 15:15 – 16)

◀
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Perhaps our difficulty is that we tend to create God in our image and forget that God has created us in God's image. Our image is one of brokenness and finality. We have all experienced giving up on people after a certain point in a broken relationship. We then assume that God, too, has

limits, beyond which God will give up on us and let us slip from God's grasp. How eloquent and affirming, therefore, is this passage from Isaiah:

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." (Isaiah 49:15 – 16)

In the New Testament, Paul repeats the certainty of God's love in Christ when he asks the Romans:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35, 37 – 39)

Praise God for our eternal security. That conviction of being in the family of God forever gives us the freedom to concentrate on giving thanks to God with the rest of our lives, as individuals and as churches:

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Corinthians 5:14 – 15)

God Involves Us

God's decision to involve the people whom God created and who are affected by God's decisions is a hallmark of God's relationship with us...it was part of God's plan from the very beginning:

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15)

T.R. McNeil writes in Holman's Bible Dictionary:

"God's people work because they are made in His image. The Bible opens with a picture of a working God. God worked in creating a universe. He has been at the job of sustaining creation since He fashioned it.

To be created in God's image means, in part, that people have the capacity to work, to fashion, to create. The notion that labor came into being as a result of humanity's fall does not reflect biblical truth. Sinless humanity was placed in the garden to cultivate it." (Holman's Bible Dictionary)

◀ *That conviction of being in the family of God forever gives us the freedom to concentrate on giving thanks to God with the rest of our lives.*

► *It seems ironic that God would entrust procreation to us. After all, we know there are thousands of genetic errors that can be passed on to future generations in humans alone.*

The whole of the Scriptures is the story of how God involved God's people in God's work. Throughout the history covered by the Old Testament, God called political, military and spiritual leaders. God called judges and prophets, priests and kings. In the New Testament period God involved Mary in bringing the Son of God into the world. He commissioned the apostles and sent out the 70. God involved Paul in bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles.

In fact, God has been involving common people from the beginning of time, encouraging us to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth in our words and actions.

Surely the most powerful example is God's decision to involve us in creation itself in which people, animals and even plants are empowered to reproduce themselves. When we consider how easy it would be for God to continue to create perfect Adams and Eves, it seems ironic that God would entrust procreation to us. After all, we know there are thousands of genetic errors that can be passed on to future generations in humans alone.

Why would God even think to involve us in creation when God knew that the fall would result in an imperfect procreation process? Was it simply poor planning or bad judgment? Is it another one of those paradoxes that goes beyond our ability to understand?

This decision to involve us delivers an obvious and very powerful result. Involvement produces ownership. We have a sense of ownership that knows no bounds. Consider the relationships between Abraham and Isaac, between Hannah and Samuel, between David and Solomon, between Mary and Jesus, and between the prodigal son and his father. Every one of these relationships speaks volumes about the intense bond that develops between parents and children. What a contrast there is between the sense of ownership of a child we created and the sense of ownership of something we purchased.

God's involvement extends also to our planning and decision-making. Involving Adam and Eve in the work of tending the garden was part of God's plan, not a result of the fall.

God involves us in the planning and decision-making involved in fulfilling our basic human responsibilities—to love God and to love our neighbor. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” God advises us that since we're aware of our own needs, we have the pattern we can use in meeting the needs of our neighbor.

Another compelling example of the value that God places on involvement is the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Undoubtedly, God could have done a better job of preaching the Gospel without our involvement. The message that Christians have preached on God's behalf has hardly been a model of clarity and effectiveness, despite the extraordinary advances in communication technology at our command. While God could speak to everyone in his or her own language simultaneously, the best we can do is have 25 percent of the world's population watch the world soccer finals live!

Yet, despite our track record, God gives us the freedom to choose our own role in the Great Commission. We are challenged by that involvement and are committed to sharing the message of God's love in Christ, constantly searching for creative ways to do so. Imagine what would happen if we were to bring the value and benefit of involvement to all our relationships.

God Leads with a Servant Heart

The use and abuse of power is a common theme in the Scriptures, as it is in today's churches. In his teachings and example, Jesus reversed the role that power often has in relationships. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus delivers a scathing denunciation of the Pharisees' abuse of power. However, Jesus does not leave it at that. Instead, he goes on to teach how power should be used in relationships.

“The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:11 – 12)

The Pharisees were not the only ones who abused power. Jesus called together the non-Jewish rulers of the day, pointedly telling them:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to

serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25 – 28)

The disciples were not immune to the temptations of power either. Imagining themselves with Jesus after he finally established his kingdom, they began to argue among themselves as to who would be the greatest. Immediately, Jesus put power in its proper perspective:

“Jesus knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest.’” (Luke 9:47 – 48)

In all his teaching and especially by his example, Jesus supported his followers. When the sick were brought, Jesus healed them. When he arrived late and found Lazarus dead, he raised him to life again. When the crowds followed him without thinking of their need for food, he fed all 5,000 of them.

◀
God gives us the freedom to choose our own role in the Great Commission.

Jesus taught his disciples that servant leadership was a necessary part of what he was doing for them and should be a mark of their ministry. In John’s Gospel Jesus demonstrates this by washing the disciples’ feet. He then informs the disciples of the significance of what he has done:

“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” (John 13:13 – 17)

Motivation Through Affirmation, Involvement and Servant Leadership

All three of these core values become part of the spiritual power that God gives us when God delegates authority to us.

We can witness the effect of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership in the joy, courage, commitment and determination of the men and women God chose as leaders throughout the record of biblical history. From this record we notice that in all relationships it is God's affirmation of God's people that provides the motivation to follow God's leading.

We may think of motivation as coming from within. We may also be critical of those who seem to lack it, as though motivation should indeed come from that place. Motivation, however, originates with God and flows through us to others by our living out these core values. Even the motivation we often feel from within is from God:

"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."
(Psalms 37:4)

Adam was motivated by God's love for him. Created in God's image with God's own free will, he was empowered to be faithful in tending the garden. It was his free response to the bounties that God had given him.

All during his life Joshua was motivated to serve the Lord thanks to the gifts God had given. With his death near, Joshua assembled the tribes of Israel at Shechem and recounted the acts of love that God had showed God's chosen people. Based on this love, Joshua motivated the people to follow his example:

"But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15b)

From the time the Great Commission was first given, Christians have also responded to the motivating power of the love of God. Peter and John were among the first Christians to share their source of motivation when the Jewish authorities ordered them to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. Peter and John replied:

"Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speak about what we have seen and heard."
(Acts 4:19 – 20)

Paul, too, shares with us what motivated him to preach the Good News in his second letter to the Christians in Corinth:

"If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died." (2 Corinthians 5:13 – 14)

In a relationship-oriented church, no other motivation other than the love of Christ is appropriate. Fear has no place in motivating people to fulfill their responsibilities:

*“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”
(1 John 4:18 – 19)*

Affirmation, involvement and servant leadership appear in healthy relationships throughout both testaments and in all the biblical cultures. In a church of Christians we will want to follow God’s example, acting on behalf of God who affirms, involves and supports us by repeating those values in our relationship with those who look to us for authority. It is this spiritual power that will enable us to be successful in our responsibilities.

Structures of Biblical Relationships

There are three major components in God’s design of relationships. They are:

- Authority (with Limitations)
- Responsibility (with Expectations)
- Accountability.

In the following pages we will explore the biblical bases of these components.

The Circle of Authority

The circle of authority that God gives us includes three elements:

- Authorization
- Resources
- Competencies (gifts).

Authorization

God expresses God’s authorization in several ways. One of the ways is simply to claim God’s authority by declaring who God is or what God has done. What better example of declaration than in God’s response to Abraham’s request for God’s name:

“Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they ask me, “What is his name?” Then what shall I tell them?’

◀
Fear has no place in motivating people to fulfill their responsibilities.

God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13 – 14)

More frequently God claims authority on the basis of what God has done. Consider the first ten words of the Bible:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

Another way in which God shows that God has the authority is by delegating his authority to another. God does this for Joshua:

"No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:5)

The fact that authority is mentioned before responsibility in Joshua 1 should not go unnoticed. God affirms us by delegating to us God's own power and authority. Thus God equips us for the task before giving it to us. God wants us to begin with confidence instead of fear.

On the Mount of Transfiguration God used a unique way to delegate God's authority to the Son of Man:

"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'" (Matthew 17:5)

God empowers us when God assigns God's own authority to us in giving us the Great Commission:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore..." (Matthew 8:18)

Resources

Authorization without resources can accomplish nothing. Therefore resources must be provided in all relationships for authorization to be meaningful. The resources Christian churches need for success include people, money, information and time. God shows us how this is to be done. In delegating authority to Adam, God tells him:

"I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (Genesis 1:29)

The resources that God gave to Joshua are described in Joshua 1:12 – 15. They consist of the help of the other tribes of Judah who will remain east of the Jordan.

Competencies

One of the most amazing realities about the six billion people who inhabit this planet is that no two people are alike. The closest we can come to being identical is in twins from a common fertilized ovum. Yet even in this example we see nuances of difference.

No one is exactly like you. Fingerprints and DNA set us apart from every other person. So do the combination of gifts that each of us possesses. Your set of gifts—abilities, interests, personality, potential to develop specialized skills, differentiates you. In this book we will refer to these gifts as competencies, a word that is explained in the next chapter. Here we simply want to affirm that the divine design includes giving you authorization, resources and special competencies that allow you to be a meaningful part of God's plan for humanity.

God gives to the Church all of the special gifts that are needed to carry out the Great Commission:

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” (Ephesians 4:11)

Limitations to Authority

In all the relationships recorded in Scripture, every single one has limitations on the authority given. In the very first relationship God created, God gave Adam this command:

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”(Genesis 2:16)

God limits Adam's authority and in so doing differentiates between God and human beings.

God also places a limitation upon Joshua's authority:

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” (Joshua 1:7 – 8)

Notice that this last line is an affirmation. The limitation is never intended to make Joshua’s life miserable.

The Ten Commandments are probably the finest example of limitations to the authority that God gives to human beings. In written form they go back to the time of Moses. Before that the Law was written in our hearts. The Commandments and are still relevant today.

In the Bible, one of the easiest ways to recognize a limitation to authority is this—it is stated negatively. In Exodus 20, nine of the Ten Commandments are in the negative. It’s quicker to give ten limitations than a thousand permissions.

Limitations to authority benefit us in two ways:

- They define the size of the circle of authority and thus our freedom to act.
- They balance our circle of authority with our circle of responsibility.

*The Ten Commandments
define our freedom to
fulfill our purpose in life
by setting clear limits.*



Limitations: Our Circle of Responsibility and Freedom to Act

It is very common for people to think of God as a micro-manager of all human life, that God has a plan for and controls every last detail. Certainly, all Christians want to echo Joshua’s commitment “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Thus, we often hear references to “surrendering to” and “obedience to” God’s will. But how can we “know” that what we decide to do is in the centre of God’s will? That thought troubles many people.

►
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◀
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Remember this. We have an empowering God. God created us in God's own image. God wants each of us to enjoy what God enjoys—perfect freedom and the absence of fear. God's will is not some tiny dot moving in the dark that we must hit blindfolded. In our churches we have enormous freedom to decide what the values, vision, mission and priorities should be. We operate freely in the midst of a large circle defined by limits to our authority. This is the way God empowers people.

Limitations: Balancing Our Circle of Authority with Our Circle of Responsibility

Limitations to authority balance our circle of authority with our circle of responsibility. In any successful relationship these circles must be of equal size. The primary purpose of delegating authority (authorization, resources and competencies) is to achieve a result within the area of responsibility. The circle of authority must therefore be adequate to cover that circle of responsibility. To appreciate this let's see what happens when they're out of balance.

The Circle of Authority Smaller Than the Circle of Responsibility

Several negative things may happen. The likelihood increases that the individual or group will not succeed in fulfilling their responsibilities. This is a situation Moses once found himself in when he came across two Hebrews fighting:

"He asked the one in the wrong, 'Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?' The man said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?' Then Moses was afraid and thought, 'What I did must have become known.'" (Exodus 2:13 – 14)

Moses lost confidence. He thought he had lost the authority he needed to intervene in the conflict.

Having too little authority for the assigned responsibility is prevalent in many churches. It is particularly common in tall hierarchical models where the source of authority is many levels distant from service delivery to members and others. Where this occurs we are likely to observe another result, poor morale.

People are designed to work and motivated to succeed. Not to have the authorization or resources to make success possible is frustrating and discouraging. This is what Elijah felt when the Lord found him taking refuge in a cave for the night:

“What are you doing here, Elijah?’ He replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’” (1 Kings 19:9 – 10)

Poor morale is an indication that people perceive themselves to be disempowered and that their circle of authority is smaller than their circle of responsibility.

Closely related to poor morale is fear of failure. It is natural to experience fear of failure if one is convinced that success in fulfilling one’s responsibility is unlikely. Ultimately, if the authority is of inadequate size, then service delivery will not meet the expectations of those who turn to us for the services we provide. When the people in a church do not have adequate authority, the whole church fails in its responsibility.

Let’s look now at the opposite imbalance.

The Circle of Authority Larger Than the Circle of Responsibility

The most common result of this imbalance is abuse of power. The Scriptures contain hundreds of examples. The saying “Absolute power corrupts absolutely” is seen all too frequently. Consider David’s abuse of power when he took Bathsheba from Uriah. What David did was to write a letter to Joab and send it with Uriah. In it he wrote:

“Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die. So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David’s army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.” (2 Samuel 11:14b – 17)

David exceeded the limits of his divine authority as king, taking more authority than he needed to succeed in his responsibility. Abuse of the extra power led directly to Uriah's death. Uriah, on the other hand, suddenly found himself in battle without the resources to succeed in his responsibility and failed immediately.

In the New Testament, the Pharisees continually took upon themselves more power than was rightfully theirs. Jesus criticized them for doing this. In this dynamic passage of teaching the crowds and the disciples, Jesus deals directly with the issue of creating a circle of authority that is larger than the circle of responsibility, thereby placing greater loads upon others than they have the resources to handle:

“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them...they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant.” (Matthew 23:1–11)

The Circle of Responsibility

The assignment of responsibility is both a gift of God and an act of affirmation by God. It is a profound privilege for us to be invited to participate in “tending the garden.” From this loving decision comes our sense of calling. It is what prompted Joshua to respond to God’s motivation by saying:

“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15b)

Responsibilities in the relationships that God established are always clearly defined. Joshua was told:

“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.” (Joshua 1:6)

In Adam’s case:

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15)

In the Great Commission, the circle of responsibility is clearly defined for all of us:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:20)

In a relationship-oriented church, it is important that we follow the biblical model of providing clear circles of responsibility to those to whom authority is being delegated:

- For the board of directors, responsibilities are stated in the bylaws.
- For individual board members and committees, responsibilities are set out in the governance manual.
- For each staff person and every volunteer, responsibilities should be documented in a clear relationship description. (Very few churches bother to document responsibilities for volunteers.)

As we shall see later, much confusion and conflict can arise out of unclear responsibilities.

Expectations of Responsibility

Expectations are to the circle of responsibility what limitations are to the circle of authority. Stated another way, expectations adjust and regulate the size of the circle of responsibility, just as limitations regulate the size of the circle of authority.

In the case of our relationship to God through the Laws of Moses and in Joshua’s relationship to God, there is no question that authority is adequate for success. In the relationship between God and Joshua, God knows perfectly how to match authority with responsibility. For that reason, negotiation of expectations between God and people is rare. Yet there are strong references to God’s sensitivity to that balance.

For example, Christ is portrayed as a shepherd caring for his sheep so that they are not put into a situation that would harm them:

“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” (Isaiah 40:11)

Even in temptation the Lord is sensitive to our capabilities. He assures us that he will maintain a balance between the resources he provides and the loads we carry:

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Negotiating Expectations

Expectations should be matched with the abilities and resources each person possesses. In the following story, Jesus has an extraordinary knack of illustrating this concept:

“It will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.” (Matthew 25:14 – 15)

◀
Much confusion
and conflict can
arise out of
unclear
responsibilities.

The departing master had expectations only in proportion to each servant’s abilities and the number of talents he had been given. Accordingly, the amounts entrusted reflected the master’s sensitivity to the differences in ability.

At the same time, the master had a range of expectations for each servant. The most he expected on his return was that the investment would double. At the very least, he assumed that the money would yield a return equal to the local bank interest. (The one who buried his talent and produced no result was told that he should have at least entrusted it to a banker and earned interest on the portion.)

Accountability

The examples of accountability are as numerous as the number of people and stories that make up the books of the Bible. Here are a few of those examples.

The first example is the accountability experienced by Adam and Eve. They were driven from the garden.

The next to experience accountability was Cain for killing his brother. He was cursed and told that he would spend his life a fugitive—and that the earth would never supply his needs.

Accountability has positive or negative consequences, depending on the results of being “*weighed in the scales.*”

The Negative Side of Accountability

Daniel 5 and 6 contain the account of Belshazzar the king discovering the handwriting on the wall. Belshazzar was hosting a banquet when he looked up and saw a human hand write on the plaster. Pale with shock, he promised that anyone who could tell him what the words meant would be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck. That would be their reward—a positive form of accountability.

The words were “Mene Mene Tekel Parsin.” Daniel was able to read these words and explain their meaning to Belshazzar:

Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

Tekel: you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

(Daniel 5:26 – 28)

Daniel told Belshazzar that these words meant the king was being held accountable for worshipping gold and silver instead of the living God.

Daniel’s success led to Belshazzar having him clothed in purple and gold and proclaimed the third highest ruler in the land. However, that very night Belshazzar was killed, called to account for failing to acknowledge God. Darius the Persian took over the kingship:

“It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.” (Daniel 6:1 – 2)

Many others throughout the biblical record were called to account. You'll recognize the following:

- God and Sodom and Gomorrah
- Moses and the Pharaoh
- God and the wandering Israelites
- Elijah and the prophets of Baal
- Nathan and David
- Jesus and the Pharisees
- Jesus and Simon Peter
- Peter and Ananias and Saphira



Accountability has positive or negative consequences, depending on the results of being “weighed in the scales.”

Judgment Day is the most obvious biblical example of being called to account. Traditionally, Judgment Day has inspired art throughout the ages of the terrors that are to come. Christ's death and resurrection have changed all that. Because of Christ, accountability is the final affirmation of God. It is the fulfillment of the plan God made before creating the world:

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight... In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.... And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” (Ephesians 1:4, 7, 9 – 10)

The Positive Side of Accountability

Christ did not shirk his responsibility but submitted to his Father's will. God also held him accountable in finding him faithful and raising him from the dead:

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9 – 11)

It is sad that the word “accountability” carries with it a connotation of fear and dread, of punishment and

suffering. Accountability in the person and work of Christ is an eternal affirmation. Christ was given the responsibility of taking the sins of the world upon him, and he was given the authority (authorization, resources and competencies) to succeed. Now he sits at the right hand of the Father for all eternity. Should the relationship-oriented church not pattern its accountability after the example of our heavenly Father for his Son?

The Role of Accountability in Conflict

Should we forgive and forget?

No, forgive and reconcile.

Like almost every other Christian, you were probably taught to forgive and forget. In real life, however, this is easier said than done. Perhaps in a broken relationship you were able to manage the “forgive” part, but you haven’t forgotten. The relationship is still broken.

Somehow your forgiveness set you free, but it didn’t restore the brokenness. Why can’t you forget? The truth is that Christians have adopted a process that isn’t found in the Scripture. You can’t forget, because it really happened. And the idea that you should put it behind you refers to forgiveness, not to forgetting.

What the Lord actually teaches is “forgive and reconcile.” It’s found in the well-known passage from Matthew 18.

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.” (Matthew 18:15-17a)

The challenge of this familiar passage is to hold our brother or sister accountable with a forgiving heart. *Negotiation* is that first step, designed to reconcile, not to win.

If the private negotiation doesn’t result in acknowledgement and reconciliation, the next step is *mediation*, but this time with two or three witnesses to assist you in your efforts. The final step is *arbitration*—standing together before a third party who will decide the matter between you.

This is about as far from “forgive and forget” as you can get. And it’s difficult. Leaving the relationship broken is easier and far more common.

►
The process of reconciliation requires a commitment to the person who caused the pain.

The process of reconciliation requires a commitment to the person who caused the pain.

Forgiveness is for your peace of mind. Holding the person accountable by negotiation, mediation and arbitration is for the other person and for reconciling the relationship.

The process of reconciliation requires tough love, and tough love is tough to find. Here's the pathway:

- Forgiveness leads to confrontation of the wrong.
- Confrontation leads to acknowledgment.
- Acknowledgment leads to making amends.
- Making amends produces justice.
- Forgiveness and justice produce reconciliation.

◄
Perhaps in a broken relationship you were able to manage the "forgive" part, but you haven't forgotten.

Why didn't God just forgive us? Why did God allow Jesus to be killed? Why didn't God say, "I made the rule that the soul that sins shall die. And I can change it!"

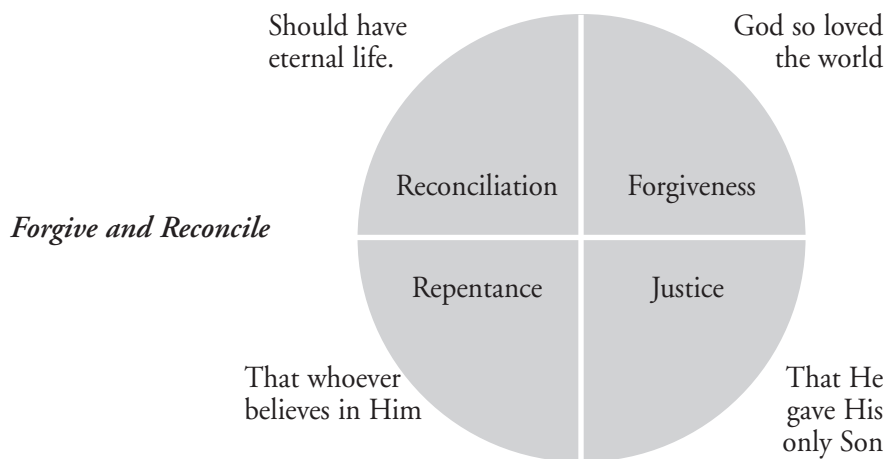
Why didn't God say, "I forgive you, but I'm sure not going to allow my Son to be killed over it." Because forgiveness alone would have helped only God, but justice satisfied by the death of Christ is what reconciled us to God. It's reconciliation that God was after, not just forgiveness.

God still doesn't forget. God confronts us with the Law, with the reality of our sin. God forgives us for what we cannot do. God also expects us to go forward with a faith that is translated into fulfilling God's expectations of us.

"Love God" and "love your neighbor" are God's two great expectations of us. Those expectations don't evaporate with God's forgiveness for our failing to do our job. "What shall we say then? Shall we sin that God's grace may abound?" Paul asks. "By no means" is his reply.

►
The primary lesson we can learn from the Bible is that forgiveness is a value and accountability is a process.

The primary lesson we can learn from the Bible is that forgiveness is a value and accountability is a process. They are not to be confused. Instead of replacing one with the other by pretending we can forgive and forget, we forgive and reconcile by including both of them in the process of resolving conflict.



Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that the Scriptures provide a wealth of teaching about relationships. We have seen that God's design of relationships is based on the core values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership.

The relationship itself has three major components:

- Authority (with Limitations)
- Responsibility (with Expectations)
- Accountability.

We have also seen that the three core values have power to motivate us when the relationship is bathed in them.

In the next chapters, we will show how this design becomes the basis of a model of the relationship-oriented church that can shape the way in which a church board, the pastor, staff, and volunteers do their work.

For Reflection and Discussion

How does the description of God's design of relationships resonate to your own understanding of relationships?

What insights did you gain from this chapter that were helpful to you?

A Church is Like a Tree

PART ONE
CHAPTER

4

The Relationship Model™ Revealed

In the last chapter, we explored many of the relationships in the Old and New Testaments that were healthy if patterned after what we believe to be God's design. In this chapter we will begin to apply to our churches the principles behind that design. If we can achieve this in our churches, we are likely to experience what God wants for all: effective ministry and personal fulfillment for staff and volunteers.

It begins, of course, with the way we use power. We have already seen that in terms of relationships, the most important and universal values are affirmation, involvement and servant leadership. Of these, servant leadership accords special significance to the tree as a symbol for healthy churches.

The effect of servant leadership is that we are lifted up by our source of authority instead of being put down. We are empowered, given freedom to excel, and encouraged to take risks and learn from our mistakes. We speak of support instead of domination.



I was only 14 when I left home for boarding school. One of the first group activities I can remember was a wholesale cleaning of the dormitory we called home, starting with the basement. Believe me when I say that when you are only 14 and the lowest form of underclassman, you know you are going to get the dirtiest jobs.

I can remember clearly that room full of old chairs that had to be cleaned out to make room for a lounge for the residents of the dorm. What I remember most clearly, however, is not the chairs or the work of cleaning that day, but the presence of the president of the school in jeans helping us with that dirty work.

I didn't know anything about servant leadership at the time but I did know what a powerful motivator it was to have Dr. Stuenkel working along side me. It gave an enormous sense of importance to the task and a sense that each of us doing the work was valued. He's in heaven now, but his spirit of servant leadership and the lesson I learned from him are still with me. "Prexy," as we called him, lifted more than chairs. He lifted each of us.

Think of Your Church as a Tree

Somewhere long ago we adopted the "top-down" vocabulary of the world. We copied the Pharisees, instead of Jesus, in the way we think and speak of our churches. Yet, wherever I introduce the tree as the symbol for how authority can and should flow within a church, I find immediate understanding and acceptance. The "top-down" thinking to which we have become accustomed is not aligned with our true values. It's ironic, isn't it, that we Christians know that we definitely don't want our churches to be run like a business. Then we proceed to design our organizational chart that makes the church look just like a business.



Imagine that a friend of yours described his experience of working in a Christian church this way:

“Ten years ago I was a staff member on the bottom rung, but I was determined to climb the ladder until I reached the highest position I could. I never expected that I would be the ‘top dog’ in just ten years. Imagine that, me on the top rung. Now I have a dozen people working directly under me, and I have control over a church budget of a million dollars. Now I’m in a position to make changes from the top down to the lowest volunteer.”

This church is NOT like a tree. Take a closer look at the language that we hear so frequently in Christian churches.

“Ten years ago I was on the *bottom* rung, but I was determined to *climb the ladder* until I reached the *highest position* I could. I never expected that I would be the ‘*top dog*’ in just ten years. Imagine that, me on the *top rung*. Now I have a dozen people working directly *under* me, and I have control *over* a budget of a million dollars. Now I’m in a position to make changes from the *top down* to the *lowest volunteer*.”

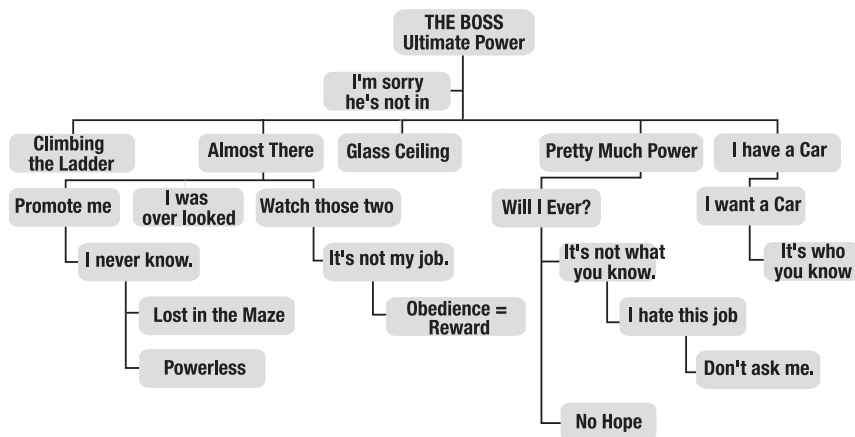
A church is like a tree. Here’s the same person stating his experience in a different way.

“Ten years ago I was at the leading edge of the church, but I was determined to reach my full potential until I had the heaviest load I could possibly carry. I never expected that I would have this much responsibility in ten years. Imagine that. I feel like I’m part of the trunk of a tree. Now I have a dozen people looking directly to me for support, and together we share the responsibility of managing our church’s budget of a million dollars. Now I’m in a position to serve everyone in the entire church from the base of the tree to the highest member/volunteer.”



The Authoritarian Model

(Top-down Thinking)

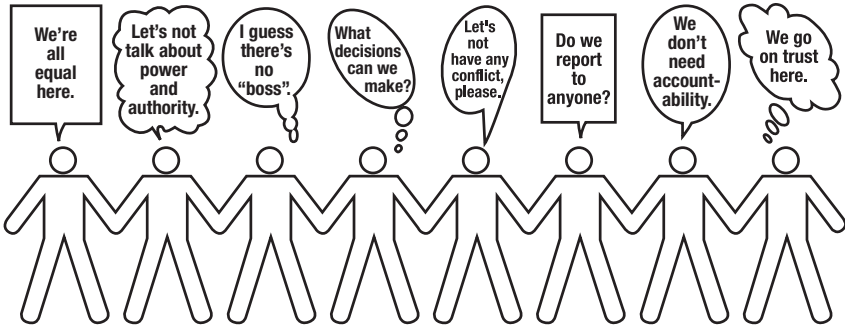


By making a conscious effort to shift our paradigm from “top-down” thinking to “roots-up” thinking, we will gain a far better understanding of the way in which God-designed relationships can work in our churches.

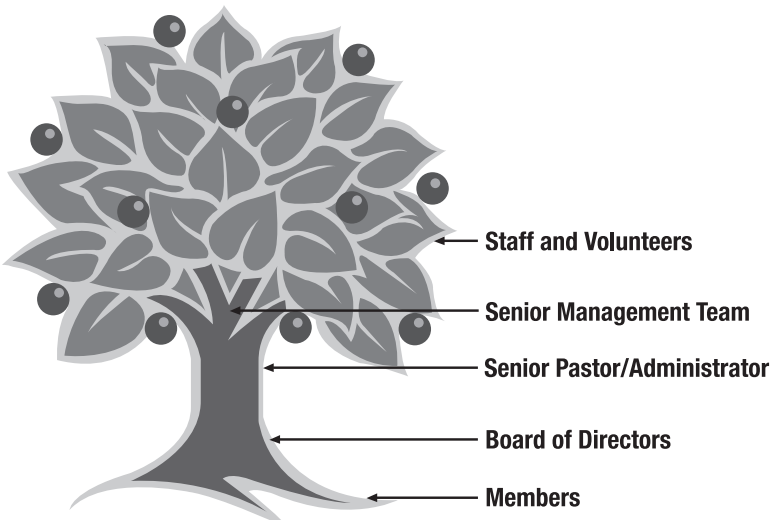
Imagine then that a church is like a tree. The greater the authority, the closer to the base you find it. The root structure that supports the tree is the membership. Together they are the final source of authority and resources for the entire church.



The Laissez-Faire Model (Lateral Thinking)



The Relationship Model™ (Roots-up Thinking)



Above ground is a strong trunk that bears the weight of the tree, the board. All nutrients pass upwards through this trunk to where the fruit grows. Connected to the trunk and looking like part of it, is the senior pastor (and possibly the administrator), the only person(s) directly accountable to the board.

At the cluster where the trunk branches out into the departments of the church, we find the senior management team. Above them are the branches. In churches they represent different branches or departments of the ministry.

The leaves represent the staff and the members/volunteers. They reach the highest part of the tree and are supported and supplied by everything below them. Just as each leaf uses light to photosynthesize sugar from water and carbon dioxide to add value to the tree, so each staff member and every member/volunteer add value to the church through his or her own set of competencies.

Making the shift from “top-down” thinking to servant leadership is never easy. Long after you’ve done it you’ll hear “top-down” language still coming out of your mouth. It’s important for others in the church to transition to this supportive, “roots-up” terminology. Even more important is that you “walk the talk” by ensuring that all your behaviors are consistent with servant leadership.

A Tree’s Health

If a tree is healthy, it will bear healthy fruit. If a church has healthy working relationships it will deliver services of high quality. The opposite is also true.

Unhealthy Churches

The tree is a living organism. If one part of the tree is diseased, it will affect other parts of the tree. If the values, structure or processes of the church are flawed, neglected or abused, those flaws will eventually impact the quality of the church’s services. Just as tragic, the health (psychological, emotional and physical) of the individuals within the church is at risk.

I have seen churches where morale is very low, where churches are deeply troubled or even completely dysfunctional. Amazingly, even in some of these, the fruit is still, by some miracle, of high quality. The staff members express a strong commitment to the mission of the church even while suffering from poor governance, leadership or management. They continue



Making the shift from “top-down” thinking to servant leadership is never easy.

to produce at their own expense, driven by personal values and beliefs, despite the pain they feel. Eventually, however, even these good people will burn out and leave.

The causes of unhealthy churches are numerous, but they often stem from a common source—a board that is not holding itself and/or its senior pastor accountable for what is happening within the church.

I think of a church that may not survive the abusive power it has suffered from within. In this case the board waited far too long before acting and now may be unwilling or unable to bring the dysfunction back from the brink.



An employee of a dysfunctional church, because a board failed to deal with the abusive behavior of one of its leaders, wrote recently to express just such a situation. “A board member called me looking for the addresses of staff that had left so that a card of thanks could be sent to each of them on behalf of the board.” I told this person, “After all that had happened, it’s just empty words on paper. The perpetrator is still at large. They’re still protecting him and the deception to members and staff continues. It’s too little, too late. And words on a card do not do justice to the wrongs that have been allowed to happen and continue to happen.”

Too often, especially in abusive situations, productivity is given higher value than staff fulfillment, the health of relationships being regarded as a means to an end rather than a desirable objective. This condition is so prevalent—even in Christian churches—that I am inclined to say, “Healthy relationships are more important than effective ministry.” Another way to say the same thing is “Healthy relationships are effective ministry.”

What produces a healthy tree? How do we balance the fulfillment of our staff and member/volunteers with the fulfillment of our other members?

Healthy working relationships begin when the board, pastors and others in authority live out the core values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership in their design of management structures and processes. In these churches we find healthy people consistently producing healthy fruit.

Healthy Churches

The structure of all working relationships in a healthy church will include:

- *a statement of authority with clear parameters of the limits of that authority.* Ironically, the limitations of authority are the defining statements that describe the freedom that each person has.
- *a statement of responsibilities with expectations of those responsibilities that have been negotiated to balance with the available authorization and resources.*
- *the concept of mutual accountability between the source and recipients of authority.* The source of authority is accountable for maintaining the balance of authority and responsibility, a balance of resources and expectations. The recipient is responsible for delivering the expectations within the limits of resources. All are accountable for living the core values.

Processes

The core processes, which are basic to all other processes, and as we saw in Chapter 2, are

- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Decision-making.

The next three processes, that are also part of the key ones, rest upon the first three:

- Planning
- Delegation of authority and responsibility
- Monitoring performance and measuring results.

When these processes are driven by the same core values, people are affirmed, involved and supported as they find fulfillment in realizing the mission of the church.

In this chapter our emphasis is on the structure. In it we will expand upon the points made in Chapter 2 and show in more detail the impact of the components that make up a healthy or unhealthy structure.

Structure and Values

If organizational values are the genetic code of the tree, giving it identity and determining what the tree will produce, structure is the shape that will carry the load and grow the fruit. There are many different relationships in churches. Each one needs the structure that will enable it to fulfill its unique role. In this section, we want to examine that structure and understand what role each component fills.

There are many relationships in churches. Each one, however, has the same design. As we saw in Chapter 3 there are three major components in a relationship:

- Authority (with limitations)
- Responsibility (with expectations)
- Accountability

Limitations (of authority) and expectations (of responsibility) are elements that enable us to design and maintain a dynamic balance in the relationship.

We think of these three components as circles. Limitations of authority and expectations of responsibility are lines that define the size of the respective circles.

Authority

Authority is the first main component of a relationship. It includes three elements within its circle:

1. Authorization
2. Resources
3. Competencies (gifts)

The Circle of Authority



1. Authorization

In a church, authorization is the formal or informal transfer of power from one level to another. Remember that delegating power, when used in a positive sense, is synonymous with authorization.

A job title is one way in which authorization is given to carry out a particular role in a church. Although a job title gives some clarity, it is important to know who authorizes you to do what you do. Knowing the source of your authority provides a focal point to return to at any time, such as when resources or authorization are insufficient or responsibilities and expectations are excessive.

Authorization is like a vapor. The day after you leave a job, it's gone. Where you were expected to attend meetings, you are now a guest only by invitation. Where you once gave instructions and made requests, you now have no authority to delegate. The building and its people haven't changed. But overnight the authorization someone gave you has gone. Vaporized. The working relationship is finished.

2. Resources

Authorization without resources cannot accomplish anything. Resources fall into four broad categories:

- People
- Money
- Information
- Time

All four are required in the right amounts.

Human Resources

These may be

- people whom you hire to help you
- volunteers willing to assist without financial remuneration
- outside contractors and consultants.

Financial Resources

Financial resources take several forms:

- remuneration for doing the work, as in a salary and benefits package
- operating funds for equipment and supplies
- capital expenditures for buildings and major items of equipment
- endowment funds that bring long-term stability.

In all cases, the financial resources must be sufficient for the work to be done successfully.

Information Resources

Imagine the information that comes into the church through phones, fax machines, pagers, TV sets, the Internet, and other electronic devices. Think of the information exchanged or shared between individuals, in conferences, training sessions and meetings.



*Authorization is
like a vapor.
The day after
you leave a job,
it's gone.*

We can't do our work without information. Cut any of it off—phone not working, power or network failures—and our productivity is jeopardized. It's worse if a co-worker, through insensitive oversight or a deliberate act, also cuts off our sources of information.

Time

Unlike the other resources, time is non-renewable and therefore of extreme value. We never seem to have enough time to do all that we want or need to do. Time, therefore, requires careful management. We must

- negotiate adequate time for the completion of a project
- prioritize time to use it efficiently and effectively.

Whatever the job, all these resources—people, money, information and time—need to be appropriate and adequate. Only then can authorization be meaningful and the responsibilities of the job successfully accomplished.

3. Competencies

What an amazing design a tree is! The food that brings life and health for a tree to grow to maturity is taken from the earth through the roots. So, as water evaporates through the leaves, life-giving water and nutrients are drawn up from those roots. A transpiration stream is started. This “stream” ensures that food travels from cell to cell throughout the tree, no matter how high or wide the tree happens to be.

A tree isn’t solely dependent on water and nutrients from below. Leaves are tree-manufacturing centers with every leaf playing its part in the tree’s well-being. As sunlight envelopes the tree, the green chlorophyll pigment in each leaf uses its built-in capacity to turn carbon dioxide from the air, and water from the soil, into carbohydrates. This activity, called photosynthesis, produces oxygen, essential to all life. It allows new plant tissue to be produced so that every cell receives the correct nutrients, letting the tree grow and develop. And it sweetens the fruit!

This interdependence is essential to the growth of a healthy tree: the roots, trunk and branches provide the structure and conditions for growth; the leaves make their own unique contribution. Omit any of them and the tree would not flourish.

Now compare this amazing, interdependent tree to a church. With its values, vision and mission, a church provides the structure and conditions for its people to play their unique roles. When the ministry needs of the church and the pastor, staff and member/volunteers are well-matched, people carry out the services the church is designed to provide. Everyone, from the newest volunteer “in the leaves” to the senior pastor “at the top of the trunk,” makes a unique contribution. Individuals work together, each delivering what the other cannot in order for the church to fulfill its mission.

Finding the Right Person for the Job

We’ve all seen people who are round pegs in square holes. There is a mismatch between their skills and those the job requires. That’s like asking the roots of a tree to photosynthesize! It’s a prescription for failure.

Everyone thrives—members, pastor, staff, volunteers—when people do what they do best in the place where they can make their greatest contribution.

But how can we be sure about someone's real abilities or strengths? An interviewer might see a certificate stating completion of training and final test passed. That doesn't tell us about the attributes that make the difference between

- doing a job successfully and the bare minimum
- a person committed to one's work and one who couldn't care less
- someone you'd trust with your life and someone whose integrity you're never quite sure about.

A paper qualification also won't tell us whether the person

- is open-minded and listens carefully to other people
- is able to handle ambiguity
- welcomes feedback so they learn as much as they can from others.

How can we assess people's attitudes towards work or the value system that guides their lives? If we have any responsibilities for assessing people and appointing them to positions in a church, or deciding whom to promote, it's useful to understand competencies. The knowledge will help prevent mistakes that could damage both the person and the church. Such "mistakes" are costly in financial terms, even more so in human terms.

The word "competencies" often gets confused with "competence." This can cause all kinds of problems.

Competence

A person who is *competent* is expected to be able to perform to a minimum standard. For example, a qualified teacher has met the minimum national standard for becoming a teacher; a pilot has passed the minimum standard to fly and is licensed for the particular plane we are on. (We hope that person has experience beyond the minimum!) *Competence*, therefore, is about meeting the minimum standard for a job. It is about *what* needs to be achieved.

Competencies

On the other hand, *competencies* are about the person and *how* they go about a task in order to complete it successfully. Competencies are the underlying characteristics of a person, intricately blended together. They are the gifts and talents people possess that make them successful at certain tasks.

One piano player slogs away at scales and eventually achieves a certain level. That's *competence*. The concert pianist also achieves a certain level. That's also *competence*—but it's more than that. The concert pianist has a gift for it as well. We say that producing music is one of his or her *competencies*, like it was for Mozart, Chopin or Beethoven.

Two people learning to play the piano at the same time or tackling the same job may have very different levels of success. Their *competencies* are influenced by their natural talents, values and beliefs, motives, personality traits, self-image and attitudes. The successful person is said to have the right competencies for the job. The other person may have gifts or competencies that are better suited to an entirely different job—perhaps to teaching.

A person's *competencies* therefore are a window through which we can glimpse his or her strengths or aptitudes. Unlike traditional exams that tell us what the person can do—their competence—competencies tell us *how* the person does the job—what the person is like.

Determining a Person's Competencies

We can determine what *competencies* people have by observing their behaviors. The more effectively and consistently we see them behaving in ways associated with particular *competencies*, the stronger the competency.

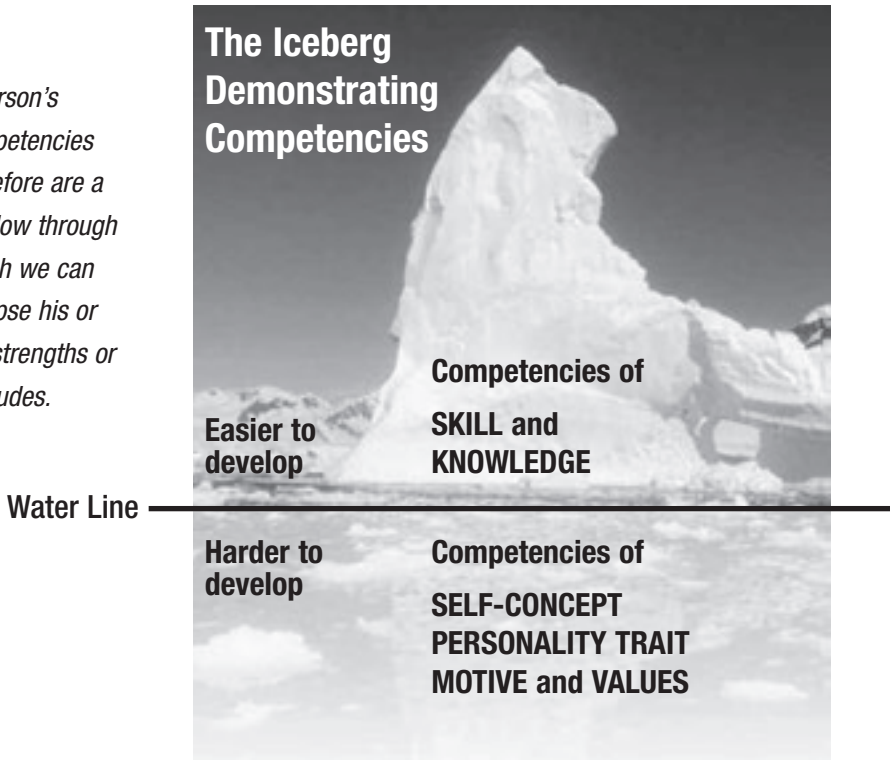
We may say that the pastor of the church has all the right *competencies* to be a successful pastor—commitment to God, leadership, humility, delegation, effective judgment, communication skills, self-esteem, and so on. Or we may not, depending on our perspective!

The pastor's call to the pastoral ministry is from the Spirit of God, but as in the New Testament, that call is verified by the Church. It was informal at the time of the apostles who said, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28). Today, this process of verifying the gifts of the Spirit is done through the process of ordination and sometimes installation. In some churches this process is called discernment and affirmation. It may be informal, but it is a very real way of assessing and confirming that a person has the gifts required for a particular position in the church.

Each job requires a specific set of *competencies*. So pastors probably require a greater ability to communicate effectively than individual board members. Church leaders need a greater degree of self-esteem and problem-solving ability than the person who makes the morning coffee. To understand *competencies* more fully, consider the following analogy.



A person's competencies therefore are a window through which we can glimpse his or her strengths or aptitudes.



Above the water line are competencies more closely associated with knowledge and experience. They are easier to develop and can be improved by training and practice. They include communication, conflict resolution, process orientation and results orientation. A person who lacks the know-how to resolve conflict can improve by learning the process needed. She or he may learn of the need for objectivity, justice and impartiality and so improve the ability to resolve conflict.

Below the water line the competencies are harder to develop. Some may be almost impossible to change. These include those associated with values, attitudes and self-perception, such as self-esteem, self-awareness, personal integrity and empathy.

If a pastor lacks personal integrity, self-esteem or a sense of justice, it will be very hard for that pastor to develop such competencies at a later date.

Competencies—the Last Word

Competencies are the best way to predict success in the job. That is why they have, or should have, wide application in churches. New staff can be assessed and selected, current staff promoted and succession planning accomplished. Used correctly and appropriately, they indicate what unique characteristics people can bring to a role to ensure success.

Competencies are also used to identify where development and training are needed, for performance management and appraisal.

Another illustration that helps to put the three components of authority into perspective is one of driving.

- Authorization is having the keys to the car.
- Resources are having fuel in the tank.
- Competencies are having the ability to drive!

Limitations of Authority

As we saw in Chapter 3, limitations of authority exist in all relationships. These limitations may be determined externally by God's laws and civil laws, or internally by the church's strategic plans and policies. We're going to summarize the main points to reinforce their importance.

Limitations tell us where the boundaries of our authority lie. They define the freedom we have to fulfill our responsibilities. They are not there to make our lives miserable. Just as God gave limitations to Moses and Joshua, we have limitations to make our lives prosperous and successful.

Another benefit to limitations is that they balance our circle of authority with our circle of responsibility. In other words, we can increase our circle of authority by decreasing limitations to match a larger responsibility. Or we can decrease our circle of authority by increasing limitations.

If we imagine our authority as a circle, the line defining the circle defines the limitations. Inside the circle, there is freedom—freedom to make decisions, to act, to be creative and to fulfill our responsibilities in the way we think best.

Limitations of Authority



A *laissez-faire* value system usually won't define limitations because this value system understands limitations as negative and oppressive. On the other hand, the authoritarian value system prefers not to set limitations, because it wants obedience from the recipient of authority, not his or her freedom.

The relationship values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership are required to make this sense of freedom real.

Responsibility

Responsibility, the second main component of a relationship, describes the purpose of a position within the church.

Traditional terms of reference (board and committees) and job descriptions (staff) focus more on responsibility than on any other aspect of the working relationship. In the Relationship Model™, we think of the job description document as pertaining to the entire relationship, not simply the responsibilities of “the job.” The tradition of writing job descriptions has, to some degree, prevented us from defining the other components of the relationship.

Our focus is on broad responsibilities, not specific tasks. In this way we emphasize the individual's freedom to be creative about handling responsibilities rather than supply a list of tasks that constricts them. Indications that

a job description is too task-oriented are the words “the above is not necessarily a complete list of responsibilities” or “other responsibilities may be included from time to time.”

A proper statement of a position’s responsibilities likely includes from two to six broad areas. More than six may suggest that the position is either too demanding, or includes a list of tasks, not areas of responsibility.

Expectations are normally expressed as goals, standards or tasks.



Expectations of Responsibility

Responsibility is further defined by expectations. Expectations adjust the size of our circle of responsibility. They focus on goals, standards and tasks, adding a distinct and personal touch to them.

Expectations and Goals

Expectations express what quantifiable goals we believe are appropriate. To be clear, goals should be S.M.A.R.T., that is

- specific
- measurable
- achievable
- relevant to the mission
- time-limited.

Expectations and Standards

Our expectations may be further defined by standards. Minimum standards express the basic quality required by the church. Staff members and volunteers are expected to operate at or above this standard. A quality that we hope to work towards may be expressed as “standards to which we aspire.”

Expectations and Tasks

Tasks are the details of responsibilities, e.g. selecting software, monitoring expenses, checking building systems and security.

Negotiating Expectations

In the Relationship Model™, expectations are normally negotiated by mutual agreement, not imposed. By negotiating, both recipient and source of authority can contribute essential information. Agreement can be reached on expectations that are

- realistic and balanced with the authorization and resources available
- focused on achieving outcomes in line with the church's strategic goals.

►
If the source of authority cannot ensure the needed resources, then expectations must be reduced to restore the balance.

If the source of authority cannot ensure the needed resources, then expectations must be reduced to restore the balance.

There may be times, however, when expectations are declared unilaterally, i.e. when deadlines negotiated with the client must be honored by everyone on the staff. In such cases, it is the authorization and resources that must be negotiated. Some adjustments to limitations may also be required. For example, extraordinary approval for deficit spending would be a relaxation of the normal limitations policy that prevents deficit spending.

When Relationships Unravel

In my experience, the failure to negotiate mutual expectations is the most common component missing in a relationship. It is the point at which the relationship begins to unravel. When not explicitly stated, both the recipient and source of authority may be oblivious to the different expectations one has of the other. This usually happens in a *laissez-faire* value system. When a person doesn't know what goals or standards are expected, there is no way to

- measure success
- make appropriate adjustments.

The authoritarian value system, on the other hand, is likely to impose expectations unilaterally, without negotiation. Since the focus is more on productivity than personal fulfillment, the recipient's personal fulfillment becomes less likely.

The Protestant Work Ethic

We are often our own worst enemy when it comes to fulfilling expectations of our responsibility. The reality may be that resources such as time, finances, staff or information are insufficient. Under the Protestant work ethic, however, we often try to achieve far more than resources permit. In other words, we try to give back to God more than what God has resourced us to give. That often results in burnout. Being on fire for the Lord doesn't mean that we should go down in flames.

Lack of Competencies

Sometimes a person's competencies are lacking or insufficient to meet expectations. The gifts and talents an individual brings into the working relationship have a direct bearing on negotiating expectations. In the real world, the negotiating process may be unsuccessful when the recipient is unable to accept reasonable expectations because they know they don't have the "right stuff" for the position. This is the most difficult imbalance to deal with, even when relationship-oriented values are present. It re-emphasizes the importance of getting round pegs in round holes in the first place.

In every case, it is the relationship values that build into the relationship both success and personal fulfillment. Affirmation, involvement and servant leadership will ensure that there is a balance between

- productivity and personal fulfillment for the entire church
- authority and responsibility for each individual.

Accountability

Accountability is the third and final component in a relationship. It is a neutral concept, although the word is often misunderstood to mean judgment, discipline or punishment.

Accountability has two chief purposes:

- It *monitors* whether the authority and responsibility delegated to a person or a group are in balance and, if necessary, enables a correction.

- It *measures* whether expectations of responsibility were achieved without overstepping the limitations of authority, i.e. it determines that goals have been achieved and standards kept within the available resources.

Balancing Authority and Responsibility

In any successful relationship, the circles of authority and responsibility must be of identical size. Let me remind you of what happens when they're not.

Circle of Authority Smaller than Circle of Responsibility

To achieve successful results, sufficient authority and resources are needed to match responsibilities. When these are unclear or absent here's what happens:

- increased likelihood of failure to fulfill responsibilities
- missed goals
- poor service delivery
- poor morale and disempowerment.

Symptoms of Inadequate Authority

- Low morale
- Missed goals
- Poor service delivery
- Fear of failure
- Discouragement



Circle of Authority Larger than Circle of Responsibility

When the circle of authority is larger than the circle of responsibility, abuse of power often results. It's very common, particularly in authoritarian churches. Here are the defining elements of this category:

◀
Being on fire for the Lord doesn't mean that we should go down in flames.

Symptoms of Too Much Authority

- Misuse of power
- Meddling
- Overconfidence
- Waste of resources
- Arrogance



Walter C Wright Jr. addresses this issue in his excellent book, *Relational Leadership*. He writes, “*But power needs purpose. Power without purpose leaves a wake of debris, a trail of litter. Tornadoes have power, but look what they do. Power needs to be leashed to purpose.*” (page 16)

Frequent violations of the limitations may indicate that

- the limitations need adjustment to better reflect the freedom required to achieve the responsibilities
- the person has little respect for the limitations and couldn’t care less about what she or he can or cannot do.

Either alternative requires corrective measures.

Annual Reviews and Accountability

The annual review of each working relationship is the primary opportunity for the measuring aspect of accountability. It’s an opportunity to recognize achievements, to identify training needs as well as to make corrections and to give redirection.

Accountability Flows Back to Authority

Accountability always flows back in the opposite direction as authority. In other words, we are always accountable to the person or group from whom our authority comes. We can delegate authority and we can delegate responsibility, but we can’t delegate accountability. Thus, if a pastor delegates significant management authority to a senior manager and that manager fails to perform, the pastor remains accountable to the board for the manager’s performance. This reality will be a very important consideration in Chapter 13 where we consider whether the administrative ministry should be delegated to a second person accountable directly to the board.

Accountability—The Gift We Fail to Give

We usually think of accountability in negative terms. We don't like being negative so we avoid it.

Accountability is no more than monitoring performance and measuring results. Being neutral, it is neither positive nor negative. It is the balance arm in the old-fashioned balance scale. Accountability is the gift we fail to give one another.

►
*Accountability is
the gift we fail to
give one another.*



Accountability and the Relationship Model™

In our model, accountability is the process that maintains that delicate balance between authorization and resources available on one side and the expectations of our responsibility on the other.

(Remember that resources also include the competencies that people bring to the workplace with them.)

The Affirming Nature of Accountability

Accountability enables us to affirm people when they deliver the expectations we negotiated with them. An annual review is a gift to people whom you might think of as being so dependable that you don't want to waste time giving them one. There's nothing to criticize, you say. If it's not broken, don't fix it. But there might be something to commend, to reward or to make even stronger. Ironically, sometimes the best employees are the least likely to receive the gift of accountability.

Accountability and the Abuse of Power

To remove destructive and dysfunctional behavior, even when it leads to the termination of employment, is a gift to everyone, the abuser and the abused. That piercing look that Jesus gave to Peter in Herod's courtyard was a gift that changed Peter's life for the better.

We cheat people when we simply forgive people instead of also holding them accountable when wrong has been done. We also cheat ourselves when we hold them accountable without a forgiving heart.



The pastor and founder of the not-so-small church in the Southwest had never had a performance review. The board didn't think this pastor needed one. Everything was going pretty well. Most importantly, the board members knew that the visionary they followed was impeccably honest and had such a high degree of personal integrity, that they were never concerned about performance or behavior. Their pastor had set such high personal standards, they knew they didn't have to worry. "If it isn't broken, why fix it?" was their position, although it was always a position by default, not a policy.

They knew there was some dissent within the staff, but they figured it was professional jealousy and an unwillingness of some professional staff to measure results. Some staff figured God should measure what goes on inside the human heart. Whatever strategic outcomes there were couldn't be measured in spiritual matters. It was an ongoing debate that was never resolved.

When the staff staged a coup to oust the pastor who insisted on measuring results, the board didn't know what to do. Because of years of neglect in giving their pastor a meaningful performance review, confirming strengths and strengthening weaknesses, they had no real understanding of the dynamics. They loved their pastor but didn't want to alienate the entire professional staff either. They tried in vain to find a compromise that wouldn't require taking a position. They couldn't find one.

(cont'd on next page)

The sad ending was the departure of the pastor and the division of the church. The board never was able to manage the fallout and the disunity of the staff members who gradually left the church themselves. Most importantly, they never did see their own role in failing to exercise accountability in their relationship with their pastor. They decided it was a personality conflict. Within two years all of them were gone too.

Accountability Builds Trust

►
*Forgiveness is
free, but trust is
expensive.*

I have often said to people who are struggling with trust issues that forgiveness is free, but trust is expensive. Trust is a misunderstood value among Christians. It certainly isn't a value that we can turn on like a faucet just because someone with more authority demands it. That's because trust is the result of our behavior first and the cause of more good behavior second, not the other way around.

People who want to be trusted will want to be found trustworthy. As much as I want to be trusted, I would rather be called to account for my decisions and actions and found *worthy of trust*. Trust, therefore, is the result of a successful accountability process. It does not replace accountability.

Building a Trust Account

Whenever we enter into a new relationship, our co-workers give us a "bank account" of trust. We want to believe the best about each other, so we take the risk of trusting a new associate or employee.

Having a good experience with a new co-worker is a return on our investment. As a result, we deposit more trust into that account. Trustworthiness results in more trust.

By the same token, a bad experience means that we have withdrawn from that account, leaving less trust than before.

There comes a time in that relationship when the account goes into deficit, when trust is not being returned by trustworthy behavior. A deficit trust account is a broken relationship. Rebuilding it requires behavior worthy of trust being returned.

Steven Covey puts it this way, “Just as you cannot fake world-class culture, so also is it impossible to fake high trust. It has to come out of trustworthiness.” (“Three Roles of the Leader in the New Paradigm,” an article in *The Leader of the Future*, p. 150)

In the Christian workplace, the best way to build trust is to design an accountability system into the structure and processes at every level of the church:

- Strategic and tactical goals should be negotiated between the source and recipient of authority.
- Regular relationship reviews should be a fundamental part of every direct working relationship.
- Important communications should be made in writing,
- Assumptions should be replaced by agreements.

For some reason Christians sometimes substitute trust for good business practice. “I trust you” is a common phrase, and a lovely one to hear. Yet when we make assumptions instead of documenting understandings or rely on memory instead of making records, we set ourselves up for misunderstandings and disappointments. Trust begins to erode between us. *Accountability establishes trustworthiness*. Trustworthiness gives trust its foundation.

Summary

Healthy relationships are based on the core values found in all productive and fulfilling relationships—affirmation, involvement and servant leadership.

The structure of a healthy relationship involves defining authority with its limitations and responsibility with its expectations.

The final component of structure is accountability, the neutral and mutual process that maintains a balance between authority and responsibility. This balance is kept by adjusting limitations of authority and/or negotiating expectations of responsibility.

Accountability also allows us to measure results by confirming that expectations have been realized without exceeding the limitations of authority.

In the next chapter, we shall turn these “circles” into “cycles” by exploring the six core processes of a healthy church. We will put the structure to work.



*For some reason
Christians
sometimes
substitute trust
for good
business
practice.*

For Reflection and Discussion

Do you find the tree to be a helpful picture of the structure of a church? Why? Why not?

In your own role in your church do you have a good balance of authority and responsibility? If not, what would it take to bring the two into balance?

**Here's how the six core processes
of a church stack up.**



Communication, Conflict Resolution, Decision-making

PART ONE
CHAPTER

5

Circles and Cycles

Process is the structure in motion. In the Relationship Model™, we speak of the structure as a “circle of authority” and a “circle of responsibility.” Correctly designed these two circles overlap perfectly to form a “circle of freedom.”

When this static circle of structure goes to work, it becomes a dynamic cycle of process. Thus, we can speak of a communication cycle, a conflict resolution cycle, a decision-making cycle, a planning cycle, a delegation cycle, and an accountability cycle. Knowing and following the components of each cycle will ensure a high quality process that produces what we all want at in our church:

- fulfillment for members and attenders
- fulfillment for staff and volunteers.

If we consider every possible process that takes place in our churches, there is no end of little wheels spinning. There is the membership process, the purchasing process, the recruiting process, the hiring process, the payroll process, and so on. In fact, hundreds of processes all linked together. In this book we deal with the six core processes to which all other processes are linked. We also

deal with the relationship values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership as they relate to each process.

In the diagram on page 90, we show you how these six core processes “stack up.” Communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making are fundamental to the processes of planning, delegation, and monitoring/measuring.

The Communication Process

In Chapter 2 we stated that communication is the first of six core processes, perhaps the core process, since communication is also an inseparable part of every other process. Thus, the quality of communication will affect every other process for good or ill.

Communication is the transfer of information through the spoken, written, electronic, or visual presentation of thoughts and feelings. We have already spoken of information as part of the circle of authority. Along with the resources of people, money and time, information fuels success in the church. When information is available as required, it will add power to the other three resources. When information is guarded, manipulated, twisted or withheld, it will put the brakes on what the other resources can produce.

From Chapter 2 we saw the effect of the *laissez-faire* and authoritarian value systems on the communication process. In this chapter we position the process on the relationship-oriented value system.

A simple test to check your own values is to ask these three simple questions:

- Am I affirming this person?
- Am I involving this person?
- Am I supportive of this person?

Affirmation

We can all tell when a person is communicating with affirmation, involvement and servant leadership. We see it in the eyes. We hear it in the tone of voice. We sense it in the time taken to help us understand. We know whether our opinion has value and when our information seems important. Values are often communicated in “body language.”

We give away so many non-verbal signals in the communication process that it's important to consider our values before we begin to exchange our thoughts and feelings. The values that underpin our communication will have as much effect on the listener as the information itself—sometimes more.

The person or group will easily be able to tell if you are authentic. Your affirmation will be obvious in the way you listen, your eye contact, the time you take and the fact that you focus on the person and the issue at hand, instead of your watch, the background activity, your next meeting, or yourself.

Involvement

Your involvement is obvious by your concern for the thoughts and feelings of the other person and in your questions to clarify what you are hearing. How much you share your own feelings is another indicator. Somewhere between “the great stone face” and “wearing your heart on your sleeve” is the real you, the “you” who comes to this interaction with aspirations and pressures of your own.

Servant Leadership

Your support is obvious in your intent to make the person’s life and work easier, your offer of help and encouragement, and your sensitivity to their feelings and their workload. It includes honoring the personal and family plans that a person has and that there is meaningful life beyond the work you share in the church community.

Confidentiality and Secrecy

Confidentiality and secrecy may reveal the difference between a communication process that is open and one that is closed. The following scenario points out the dangers to a church of such practices.

Were you ever present when someone was embarrassed suddenly in front of your fellow board members because it came out that person shared something from a previous board meeting with another person? You didn’t think the person was doing anything wrong at the time. You still don’t think of it as being confidential. Still, it feels very awkward when it is suggested in front of the board that a member broke confidence.

In many Christian churches, there is an overuse of confidentiality. Whenever I see that, I begin to wonder if it really is confidentiality. It might be secrecy in sheep's clothing.

The easiest way to describe the difference between confidentiality and secrecy is to identify the motivation. Of course, it isn't easy to know the motivation of others, but you can certainly identify it in yourself. If you are justifiably trying to protect someone by withholding information, *that's confidentiality*. If you are withholding information, trying to hurt someone or to gain the upper hand in a group decision, *that's secrecy*.

Confidentiality is important in board governance. Many items of information might hurt people in your church if disseminated prematurely or without thought about its impact on them. Can you imagine what would happen if someone released information that the pastor was going to be dismissed before the pastor was informed? That information is confidential, not secret.

Here's another example. What if information were released prematurely to the local newspaper that the entire church school was going to be shut down before the board could first explain the reasons to those people directly affected? Releasing that information prematurely hurts people. Keeping it confidential until it can be shared appropriately is an act of caring.

Secrecy, on the other hand, is the withholding of information to gain an advantage over people or to deliberately hurt them. It happens often, sometimes routinely, in some churches. Imagine a pastor who is accused wrongly of an inappropriate act. The accusation and the evidence, and perhaps even the source of information are kept "confidential" until after the board has rendered a decision. The pastor has no opportunity to face the accusers or to make a defense. That's secrecy. In one recent example, a pastor was not invited to "tell his side of the story" because some board members feared that would change the board's decision to terminate the pastor's call!

Information is power. There can be just as much effect in withholding information as in sharing it. When information is withheld to gain advantage or to hurt people, it is secret information. When information is withheld to heal or to protect, it is confidential information.

Responsible church boards use confidentiality judiciously, not routinely. It is important for the board to be in agreement that withholding information in a particular situation is for a good cause, and that releasing it would cause unnecessary harm and perhaps even result in a liability to the church family. The same board must be sure that information is not being withheld because one or more board members are trying to "do someone else in," or simply to



*It might be
secrecy in
sheep's clothing.*

gain an advantage in a conflict of interest situation.

Imagine a board member not disclosing her knowledge that the recipient of a contract is a close relative. To disclose it would mean that she shouldn't be speaking in favor of tendering a contract to that company. Withholding the information is an example of secrecy to gain unfair advantage. Even kind and caring people can confuse confidentiality with secrecy. It can happen when you

- participate in a group action that you haven't thought through
- aren't taking the time to identify your own values
- align your own decision with those of the other decision-makers even though your motive is not aligned.

Aligning motives means that when you know someone is withholding information inappropriately, you have the obligation to share it with the board. Withholding that information is keeping it secret, not confidential. Your values make all the difference.



*Secrecy is the
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The Conflict Resolution Process

Some types of conflict are healthy for a church. Others are not. Discussion and debate on an issue often highlights the conflicting ideas and opinions on

- what things should be done
- how things should be done.

Healthy Conflict



*Information is
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be just as much
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information as in
sharing it.*

Sharing divergent perspectives and enabling them to converge into a group decision is one of the main strengths of a group. The synergy of a group can often produce a more effective and efficient solution than an individual acting alone. That's because of the various ideas a group can generate, some of which may be in conflict with another. This kind of conflict is usually healthy and should be encouraged.

Warren Bennis writes in *An Inventive Life*, "Today the laurel will go to the leader who encourages healthy dissent

and values those followers brave enough to say no. The successful leader will have not the loudest voice, but the readiest ear. His or her real genius may well lie not in personal achievements, but in unleashing other people's talent.” (p.107)

In fact, sometimes the conflict should be allowed to continue so as to produce a dynamic tension within the church. For example, the continual struggle between risk and caution, effectiveness and efficiency, the tension between remedial or preventive efforts, and the conflict between small and intimate or large and less personal, are some of many issues that remain in tension and can benefit the church's ministry. Such types of conflict can not only build relationships but the respect people have for each other's perspective and contribution.

Unhealthy Conflict

Unhealthy conflict occurs when values are at stake and people hurt one another. Relationships become strained and sometimes break. It requires effort to reconcile the relationships after this type of conflict in order that they can once again function effectively within the church.

As we saw in Matthew 18 mentioned in Chapter 3, there are three pathways to reconciliation:

- *Negotiation*—between the individuals and/or groups experiencing conflict
- *Mediation*—the addition of “two or three persons” to facilitate the resolution of the conflict
- *Arbitration*—a third party is asked to hear both parties and make a decision in the hope that the parties can be reconciled.

The Role of Values

Reconciliation requires both forgiveness and justice. Neither forgiveness nor justice, acting alone, will result in reconciliation. That's because successful reconciliation, like all other processes, begins with the way we value the relationship. So when the relationship is in negative territory, forgiveness is an expression of *affirmation*.

Involvement brings the conflict into the open. It results in transparency instead of secret meetings to decide the fate of someone who cannot defend oneself.

Servant leadership looks to the resolution of the conflict and the reconciliation of the relationship. It seeks to support, rather than win.

The five step justice process that now follows is based upon forgiveness.

The Justice Process

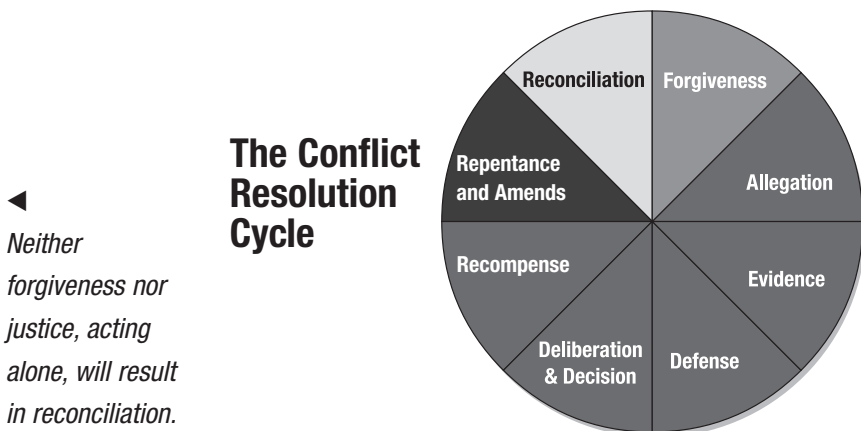
The justice process that we know from our understanding of Matthew 18 appears in the documented literature of many cultures. The sequence includes

- making an accusation
- giving evidence
- allowing for a defense
- reaching a decision
- recompense.

The words we use in our church context are different from those of the civil court, but the concept is the same. The difference? Forgiveness and reconciliation, the first and the last steps of the process, are not normally a part of the civil or criminal justice process.

Making allegations about the performance, integrity or behavior of another person is very serious. Without evidence that can pass the test of scrutiny and defense, it is called slander or libel. This kind of behavior is outside

Justice in the Church	Justice in Litigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegation • Documentation • Defense • Deliberation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charges • Evidence • Defense • Jury Deliberation • Verdict • Sentence • Appeals • Fine, Incarceration



the limitations of the Ten Commandments and civil law. Unfortunately, many innocent people have been hurt, their lives put on hold, their reputations irreparably damaged and their careers destroyed due to this form of injustice. Even in Christian churches the amount of damage from innuendo and rumor is appalling.

There is a better way to achieve reconciliation from brokenness. Here are four important steps:

1. Allegations must be clearly framed in writing so that they are clearly understood in the same way by all parties. This also records the allegations in a manner that can be referred to later. There will be no doubt what was said. “I never said that,” is not an option when the matter is documented in writing.
2. The source of the allegations should be identified. Is it an individual? Is it a group? Is it the official record of the group, or is it an individual using the name of a group?
3. The person or group who is the object of the allegation must be identified. This prevents an accuser from covering tracks by saying later, “I didn’t mean you personally. I was talking about the whole church.”
4. The person to whom the allegation is addressed should have access to this information so that she or he can have the information and the time required to prepare a defense.



The basic justice process is documented throughout history in some of the most well known and respected records of various cultures. Here are some of them.

Code of Hammurabi (1795 – 1750 BC)

1. If any one ensnare another, putting a ban upon him, but he can not prove it, then he that ensnared him shall be put to death.
2. If anyone bring an accusation against a man, and the accused go to the river and leap into the river, if he sink in the river his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if the river prove that the accused is not guilty, and he escape unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser.
3. If any one bring an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if it be a capital offense charged, be put to death.

Acts 25:16 (Festus to Agrippa circa 60 AD) Roman Law

I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges.

Magna Carta (King John 1215 AD)

38. No bailiff for the future shall, upon his own unsupported complaint, put anyone to his “law”, without credible witnesses brought for this purposes.
39. No freemen shall be taken or imprisoned or disseised or exiled or in any way destroyed, nor will we go upon him nor send upon him, except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.
40. To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, right or justice.

U.S. Bill of Rights, Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1981)

11. Any person charged with an offence has the right a) to be informed without unreasonable delay of the specific offence; b) to be tried within a reasonable time; c) not to be compelled to be a witness in proceedings against that person in respect of the offence; d) to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

United Nations General Assembly (Dec. 10, 1948)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1 .(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

Towards Reconciliation

It seems obvious that people in churches should have the same right to defend themselves in the conflict resolution process. Closed-door sessions and secret back-room decisions should never take the place of this vital process.

For both parties, reconciliation is the reward of a successful process. Of course, the process is rarely this simple. Sometimes both parties share in the responsibility for brokenness. Most significantly, perhaps, reality hits home when conflict goes to the third stage, arbitration by a third party, and the likelihood of reconciliation diminishes. Some of the reasons that may account for a failure to reconcile include

- a lack of forgiveness
- a flawed justice process
- no admission of guilt or acceptance of the board/arbitrator's decision
- a refusal to make amends.

Each step of the conflict resolution process must take place successfully to proceed from forgiveness to reconciliation. The process may break down at any stage. It is possible to have

- forgiveness without reconciliation
- justice without reconciliation.

Reconciliation of both parties will result only from

- forgiveness that is responded to with repentance
- justice that is perceived to be fair.

The Decision-making Process

Decision-making, like every other process, is built on values. In the case of group decision-making, the values of the board chair or team leader are especially critical. We will explore that aspect of group decision-making when we discuss the role of the board chair.

The values important for all others in the group to bring to the process have already been discussed. Affirmation, involvement and servant leadership are demonstrated in

- the listening that goes on within the group
- the issue-oriented discussion and debate
- the time the group is willing to take to allow all members to express their opinions.



Reconciliation is the reward of a successful process.

What's the Issue?

What's the agenda item? It may seem too obvious to say, but sometimes a discussion will begin with the assumption that everyone is on the same page on a particular issue. That assumption may be invalid. Let me give you an example:

- The pastor thinks that the board is making a decision about whether the pastor had a conflict of interest on a decision the pastor made recently.
- The board thinks it is making a decision about whether the pastor should be disciplined.

You can appreciate that the process is going to be confusing at best.

Another example:

- Some think it's a decision on whether to build, or buy an existing building.
- Others assume that decision has already been made and that this decision is whether to employ an outside contractor or to act as the general contractor themselves.

Defining the Issue

Obviously, the issue requiring a decision must be clearly defined. The individuals in the group must be focused on the same issue for the process to produce a satisfactory result. This is not to say that the decision may not change during the process. For example, the decision to engage an outside contractor may shift to a discussion about the relative merits of building or buying. The transition from one decision to the other, however, must be acknowledged by all members of the group for the agenda item to change.

Information Gathering

The quality of the decision that results from the process will be equal to the quality of the information available to the group at the time. The complexity of the decision will

determine the degree of effort, time and research required. For example, in order to set a date for the next meeting, the group only needs information from members' schedules. On the other hand, to decide whether the church should move to another location requires information that will take much more time and effort to obtain.

One important decision a group needs to make is whether it has the expertise to make a given decision. It may be unaware of the complexity of a decision and reach a flawed conclusion due to lack of information the group didn't realize was important. "I had no idea there was that much to it," one might hear later. Regardless of how obvious it seems, if the decision has any significant implications, the group should ask itself if outside consultation or support is needed.

The time and expense of gathering information are other factors. Saving money on information may cost more later. It can be more expensive to fix something than to do it right the first time. "Haste makes waste," the saying goes. Taking the time to gather the information necessary will have the same positive effect on the outcome as spending the money to obtain it.

Discussion and Debate

The difference between discussion and debate is the presence of conflict. When parties agree on the statements that each other makes, the discussion adds value because of the additional insights that each contributes.

Debate occurs when there is a difference of opinion, and it can have a positive or negative effect. Debate that is issue-oriented is healthy and should be encouraged. Debate, however, may seem like a damaged word. It is often associated with a clash of values that harms relationships. When values clash in a discussion, it helps if we recognize what is happening. In itself, the clash can be a positive learning experience. However, it should take place as a separate discussion. When opposing values become confused with the issue, the result is more likely to be a "win-lose" decision.

Outcomes of the decision-making process are determined by the group's assessments of facts, thoughts and feelings. So it should be, but it's important to know the degree to which the decision is being shaped by each factor.

Discussion should be issue-oriented. Clear thinking about the facts is vital to a quality decision. That does not mean, however, that feelings are of no account.



To build or not to build. Is that the question?

The church had rented office space for years, but the building was being sold, and the new owners were going to move in and use it for their own work. The board now had to decide whether to rent other facilities, purchase an existing building, or build a new one.

A lot of time and money went into this decision. A consulting firm was engaged to gather data about available space to rent or purchase compared with the cost of building a new structure.

There didn't seem to be much debate about the matter. Everyone agreed that in the long term, building new would result in the best value for money. Renting amounted to buying a building for a landlord, while the church was committed to its ministry in this small city. Buying an existing building was out of the question, because the only two available were either too old or didn't provide convenient access or parking. Building new meant that the office could be designed to enhance ministry in addition to providing office space.

But two members of the board opposed the proposal to build. They were both highly respected for their long, committed service and their integrity. "I don't have the right feeling about this move," one said, "but I don't know why." "Well, I know why I don't like it," said the other, "I don't believe in debt. I don't think it's right for us to borrow money to build. If our members can't pay for it up front, we shouldn't do it. I'm not opposed to building, but doing it this way just isn't right."

The chair suggested that the decision to build be set aside in order to focus on the issue of funding and financing. After a lot more discussion the board decided to design an interest-free financing and fundraising campaign and to build only after the campaign was successful.

The decision to build a new facility was approved unanimously.

Where feelings can't be identified, it is especially important to probe the values behind the feelings. For example, if the decision to build a new building makes sense, but some members are opposed to the decision because of values related to indebtedness, the decision could have been made not to build because of feelings instead of facts.

In our example, the group realized that it was a value related to indebtedness that prevented some participants from supporting the decision to build. It was able to separate that value from the issues related to the building. As a result, the project went forward without anyone having to violate personal values. It was a “win-win” decision.

Making the Decision

Boards, management teams and other groups making decisions have two choices in how to approach the making of decisions—consensus or majority vote. That assumes, of course, that the leader of the group (or a small faction within the group) doesn't force a personal agenda, pretending that the group has made a decision freely.

This subject is dealt with in more detail in Part Two, since consensus is an important part of senior management team decision-making, but we will also highlight it here.

Consensus occurs when the majority agrees on a certain course of action and everyone else in the group is willing to proceed for the sake of the group, even though some may not have chosen that course of action and would prefer another.

Consensus and Involvement

Boards often use consensus to encourage involvement and ownership. The Relationship Model™ leans towards this form of decision-making. The difference between management teams and boards is that if the board cannot reach consensus, the decision cannot default to a stronger authority. In this case, the board has no alternative but to revert to a vote where the majority determines the outcome.

Normally, board members are expected to support the decisions of the board, but the sense of ownership may be lost in the process. For this reason, my suggestion is that boards make an effort to make decisions by consensus and move to voting only when the board cannot reach consensus. The minutes may refer to the decision as, “It was agreed by consensus...”



Was it consensus or a majority vote? You decide.

The discussion on a motion to change the bylaw had finished and the board chair called the question. “All in favor?” Some hands go up, some don’t. Some seem to mumble assent. The new board member isn’t sure if this is a vote or if it’s an expression of consensus. It appears to be somewhere in between, but no one seems to have objected so they assume it passed. People did seem to agree with the motion during the discussion. Anyway, the chair has moved on to the next item. The experienced board members understand what it all means. The new one assumes that he will catch on to the system with time.

Summary

The six core processes of a church are

- communication
- conflict resolution
- decision-making
- planning
- delegating
- accountability — monitoring and measuring.



Boards often use consensus to encourage involvement and ownership.

Processes are the structure in motion. The first three processes, which are discussed in this chapter, are the foundation for the other three in the sense that communication, decision-making and often conflict resolution are a vital part of the other three processes.

Communication is the transfer of information through the spoken, written, electronic, or visual presentation of thoughts and feelings.

The conflict resolution cycle involves the four steps of

- forgiveness
- justice
- repentance
- reconciliation.

All four stops are necessary to achieve reconciliation.

Decision-making may be done by consensus or majority vote. The involvement in building consensus results in greater ownership of the decision.

In the next chapter we discuss the other three core processes that build on these three.

For Reflection and Discussion

Could the communication between your pastor and the board be improved in any way? How?

Are you satisfied with the way conflict is managed in your church? Can you give examples of how conflict is used to improve the quality of decisions? Or how it is harming relationships?

To what extent is consensus used for decision-making in your church? Give some examples.

Planning, Delegating, Monitoring and Measuring

PART ONE
CHAPTER

6

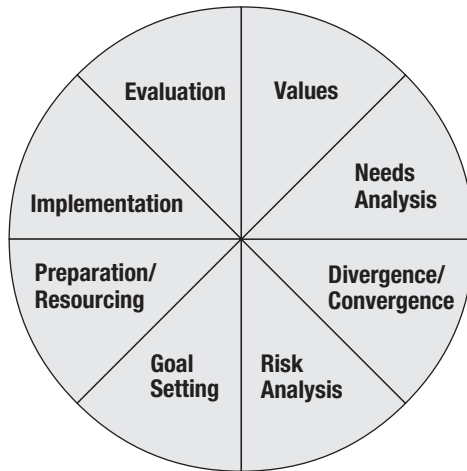
Introduction

This chapter expands on the role of the processes of planning, delegating, and monitoring and measuring (accountability). All three of these are supported by the three processes discussed in Chapter 5 as illustrated on page 90.

The Planning Process

The planning process consists of a church's strategic and tactical planning. The two types of planning are quite different and done by different groups. The principles, however, are the same. In this section we deal with the elements common to both. We will deal with applications in Part Two of this book.

The Planning Cycle



Relationship-oriented Values

The values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership will be apparent in each step of the planning cycle. It will be evident in the

- sensitivity towards the beneficiary groups whose needs the church seeks to meet
- quality and scope of involvement of all members and attenders, including staff and volunteers
- negotiation in setting realistic and achievable goals
- degree of preparation and resources made available
- quality of management in the implementation and evaluation of the plan.

To be reminded how the wrong values can also have a negative effect on planning, review Chapter 2 on this topic.

Needs Analysis

All planning is an effort to meet the need of some individuals or group. It is common for churches to make assumptions about what the needs are. Needs change. If the assumptions that underlie the services and programs don't change with those needs, ineffectiveness or inefficiency or both will result. Tradition is a powerful factor in keeping plans from changing. "We've always done it this way" describes an unwillingness to look afresh at how needs move on from past rationales.



It is crucial to understand the need for change that is expressed by the members of the church.

Responding to Change

One excellent indicator for a needs analysis is the change in the type of worship experience people want. It seems that the churches that resist change in the style of worship maintain a meaningful experience for a decreasing number of people. Active participation decreases. Church membership shrinks. Churches that successfully identify the changing tastes in worship style and music are bulging at the seams. Willow Park Church in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, is making this change. There is one traditional worship service on Sunday morning, but the contemporary service has standing room only, even on Saturday night! Any visitor can't help but notice the fulfillment people are experiencing in their worship. The energy is high and it appears that people are actually having fun in their worship experience.

Divergence and Convergence

Divergence

Divergence is brainstorming. (*Thought shower* is the politically correct replacement suggested in the UK.) It is a creative process that produces a flood of ideas without any discussion or debate. In a wonderful and stimulating way a group can generate a large number of ideas in a remarkably short time, ideas worthy of closer consideration. The premise is that people who have a stake in the finished plan have valuable thoughts and insights to offer, so we should involve them in the process of change.

Divergence works best when completely separated from convergence—that is, the analysis of the ideas, ranking them, or discussing whether they will work or not. All you want at this stage are the ideas.

Prepare a group for the exercise by

- inviting them to think of any idea that might even come close to reality. Humor adds to the dynamic.
- setting a time limit of five or ten minutes. If necessary, you can always extend the time.
- asking someone who can write both fast and legibly to keep up with the flow of ideas. A flip chart is very useful for this. So is the use of “stickies” on a wall or other surface, as is a projected image of ideas being typed into a file as they are expressed.
- advising the group that there will be no discussion or requests for clarification during the brainstorming.

Convergence

Only when the brainstorming is complete can convergence begin. This is the slow, careful process of testing the ideas that emerge to meet the identified needs. In this way the plan begins to take shape. This stage may also require

- a smaller work group
- research
- use of accumulated data
- discussion
- outside expertise
- more time.

Risk Analysis

Luke 14:28 – 33 gives some biblical examples of risk analysis. In counting the cost of discipleship, we are invited to ponder the cost of building a tower, lest we are unable to finish what we started and are ridiculed for our lack of planning. Or consider the king who considers the risk of facing an opposing force of 20,000 men with his own army of 10,000.

The easiest and probably the most widely used model for analyzing the risks associated with new plans is called a SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for

- strengths
- weaknesses
- opportunities
- threats.

Strengths and weaknesses are the internal factors that help and hinder. Opportunities and threats are the external factors that can make or break your plans.

A SWOT analysis allows an examination of the internal and external factors that will either help or hinder the plans being considered. This model also deals with the cost/benefit ratio of any given plan, since costs and benefits fall into one or more of the four categories. Brainstorming may be used as well to generate the wide range of possible factors that may fall into one of the categories.

Goal-setting

Deciding how much your church can “bite off” is a very significant part of the planning process. You can’t measure progress towards a goal that doesn’t exist.

►
*You can’t
measure
progress
towards a goal
that doesn’t
exist.*

Indicators

The key to setting goals lies first in identifying indicators of results. Anything worth doing can be measured in some way. Even spiritual things should be measured in some way, because it takes the hard-earned money that people have contributed to make ministry possible.



Out of the Mouths of Babes

I shall always remember the words of the five-year-old girl seated next to me at the Sunday school opening. As I waited for my introduction to speak to her class, she was swinging her legs under the chair and warming up the quarter in her hand, preparing it for the offering. Obviously deep in thought, she paused, looked up at me and asked, “How does God get the money?” How could such a little girl ask such a difficult question? Don’t ask me to remember my answer. What I remember is the importance of her question. I remember thinking how valuable it would be for adults to ask the leaders of their church that question before and after they make their contributions.

Benchmarks

The next step is to establish meaningful benchmarks. This comes from the experience of others with some history of past achievements within your own church. This information may be difficult to obtain. As an alternative it may be necessary to establish a base for a year or more so that meaningful goal-setting can follow.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

The acronym S.M.A.R.T. stands for goals that are

- specific
- measurable
- achievable
- relevant to the mission
- time-limited.

Overall Goal

“We shall increase our enrollment in the Alpha Course by ten percent to 50 people by the beginning of the next year.”

Specific

“We shall increase our enrollment in the Alpha Course...”

Measurable

“...to 50 people...”

Achievable

“...by ten percent...”

Relevant to the mission

“The mission of Riverbend Church is to introduce people to a living relationship with Jesus.”

Time-limited

“...by the beginning of next year.”

Measuring Spiritual Change

“As much as God allows” is not a S.M.A.R.T. goal. In my opinion, it’s D.U.M.B. (Deifying Underachievement, Mediocrity and Bungling). Oddly, this vital element is missed by some churches, sometimes for theological reasons: “You can’t measure what goes on in the heart” is an all-too-frequent lament of Christian churches. Ah, but the person whose heart has changed can measure it. Base the measurements on information the beneficiaries can give.

Some Christians excuse themselves from striving for excellence and from monitoring and measuring accountability by explaining that God will decide the success of any human effort. If it doesn't succeed, it probably wasn't God's will in the first place. That "model" of goal-setting relies on the truism that if you don't have a target, you can't miss it.

This leads to another important element of setting goals. The best and sometimes the only way to measure results is to ask

- specific stakeholders
- the beneficiaries of the services
- the staff and volunteers for whom you wish to offer personal fulfillment.

►
It is not an easy thing to measure strategic results.

It is not an easy thing to measure strategic results. In fact, its difficulty is what inspires some to avoid it or spiritualize it so as to excuse themselves from doing the work.

A staff/volunteer fulfillment survey, for example, can ask specific questions inviting reviewers to rate their level of fulfillment in particular areas, using a numeric scale. The scores can be compared with those recorded in the following year's survey. In this way, S.M.A.R.T. goals can be established for growth in staff/volunteer fulfillment.

Preparation/Resourcing

Before any plan can be implemented, the resources must be in place. In an earlier chapter, we presented resources as part of the circle of authority. To remind you, resources consist of four elements—human resources, financial resources, information and time. The first three must be in place before implementation can begin:

- human resources—with the competencies that match to responsibilities
- financial resources—for capital and operating costs. Endowment funds may also be required.
- information—to match services with needs and a host of other kinds of information.

These items can form a useful checklist for the preparation of the authorization and the resources required for implementation.

Implementation

“The proof of the pudding is in the eating.”

“Well, here’s goes nothing,” we say.

“On a wing and a prayer...”

“Let’s jump into the deep end. It’s sink or swim.”

A new fiscal year begins. Usually, all the planning isn’t done yet. Not all the resources are assembled, but the time has come. Our purpose here is not to deal with the complexities of management. Even in Part Two of this book we condense the variations and complexities of diverse churches into the relationship between the pastor and the senior management team.

Our purpose is simply to highlight the reality that the actual operation of the plan is an important component to the next planning cycle. We learn from doing. We accumulate wisdom and incorporate what we learn into better plans for the future.

Evaluation

Monitoring and measuring are the two components of the accountability process. Evaluation of our plans utilizes this final core process of church governance. While we mention it here as a part of the planning cycle, we will discuss it as a separate core process later in this chapter. Evaluation has two separate elements:

- monitoring
- measuring.

Monitoring Risk, Performance and Behavior

Monitoring is the ongoing checking of risk, performance and behavior that takes place during the operational phase. We monitor compliance with limitations of authority and expectations of responsibility. Monitoring allows us to make minor changes and improvements while the implantation is proceeding.

Measuring Results

We compare our actual results with the goals we set. We learn what we did well, what we did poorly, what worked and what didn't work. This gives us valuable information for better planning in the next cycle. It also enables us to set S.M.A.R.T. goals to build a stronger, service future on the foundation of the past. The cycle repeats itself annually.

The Process of Delegating Authority and Responsibility

►
In any direct working relationship there should be no more than one source of authority.

In the relationship-oriented church virtually every direct working relationship will have a current relationship description. This section documents this process.

Definitions

A *direct working relationship* is one in which authority and responsibility are delegated from one person or group to another. In any direct working relationship there should be no more than one source of authority. (No person can serve two masters.)

◀
Monitoring and measuring are the two components of the accountability process.

An *indirect working relationship* is one in which

- peers share authority, e.g. two members of a senior management team
- services are provided to an individual or group that is not the source of authority for the person providing the services, e.g. a secretary who provides support to various managers.

Indirect working relationships are not normally documented because authority does not flow from one to the other.

►
Knowing how authority flows in a church is one of the most basic aspects of church life.

“Who is your source of authority?”

Knowing how authority flows in a church is one of the most basic aspects of church life. I am therefore constantly amazed to discover how many people in the church have no idea how authority flows in their church.

When I ask the question I get a number of reactions:

- a blank stare
- “I wish I knew.”
- “You must be kidding. I don’t have any authority.”
- “I have two or three people who think I work only for them.”

The fact is, we all have some authority. The problem is that too often we don’t know

- where it comes from
- how much we have
- what to do with it.

Writing Relationship Descriptions

Delegating authority and responsibility should answer all the questions we have ever had about how authority flows and what our role is in the big picture. This cycle has six components:

1. delegating authority
2. setting limitations of authority
3. delegating responsibility
4. negotiating expectations
5. monitoring performance
6. reviewing the relationship.

1. Delegating Authority

Delegating authority clearly defines the source of operational authority and adds a broad statement of what that authority covers. It is a far more powerful and effective statement than we might consider.

We understand the power of having authority delegated to us if we can recall an experience of having lost it. Losing authority is much more dramatic than receiving it. Ask anyone who has just

- received an unexpected pink slip, or
- learned that he or she has not passed the probation period successfully, or worst of all
- discovered that one’s employment has been terminated for cause.

Being asked for the office keys, being observed while packing personal items and then being ushered to the door are pretty dramatic ways to feel the vapor-like characteristic of authorization dissipating rapidly into the air.

A key part of the delegation of authority is assurance that you will receive the resources needed to be successful. Getting the keys to the car without fuel for the tank is empty authority.

The relationship description should contain a statement recognizing the source or sources of regulatory authority. That may include

- a conference, synod, district, presbytery or diocese
- the leader of the denomination of which your church is a member.

2. Setting Limitations of Authority

Defining limitations of authority provides empowerment and freedom to use the delegated authority. It is like building a fence around the playground that gives children the confidence to use the entire space. In the relationship description, these limitations may be

- imposed upon the entire church
- the same as your source of authority
- imposed by the regulatory authority
- defined by your source of operational authority.

In later chapters, we will give examples of relationship descriptions incorporating these limitations.

►
*It is more
efficient to give
ten limitations
than to
document a
thousand
permissions.*

Limitations are stated in negative language, simply because it is more efficient to give ten limitations than to document a thousand permissions.

3. Delegating Responsibility

The traditional job description (which the relationship description replaces) contains this element of the relationship more than any other. It is often expressed as a list of tasks. Here we focus on broad areas of responsibility, emphasizing the freedom of the recipient of authority to develop those tasks, programs and activities that best deliver what is expected from the areas of responsibility. In making the paradigm shift from tasks to broad areas of responsibility, we have found it helpful to

write the relationship description “starting from scratch.”

Normally, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, there should be no more than six broad areas of responsibility. If there are more, they may either need restatement, or they document the need for another position!

Because responsibilities evolve, I have also found it helpful to seek out the experience of job holders in preparing the first draft of the relationship description. The recipient of authority often knows more about his or her area of responsibility than the source of authority.

4. Negotiating Expectations

In this section of the relationship description, we generally make a simple reference to the tactical goals that have been negotiated between the source and recipient of authority. Normally the goals themselves are contained in another document along with those of other staff members.

However, the number of employees in churches who do not know what is expected of them is so great that the problem qualifies as one of the seven deadly sins of Christian churches.

This section also contains an expectation that the recipient of authority will behave in a manner that is consistent with the relationship values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership.

5. Monitoring Performance

6. Reviewing the Relationship

Both of these elements are part of the last section of the relationship description—accountability. Because accountability is the sixth core process—which we will discuss next—we will mention only what the content of this section of the relationship should cover.

The accountability section of the relationship description includes a basic four-point outline:

- a review of the source of authority’s expression of values and provision of authorization and resources
- a review of the recipient of authority’s performance towards goals negotiated at the beginning of the year

- goal-setting for the next planning period. This process may be implemented at another time when the staff is preparing the tactical plan for the next fiscal year.
- a review of professional development needs and opportunities that may make the relationship more productive and fulfilling.

The Accountability Process— Monitoring and Measuring

►
*Accountability
is a vital
component of
maintaining
healthy
relationships.*

As you read this book, I invite you to understand the word “accountability” in its neutral sense. The reason I ask you to do this is because accountability is a vital component of maintaining healthy relationships. To repeat what I’ve already said several times:

“Accountability is the gift we too often fail to give one another.”

Unfortunately, accountability is a “damaged” word. Even though it names a neutral process, it is often taken to mean punishment or discipline. For example, the famous handwriting on Belshazzar’s wall, “You are weighed in the scales and found wanting,” was a judgment that resulted in the death of that Babylonian king on the very same night that Daniel interpreted the handwriting. It is sometimes overlooked that Belshazzar’s gift of a robe of royal purple to Daniel was also an example of accountability. Daniel, too, was “weighed in the scales” and found faithful.

I have been encouraged to use a different word to name this important process, but I have chosen to reclaim the word instead. Being “weighed on the scales” is a neutral process, even if the news is sometimes negative. When you step on the scale to see how effective your diet has been, the news might be good. The fact that sometimes it isn’t is no reason to blame the scale for being the bearer of bad tidings.

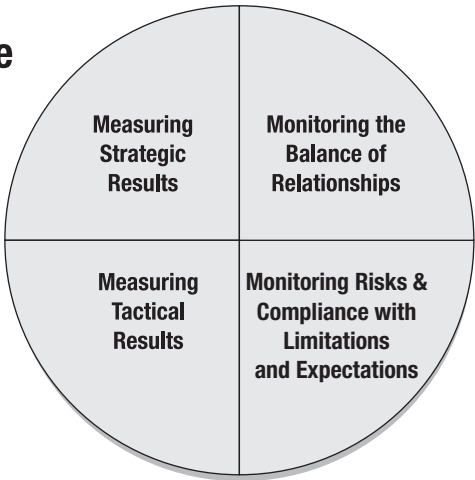
Not a day goes by that newspaper headlines don’t deal with the need for accountability from some corporate executive or abuser of women or children. Since account-

ability is always mentioned in a negative context, it’s a challenge to think of it as being neutral or ever resulting in a commendation, promotion or a raise.

What Can Accountability Bring to Relationships Within Churches?

In the first paragraph of this book, we mentioned that the most important balance to maintain in churches that between the fulfillment of member needs and staff needs. The process of accountability—monitoring and measuring—provides and maintains that balance.

The Accountability Cycle



The Four Roles of Accountability—Monitoring and Measuring

1. *Monitoring the Balance of Authority and Responsibility within Relationships*

At every level it is important to maintain a balance between authority and responsibility, i.e. between what is invested in an individual or group and what is expected in return. The only way that members and staff can experience fulfillment is to ensure that this balance is maintained in every relationship where authority is delegated to another. Nothing is more important in a church than balancing member fulfillment with staff fulfillment (ministry productivity with personal fulfillment). This is the first and most important role of the accountability process.

Accountability is mutual. Two parties have a role in maintaining this balance—the source and the recipient of delegated authority and responsibility. We therefore speak of the annual relationship review, not the annual performance review. Thus, the first section of that review concerns the source of authority’s performance in

- demonstrating affirmation, involvement and servant leadership in the relationship
- providing adequate authorization and resources for the job holder to meet his/her responsibilities.

The failure to meet goals may be due to the

- authoritarian use of power by the source of authority
- lack of support or abandonment through *laissez-faire* use of authority
- limitations of authority that result in inadequate authorization to fulfill the responsibilities
- shortage of resources (It may not necessarily be the failure of the job holder to use those resources effectively.)
- unrealistic goals negotiated in the planning process.

The whole purpose of this process is to restore or maintain this balance. It is not to find fault or blame, but to affirm, involve and serve one another in the pursuit of productivity and fulfillment. Needless to say, this process should not be limited to the formal annual review of the relationship. Either party should be free to approach the other whenever an imbalance exists. Human and financial resources, information and time may be adjusted at any stage of the year in order to ensure the success of the relationship, namely to achieve the goals of the church.

►
*Either party
should be free to
approach the
other whenever
an imbalance
exists.*

2. Monitoring Risk and Compliance with Limitations and Expectations

In the relationship between the board and the pastor, this is the way in which the board can monitor risk associated with the pastor’s management without becoming involved in management itself. The limitations of

authority and expectations of responsibility are entrenched in the board's policies and are monitored on a predetermined schedule.

Limitations of authority are a part of every working relationship within the management of the church. When these limitations are specific, they clearly define the freedom of the recipient of authority. It is important to monitor compliance with these limitations to ensure that the relationship remains in balance. Exceeding the limitations of authority may be an abuse of power. It may also indicate that the limits are unrealistic for the expectations and need to be adjusted.

Monitoring the risk associated with management may take many forms in addition to the regular monitoring of Limitations and Expectations Policies and may occur during the year on a formal or informal basis.

3. Measuring Tactical Results

The form of measurement requires identifying indicators of results. In this case, the indicators are related to the programs that deliver the services, not to the services themselves. This process is the responsibility of the pastor and staff. It indicates the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs in delivering the strategic results of the ministries offered by the church.

4. Measuring Strategic Results

Measuring strategic results means measuring the extent to which the church is realizing its mission. It is a measure of productivity—the degree to which the needs of members and attenders are being met. This process is primarily a board responsibility, although it cannot be done without the involvement of the pastor and the management team.

It is surprising how few churches measure strategic results. Usually churches rely on anecdotes—stories and testimonies from satisfied members. Sometimes tactical outputs are confused with strategic outcomes, e.g. measuring how many people come to worship instead of measuring what happens in the hearts and lives of the people who come.

Measuring the degree to which we are meeting the needs of members cannot be done without asking those members to measure the effects of our work. Even before that we must identify the indicators that tell us what to measure. Once that is done we can design a questionnaire based on the services we offer, asking members to reflect on how well these services met their needs.

All four of the monitoring and measuring processes we have just covered have a role in insuring that the balance between staff fulfillment and member needs is maintained or restored.

Summary

The other three core processes of a church are

- planning
- delegating
- monitoring and measuring (accountability).

Processes are the structure in motion. These three processes rest on the foundation of the first three in the sense that communication, decision-making and often conflict resolution are a vital part of the processes we covered in this chapter.

All six processes have an important role in ensuring that we achieve the balance between productivity and the fulfillment of staff and volunteers.

The values (the ways we use power) that support the processes are the most important single component in determining our success in achieving that balance.

This completes the explanation of the “operating system” of the Relationship Model™. This operating system applies to every facet of life that involves relationships, and that is almost everything in life. You may have identified with much of Part One as you thought about your own job, your marriage and family, your friendships, your business or your school.

While there are an almost infinite number of relationships which “run” on this operating system, we are now going to turn our attention to the governance, leadership and management of Christian churches in detail.

◀
*Usually churches
rely on
anecdotes—
stories and
testimonies from
satisfied
members.*

For Reflection and Discussion

Describe how your church's strategic and tactical planning processes compare to what you read in this chapter.

Could the delegation of authority and responsibility become more effective in your church? How? How effective are you in your delegation of authority and responsibility to others?

Describe your reaction to thinking of accountability as a neutral process of monitoring and measuring.

The Applications—
Church
Governance,
Leadership and
Management

PART Two

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.

Mission Impossible?

PART TWO
CHAPTER

7

“Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to design one application of governance, leadership and management for churches that is faithful to the New Testament yet flexible enough to work for all of Christendom.”

In Part Two I endeavor to present an application of governance, leadership and management for Christian churches that can “run” on the operating system of the Relationship Model™.

Is It An Impossible Mission?

While I have experienced that the values, structure and processes of relationships as outlined in Part One have widespread support, I know that the practices of the governance, leadership and management application vary widely across the Christian Church of the twenty-first century.

According to the World Christian Encyclopedia (year 2000 version), global Christianity had 33,820 denominations with 3,445,000 congregations/churches composed of 1,888,000,000 affiliated Christians.

I have mused with friends that I should begin Part Two with an apology. The alternative to apologizing for attempting the impossible is to write 33,820 versions of

this book—one for each denomination in Christendom. I don't want to write 33,820 books. Rather, I will attempt in this chapter to discuss the unique challenge of presenting a governance, leadership and management application that can be of some benefit to the wide spectrum of Christian denominations.

I believe it's possible.

I am well aware of the pitfalls of attempting this. It is obvious that, if you chose to doubt the value of this approach, there would be no end of opportunity to reject what follows. On the other hand, if you are open to ideas that may differ from what you have held, then there is the possibility that you will gain from this experience. I am not seeking to offer you “heavenly hash.” I am attempting to find the common core of insight that the Bible gives to all of us.

My perception that this is a valuable approach is based on the following personal observations:

1. The Holy Spirit has used virtually every Christian denomination to bring people into a living relationship with God through Christ Jesus.
2. Every denomination within Christendom looks to Holy Scriptures for its direction in matters of faith and life.
3. Every denomination has examples of abuse of power that have offered challenges to the integrity of the ministry, even in the perception of the denominational leaders themselves.

If you are can support these three observations, you will likely gain something of value from this part of the book, even if the applications are not a perfect fit for you in your place within Christianity.

The purpose of this chapter is to share some of the more significant challenges of attempting to benefit the full spectrum of Christian governance with one book.

Here are the issues we will consider:

- Bible translations
- God's will and our freedom
- theology and culture
- the flow of authority: clergy and laity
- terminology and definitions

Bible Translations

Frequently I will use the original Greek words in English letters. For the most part, however, I will quote from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible with the kind permission of the publisher. That poses a challenge of its own. For example, the Greek word “*episkopos*” is translated “bishop” in the King James Version and “overseer” in the NIV. This makes a significant difference in determining the various positions of leadership in the New Testament Church. Were bishops separate positions of leadership or is this word intended to be taken as a synonym for “elder” (“*presbyteros*”? We shall explore that example and others in the next chapter.

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*I am attempting
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of us.*

Since I cannot use all of the many translations in common use today, I have chosen one, but I do so with this invitation. You may wish to compare the quotations taken from the NIV with the translation that you prefer to see if there is any difference that is significant to the discussion.

With my use of Scripture I hope to discover insights into the structure of governance, leadership and management of the New Testament. It is not my intent to steer the discussion into a personal direction by the choice of the NIV as our translation. For this reason, I will occasionally point out the words in other English translations.

God’s Will and Our Freedom

Both of these themes are very strongly presented in Scripture. They are also the source of considerable confusion and division in the Christian community today. The various understandings of the relationship between these two concepts are one of the most significant barriers to suggesting that any model of church governance might work for all Christian denominations.

To what degree are we Christians free to shape our church structures and to what degree are Christians bound to apply strict biblical precedents to the structures we create?

How much of what we see in the design of church structures today is the result of obedience (or disobedience) to God's will, and how much is the result of the natural development within the freedom that God has designed for us?

The various responses to these questions determine for all of us how we react to the structures of churches other than our own. They will also shape our responses to the ideas that unfold in the chapters that follow.

My perception is that unnecessary rigidity has resulted from missing the freedom that the New Testament gives to develop changing forms for changing circumstances. Form becomes the theological issue instead of function. Official positions become entrenched and then separate and divide the Christian community. Even while we adapt some structures to the cultures into which the Church is planted, we persist in hanging on to denominational norms that have taken on more importance than the freedom that the early Christians enjoyed.

Theology or Culture?

One of the forms that the issue of God's will and our freedom takes is the relationship between theology and culture. Among the vexing and potentially divisive issues of New Testament studies is the question about whether a position of a writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is sharing theological truth or cultural practice, the latter of which may or may not be in accordance with God's will.

Some of the statements are less clear than others, at least in western culture. For example, when Paul tells Timothy "...do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure." (1 Timothy 5:22), he is teaching Timothy something of theological importance that applies equally to each of us today. But what about the very next sentence? "Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." (1 Timothy 5:23). Is this statement just as theological, or is Paul simply giving Timothy some medical advice that Luke, the physician, may have suggested.

We may find that an easy distinction to make. Others have challenged the church to a greater degree in the last two thousand years. The role of women in the church is widely held to be theological in some denominations and cultural in others. The issue of slavery has had just as much debate over the centuries.

◀
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missing the
freedom that the
New Testament*

▶
*“How does
authority flow in
your church?”*

So it should come as no surprise that the structure of church government is yet another example of the challenge of distinguishing between what is theological and what is cultural. As you will see, I suggest that there is room for a little of both. I take this position not to suggest a compromise in order to avoid conflict. Rather, I think we should make a distinction between the theological element of function and the cultural element of form (structure). In doing so, I also recognize that offering this perspective is likely to encourage some readers and alienate others.

The Flow of Authority: Clergy and Laity

The first question I ask every church I am invited to assist with governance issues is, “How does authority flow in your church?”

I have already discussed the importance of Jesus’ choice of words in introducing the Great Commission, “All power is given to me in heaven and in earth...” (Matthew 28:18 KJV) Every Christian agrees that all of the Church’s authority comes from Christ. The question every church must answer is how it flows within the body of Christ.

Is it through the body itself, the assembly of the universal priesthood of all believers? Or is it through the clergy in the same way that it began to flow directly to the apostles? Of all the differences between denominations, the question of how authority flows to the body and within the body has likely been the greatest source of division over the centuries, particularly at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

Today we observe a well defined continuum of the role of clergy in relationship to the laity with respect to how authority flows from God to the Church. I will deal with the development of the role of clergy in Chapter 9 where you will see an illustration of the range of roles that are demonstrated in the structures of some of the larger Christian denominations.

This issue is a significant source of difference and potential division among denominations. The debate continues even within denominations regarding the respective roles of clergy and laity. These discussions always include the issue that we discussed above. How much authority does each have and how does power flow from the Lord to the Church and within the Church?

In presenting the operating system of relationships I have already clarified that the continuum of values associated with the use of power in the Church is the single most important element in determining the effectiveness of any structure and processes (form and function) of church governance. Thus, you may expect this element of this book to be especially helpful to some and anathema to others. My hope, however, is that I can make a case for it being valuable to all.

Terminology and Definitions

Choosing what terminology to use is yet another of my challenges in making this work meaningful to such a diverse audience. Here are some of the names the Christian community has given to governing bodies in our local churches.

The Whole Church	The Governing Body	
Assembly	Board	Directors
Church	Board of Directors	Elders
Congregation	Board of Elders	Elders' Board
Fellowship	Council	Session
Membership	Church Board	Vestry
Voters' Assembly	Church Council	

To simplify my presentation I have selected two of these with the invitation that you replace them with the words that are more appropriate to your experience. They are

- membership
- board

The list of group structures pales in complexity when compared to the list of titles of leadership positions in common use today.

Here are some of them. All of them have a precedent in the functions of the apostles and functions that the apostles put into place to govern, lead, and

manage “the Way.” (You don’t have to read the long list unless you want to confirm that I remembered your leadership positions.)

Titles of Leadership Positions

Administrator	Deaconess	Minister of	Rector
Archbishop	Director	Music	Secretary
Associate Pastor	Elder	Moderator	Senior Pastor
Bishop	Evangelist	Pope	Superintendent
Board Member	Executive	Pastor	Teacher
Canon	Director	Preacher	Treasurer
Cardinal	Executive Pastor	President	Trustee
Chair	Intern	Priest	Usher
Clergy	Lay Person	Principal	Vicar
Counselor	Lead Pastor	Professor	Warden
Deacon	Minister	Reader	Youth Pastor

Summary

In this chapter we discussed the challenges of attempting to design one application of governance, leadership and management of Christian churches that would be of value to the wide spectrum of the Christian community.

We discussed the following areas of difficulty and potential conflict:

- Bible translations
- God’s will and our freedom
- theology and culture
- clergy and laity
- terminology and definitions

These words are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but I did invite the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom that would be a blessing to many. I believe, therefore, that the pages that follow will be of value to you.

In the next chapter we will explore the structure and functions of the New Testament Church, attempting to find the common elements that will give us a balance between the clear direction of the New Testament and the freedom God gives us to develop structures of governance, leadership, and management that meet the needs of our time and place.

For Reflection and Discussion

What reasons would you offer to show why this book is helpful or not helpful for you in your church and denomination?

New Testament Church Governance

PART TWO
CHAPTER

8

A Church Emerges—The Way

When the apostles began their preaching, gatherings were in synagogues, so there was no need for a new organizational structure. As more people became believers in the Messiah, however, the Jewish power structure became increasingly threatened. Very early in the growth of the new Christian community, preaching, teaching, and worship shifted from the synagogues to homes.

The Apostle Paul, too, began his preaching and teaching in synagogues in the towns and cities that he visited. The same pattern of shifting from meeting in synagogues to homes occurred. Typical was the experience Luke records in Acts:

“Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titus Justus, a worshiper of God.” (Acts 18:4-7)

A new organization was emerging—the Christian Church!

The Way

The infant Christian movement itself acquired a name—actually several names. “The Way” occurs five times in the Book of Acts. Perhaps this name was derived from Jesus own claim “I am the way, the truth and the life...” (John 14:6) Luke is clear that the Way is the name of the group. He quotes Paul telling Felix, “*However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect.*” (Acts 24:14)

The Way spread rapidly. The new organization being created was flexible, making changes as changes were required. It required new names and terminology to distinguish it from the Jewish tradition from which it came. Sometimes the new church borrowed terms from the Jewish tradition, e.g. elder. Sometimes it created its own new names, e.g. deacon.

The basic unit of the Way was the house church. The Way was made up of house churches in many towns and cities. The larger the city, the greater number of house churches that developed. These small units of new believers were linked together within the towns and cities in which they developed.

At some point the name “The Way” passed from the scene. It is no longer in use today. Now we refer to “the Christian Church” or “Christianity.” The use of the name “Christians” also goes back to the New Testament times. “*The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*” (Acts 11:26b)

The new church also required structure for governing and leading the growing community of believers. During this initial period of formation, the structure and the naming of positions of leadership were fluid and sometimes overlapping. There was no full and complete “model” laid out from the beginning that was to be followed everywhere and for all time. Sometimes several names were used until one became more prominent, just as with the name of the church itself. The emerging structure was fluid, but some basic functions of leadership began to become standard during the New Testament period of the church’s growth.

Perhaps the most important and liberating observation that we can make in this chapter about the structure of governance, leadership, and management of the New Testament Church is that there is much less precedent for structuring things and naming positions in a certain way than we would be inclined to think. The fluid and flexible approach of the apostles and others invites the twenty-first century church to adapt structures to changing circumstances just as the first Church did.

Building Blocks of Structure

In order to understand the structure of the New Testament, we must first identify the individual building blocks that make up the structure. The building blocks are the leadership positions that together form the structure. Identifying the positions of leadership by their titles is not a simple task. There is no “list” in any one place. We must sift through the entire New Testament to find the words that represent the various positions. Working in English we also have to deal with how the Greek words are translated in the various translations of the New Testament. On the following page is a table of the words that appear to be titles of positions of leadership in the New Testament Church.

Note that the words may appear in their singular and plural forms. The number in parenthesis is the number of times the word appears in either form in two English translations—the King James Version and the New International Version. Titles such as prophet, elder and teacher may appear in the New Testament but are sometimes used to name a position in the Jewish structure. We have included only those occurrences that describe a leadership position in the New Testament Church. Except for the word “apostle” we have not included any words from the Gospels, because the church that we are studying began at Pentecost.

The names of individual leadership positions within the *ekklesia* that we want to examine in particular are

- *apostolos* — the apostles
- *presbuteros* — the elders
- *diakonos* — the deacons

Some scholars and denominational literature suggest more leadership positions, e.g. pastors, bishops and presbyters. Others suggest that these and any other names are alternate names for the three positions mentioned above. Because we know for certain that these three designations are well documented in the New Testament, we shall deal primarily with these three. We do also need

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for all time.*

NIV	KJV	Greek
Apostle (85)	Apostle (79)	<i>apostolos</i>
Deacon (4)	Deacon (5)	<i>diakonos</i>
Elder (20) Older (4)	Elder (24)	<i>presbuteros</i>
Prophet (12)	Prophet (12)	<i>prophetos</i>
Teacher (8)	Teacher (7) Masters (1)	<i>didaskaloi</i>
Evangelist (3)	Evangelist (3)	<i>euangelios</i>
Overseer (7)	Overseer (2) Bishop (5)	<i>episkopos</i>
Pastors (1)	Pastors (1)	<i>poimenoι</i>
Shepherd (3)	Shepherd (3)	<i>poimenos</i>

to comment later, however, on the relationship of other functions and positions to these three.

Focusing on these three need not be a concern to anyone who depends on the New Testament precedent for other positions. The flexibility of the New Testament Church has never stopped. The freedom that the Lord and the apostles gave to the first churches has continued to develop a wide variety of positions of leadership. You saw this illustrated in Chapter 7 in the table of leadership positions found in the Church of today.

Luke and Paul, the two authors that deal with church structure more than all others combined, have a tendency to focus on the function of leadership within the New Testament Church. The form those functions take and the names given to the positions are less distinct and consistent. The names appear to develop naturally. This can be observed in the first and most basic leadership position of the early church.

The Role of the Apostles

There are basic marks that identify apostles. Apostles are

- called personally by Jesus — “*Jesus chose twelve disciples and designated them the apostles.*” (Luke 6:13)

- instructed by the Holy Spirit — “...*after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.*” (Acts 1:1b)
- empowered by the Holy Spirit — “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...*” (Acts 1:8a)
- sent to preach the Gospel — “...*and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” (Acts 1:8b)
- claim a personal acquaintance with Jesus — “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.*” (1 John 1:1)
“*Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?*” (1 Corinthians 9:1)

►
The use of
the term
“the Twelve”
gradually
shifted to
“the apostles.”

In the four Gospels the common term for the apostles is “the Twelve,” where it appears 24 times. The use of the term “the Twelve” gradually shifted to “the apostles.” Luke is likely responsible for documenting the shift. The term “apostle” appears only nine times in the Gospels, six of them in the Gospel of Luke. It was in the Book of Acts, also written by Luke, probably while he was imprisoned with Paul in about AD 62, that the name “apostle” began to replace the original “the Twelve.” Luke uses the term “apostle” 33 times in the Book of Acts. The other 52 times the word appears are in the epistles, so the term had received wide acceptance in New Testament times.

The word *apostolos* was taken from Greek naval and commercial language and became a technical term for a messenger whom Jesus sent on a mission. As in maritime use, the apostle’s message had the same authority as the sender. Jesus gave the Twelve his own authority to preach the Gospel and to forgive and retain sins.

In addition to the Twelve, Paul was the only other apostle. Apostles all saw the risen Christ and received their commissions directly from Jesus. There appears to be no documentation in the New Testament to suggest that the apostles appointed specific persons to carry on

the same function with the same title of apostle. Rather, the office of apostle is likely the foundational office of the early church but not an ongoing one (Ephesians 2:20). To be sure, the apostles did appoint others to positions of service, but the name “apostle” is not part of their appointment.

The apostles’ relationship to their source of authority is well defined in the New Testament, but not in one place. When we take all the references of that working relationship and put it in the form of a relationship description, we see the entire relationship.

Apostle/God Relationship Description

Authority

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18)

“He called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.” (Luke 6:13)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...” (Acts 1:8a)

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20b)

Limitations of Authority

“Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.” (Luke 10:4)

“Do not move around from house to house.” (Luke 10:7b)

(These limitations were later removed.)

Responsibility

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

“... Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:20a KJV)

Expectations of Responsibility

“...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8b)

Accountability

“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.” (John 12:48)



The office of apostle is likely the foundational office of the early church but not an ongoing one.

The Role of the Elders

The Greek “*presbuteros*” is translated “elder” in the NIV and the KJV. The word appears in reference to the New Testament position 20 times in the New Testament. Of course it also appears when referring to the Jewish elders, but we are not examining those occurrences.

All of the 20 occurrences we shall examine in this chapter appear from Acts to Jude. From these occurrences we can gain considerable understanding of the authority and responsibilities of elders.

As with the role of the apostles, we cannot turn to a concise conceptual presentation of the definition of elders and their role in the New Testament Church. We must glean what we can from those passages where Luke and Paul speak of them. There are only four references to New Testament elders in the letters of three other writers. Those are in James 5:14 and 1 Peter 5:1 and the first verses of 2 and 3 John.

When we do gather all we can from these 20 references, we find that the definition of elders is broad and general. As we have observed before, it appears that Luke and Paul were more concerned about the function of elders than in their place in the structure of the church.

For example, the Apostle Peter begins his first letter by introducing himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Then in Chapter 5 when he uses the name “elder” he includes himself as one of them too. *“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.”* (1 Peter 5:1) Thus, it appears that the apostles also considered themselves elders.

That is verified by how the Apostle John introduces himself in his second and third letters. His first two words in both these letters are “The Elder, to...” That is in contrast to his self-introduction in his first letter where he is clearly representing himself as an apostle—without using the name. *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”* (1 John 1:1)

On the other hand, when the question about circumcision was brought to the Church in Jerusalem, the matter was put to the “apostles and elders.” Here the distinction is made between these two offices six times in a story that takes 44 verses to unfold. (Acts 15:2 – 16:4)

There is ample information in the New Testament to construct a description of the relationship between the elders and the apostles who appointed them. In the following box the key words are in italics.

Elders/Apostles Relationship Description

Authority

Authorization

“... the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” (Acts 20:28)

“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.” (Acts 14:23)

“Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.” (Acts 15:22)

Resources

“For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.” (1 Timothy 5:18)

Professional Competencies

“Now the overseer must be...able to teach.” (1 Timothy 3:2)

“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” (Titus 1:9)

Limitations of Authority

“Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—

- *not overbearing,*
- *not quick-tempered,*
- *not given to drunkenness,*
- *not violent,*
- *not pursuing dishonest gain.”* (Titus 1:7)

Responsibility

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock...Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” (1 Timothy 5:17)

“The apostles and elders met to consider this question.” (Acts 15:6)

“...call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.” (James 5:14)

Expectations of Responsibility

“An elder must be

- *blameless,*
- *the husband of but one wife,*
- *a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.” (Titus 1:6)*

“Rather he must be

- *hospitable,*
- *one who loves what is good,*
- *who is self-controlled,*
- *upright, holy and disciplined.” (Titus 1:8)*

Accountability

“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” (1 Timothy 5:17)

“Keep watch over yourselves...” (Acts 20:28)

“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.” (1 Tim 5:19)

There are two well-known lists of qualifications for elders found in the New Testament. Paul wrote both of them, but at two different times to two different people. He probably didn't have a copy of the first one when he wrote the second. It seems that some of the qualifications were important enough to remember to include in both lists. Other details came to Paul as he was writing.

Both sets of qualifications, outlined in the table that follows, contain three separate elements of the relationships between elders and their source of authority. Notice the emphasis on the personal competencies and personal behavior.

Qualifications for Elders	
Timothy 3:2-7	Titus 1:6-9
Professional Competencies <i>Now the overseer must be</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>able to teach.</i>	Professional Competencies <i>He must</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>hold firmly to the trustworthy message</i>• <i>encourage others by sound doctrine</i>• <i>refute those who oppose it.</i>
Personal Competencies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>temperate</i>• <i>self-controlled</i>• <i>hospitable</i>	Personal Competencies <i>Rather he must be</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>hospitable</i>• <i>one who loves what is good</i>• <i>self-controlled</i>• <i>upright</i>• <i>holy</i>• <i>disciplined.</i>
Limitations <i>He must not be</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>given to drunkenness</i>• <i>violent</i>• <i>quarrelsome</i>• <i>a lover of money</i>• <i>a recent convert.</i>	Limitations <i>He must not be</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>overbearing</i>• <i>quick-tempered</i>• <i>given to drunkenness</i>• <i>violent</i>• <i>pursuing dishonest gain.</i>
Expectations <i>He must</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>be above reproach</i>• <i>be the husband of but one wife</i>• <i>be respectable</i>• <i>manage his own family well</i>• <i>see that his children obey him</i>• <i>have a good reputation with outsiders.</i>	Expectations <i>An elder must be</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>blameless</i>• <i>the husband of but one wife</i>• <i>a man whose children believe.</i>

The Role of the Deacons

“Deacon” is another New Testament term that lives on in our current vocabulary of church governance. It’s ironic that the word *diakonos*, translated “deacon” appears only four times in the New Testament, while the word *prophetos*, translated as “prophet” appears twelve times. It’s ironic because we don’t have a formal position for prophets in our churches, although they appear three times more often in the New Testament.

A second irony is that the first likely reference to the function of deacons does not even mention the word “deacon.” We probably assume correctly that the reference in Acts 6 is to the service of deacons, because the function is clearly identified.

“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.” (Acts 6:1–6)

A third irony is that in all four specific references to the office of deacon, there is no mention of the actual function of deacons. Here are the four uses of “deacon,” the first three of them in Paul’s letter to Timothy.

“Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the

same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:” (Philippians 1:1)

Complicating our understand of the role of deacons just a little more is the fact that deacons did much more than the practical work mentioned in Acts 6. Some of them also had spiritual ministries. This may explain why Paul gives Timothy the qualifications for deacons recorded above.

For example, Philip, now in Caesarea as an evangelist was also one of “the Seven.” Luke writes, *“Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven.”* (Acts 21:8) It appears that Philip was an evangelist as well as a deacon, or perhaps deacons also performed the work of an evangelist. In any case, Philip was set apart for this service in Jerusalem but ended up in Caesarea.

Stephen was also one of the Seven. Like Philip, God had given him special gifts. Now, *“Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.”* (Acts 6:8)

He was also a gifted speaker. *“These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.”* (Acts 6:9-10)

Because we have so little material describing the work of deacons we can make only the broadest generalities. Upon these general and diverse observations, we can only wonder what the deacons in all the churches actually did. There is not even enough reference to this office to draft a relationship description, as we did for the elders. The functions of today’s deacons grow out of this general definition, but we have had to fill in many blanks in their duties to make the office relevant today.

The non-directive manner of describing the role of deacons in the New Testament is what gives us the freedom to adapt this important function to the twenty-first century church.

What about Pastors and Bishops?

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

This is the only reference that the NIV and the KJV translate as “pastor” in the entire New Testament.

Certainly the functions fulfilled by today’s pastors were fulfilled in the New Testament Church. Preaching, teaching, evangelism, discipline and correction, visiting the sick and other functions began at Pentecost and have continued to the present. In the New Testament, however, the leaders who provided these services were called apostles, elders and deacons, but not pastors, except for this one reference. This is a description of the function of an elder, not the title of another position.

Elders in the New Testament were a very significant group of leaders with various responsibilities. They are the group from which the clergy developed, although that development does not appear with any clear definition during the New Testament era. The pastoral function has existed from the beginning, but the term “pastor,” describing a member of the clergy as separate from the rest of the body of Christ appears to be a later addition.

One of the possible reasons that the clergy collectively emerged from the New Testament elders is that Paul made it clear that elders could be paid for their labors. Perhaps the distinction between clergy and laity began because of the rather simple reality that some could develop their full attention to their duties because they were paid by the community.

The English word “bishop” has a similar development.

The Greek word *“episcopos”* appears seven times in the New Testament. In the NIV it is always translated “overseer.” In the KJV it is translated “bishop” five times and “overseer” twice.

Usually when the word *episkopos* appears, it is used in connection with a discussion of the elders (*presbuteros*). In these cases it appears to be a synonym, not the name of a separate position. Luke, Paul and Peter all use the word in this context. Notice that Luke and Peter even add a reference to being “shepherds” (*poimenoι*) in the same context.

For example, Luke first used the word when he discusses Paul’s meeting with the elders of Ephesus whom he invited to nearby Miletus.

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

In his letter to Titus, Paul describes the expectations of an elder and then uses the word overseer as a synonym.

“An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.” (Titus 1:7)

Peter also uses the same word in the same way in his first letter.

“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” (1 Peter 5:1-2)

Another use of the word “overseers” is in connection with the deacons. We would expect to hear “elders and deacons” mentioned together, but there is no mention of this combination. The only mention of the two offices is referred to this way:

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:” (Philippians 1:1)

I am satisfied that the terms “elder” and “overseer” are synonymous, not separate positions.

Who are Luke, Barnabas, Timothy and Titus?

The focus on function and the relaxed concern about titles and structure is apparent also in matching people with their titles and trying to identify their positions within the Church’s structure.

This is easy with the Twelve and with Paul. There is no doubt that they are all apostles. It is not quite as straightforward with some of the other well known names—like Luke, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus and others.

Luke

Who was Luke? Luke was not one of the Twelve. As far as we know, he was not a later addition to the list of those we call apostles either. Luke tells us himself that he is not one of the apostles by excluding himself from those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' life. He opens his account of the life of Christ.

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.” (Luke 1:1-2)

This famous figure of the New Testament is actually named only three times in the entire New Testament! He never once mentions himself in the Gospel that bears his name or in the Acts of the Apostles, the second book that he wrote to Theophilus.

“Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.” (Colossians 4:14)

“And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.” (Philemon 1:24)

“Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica... Only Luke is with me.” (2 Timothy 4:10-11)

◀
I am satisfied that the terms “elder” and “overseer” are synonymous, not separate positions.

Ironically, every time Paul mentions Luke, he also mentions Demas, who eventually deserted him. The only three times either one is mentioned is in the company of the other. It hardly gives the impression that title and position were very important to Paul.

How much effort would it have taken Paul to give us Luke's title? Apparently, the work that Luke did in writing 25 percent of the New Testament, including the

clearest documentation of the first years of the Church, was more important than his position within the structure of the Church. For his title we can only speculate.

Barnabas

Barnabas fares a little better. Luke mentions him 29 times in Acts and Paul names him five times in three of his letters.

Perhaps the clearest statement of Barnabas' position within the Church is recorded by Luke.

"In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus." (Acts 13:1-4)

Barnabas is clearly identified as a prophet or a teacher, or both. It isn't clear, however, whether these were functions he filled because he was an apostle, like Paul, or perhaps an elder, or whether "prophet and teacher" are two more formal positions in the Church.

A case can certainly be made that he shared the title and position of apostle with Paul from this reference in Acts, where no distinction is made in their authority to appoint elders:

"Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust." (Acts 14:23)

It is yet another example of Luke's focus on function rather than on position and title.

In any event, Barnabas and Saul were set apart by the Holy Spirit's call for a special assignment. The group prayed and fasted and after laying hands on them to set them apart, Barnabas and Saul, led by the Holy Spirit, left for Cyprus. Going to Cyprus was likely a special assignment in their current positions, not the beginning of a new position within the Church.

►
*Timothy is
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Yet nowhere is
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Timothy

Timothy is mentioned 25 times in the New Testament—six times by Luke and 19 times by Paul. Two letters in the New Testament are addressed to him. Yet nowhere is his title or position given. Was he an apostle, an elder, a pastor?

Luke refers to Timothy as “his helper” referring to Paul. Paul describes him too, but not with the clarity we would like. Paul refers to Timothy as

- “my fellow worker”
- “my son whom I love”
- “carrying on the work, just as I am”
- “our brother” (4)
- “servant of Jesus Christ”
- “as a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel”
- our brother and God’s fellow worker”
- “my true son in the faith”
- “my son”
- “my dear son.”

Almost every time Paul mentions Timothy, he gives some descriptor, but it is never his title or position in the Way. “Fellow worker” and “servant of Jesus Christ” are as close as he comes. One is left with the sense that Timothy didn’t have a formal title, or that the name of his position was simply not important enough to record in the New Testament. None of the Greek words in the table earlier in this chapter are ever ascribed to Timothy. His function was important enough for Paul to write two letters and for the early church to include them both in the New Testament canon, but we can only conjecture on what the title of his position was.

Titus

Because Titus has a relationship with Paul similar to that of Timothy, we chose to include him among those who are important New Testament leaders who are not given a formal title for their position.

Luke never mentions Titus in the Book of Acts, but Paul mentions him 14 times in his letters to the Corinthians, the Galatians, to Timothy and to Titus himself.

As was his practice with Timothy, Paul adds some descriptors when he speaks of Titus. He calls Titus:

- *“my partner and fellow worker among you.”* (2 Corinthians 8:23)
- *“my true son in our common faith.”* (Titus 1:4)

Yet he never gives him a title or makes reference to a formal position. Titus was given significant responsibilities of leadership in Crete. Here is how they are described in the letter Paul wrote to Titus.

“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.” (Titus 1:5)

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1)

Teaching appears to be the most significant of Paul’s directives to Titus. Many verses follow the reference above to give details in the instruction that Titus was to give to the older and younger men, older and younger women, and slaves.

Timeless Elements of the New Testament Church

In understanding the significance of function over form in the New Testament Church, we want to highlight the functions that appear to be common to all relationships in where authority and responsibility are delegated.

There are two fundamental and timeless elements that are associated with apostles, elders and deacons. They are the consistent elements in a changing and developing structure. They are the elements that we still consider fundamental to any structure that the twenty-first century church develops within the freedom that the New Testament gives. They are the Holy Spirit’s call and the laying on of hands by the Church.

Both the Spirit’s call and the Church’s laying on of hands are important, because the Spirit works through people. Sometimes these two elements are mentioned in the same verse.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this two-step practice of the early church is in the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles.

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.’” (Acts 13:2-3)

Later, Paul mentions in his letter to the Galatians how three apostles affirmed the call of the Spirit and of the laying on of hands on Paul and Barnabas.

“James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.” (Galatians 2:9)

This relationship between the leadership of the Spirit and human decision-making appears again in the famous Jerusalem council. The verses of Acts 15 go into great detail recalling the discussion about the need for the observance of Jewish customs by Gentile Christians. When the discussion ended and the decision was made, Paul and Barnabas carried a letter, accompanied by Judas and Silas who gave verification to the letter by word of mouth. Both the Holy Spirit’s leading and the decision of the apostles and elders are mentioned in the same sentence. Here is how the letter began:

“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements...” (Acts 15:28)

◀
There are two fundamental and timeless elements that are associated with apostles, elders and deacons.

In order to understand the process of governance in our churches today, let’s examine in greater detail how these two elements work together—the call of the Spirit and the freedom of the God’s people to confirm the Spirit’s call by delegating authority and responsibility with the laying on of hands.

The Holy Spirit’s Call and Gifting

The Holy Spirit is mentioned in the New Testament 246 times. The context in which the Spirit appears is almost always related to giving something to the people with whom the Spirit interacts.

Luke begins his record of the early Church by mentioning the Spirit and confirms that even before Pentecost, the Lord promised the Spirit to the Twelve.

“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.... For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
(Acts 1:1-2, 5, 8)

This early reference to the work of the Spirit introduces the most basic truth about the Spirit that is so relevant today. The Holy Spirit’s call and the gifts of the Spirit are almost always presented together. They are in such close harmony that we are inclined to think of them as the same thing—the call is the end, the gifts are the means by which the call is recognized.

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”
(1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it... It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Ephesians 4:7, 11-12)

Today we often refer to the work of the Spirit in the life of the Church as the Spirit’s call, even though the word “call” is seldom mentioned in connection with the work of the Spirit.

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”
(Acts 13:2)

“After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” (Acts 16:10)

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God...” (Romans 1:1)



The Church’s Call and Laying on of Hands

The Holy Spirit calls and gives the gifts, the Church calls and gives the positions and titles.

The Holy Spirit calls and gives the gifts, the Church calls and gives the positions and titles. The formal manner in which the Church does its part is through the laying on of hands.

The laying on of hands is always associated with a transfer of power or authority. That power or authority is expressed in four ways:

- power of blessing (3)
- power for healing (9)
- receiving the Spirit and the Spirit’s gifts (7)
- authorization from the Church for a specific ministry (2)



The call is the end, the gifts are the means by which the call is recognized.

The specific references are contained in the table that follows.

Laying on of Hands

The laying on of hands occurs on 20 occasions in the New Testament.

- 10 times in the Gospels
- 6 times in Acts
- 4 times in Paul’s letters

Gospels

Blessing: Matthew 19:13-15 (2), Mark 10:16,

Healing: Mark 5:23, Mark 6:5, Mark 8:23-26 (2), Mark 16:18, Luke 4:40, Luke 13:13

Acts

Dedication: Acts 6:6, Acts 13:1-4

Receiving the Spirit: Acts 8:14-19, Acts 19:6-7

Healing: Acts 28:8-9

Healing and receiving the Spirit: Acts 9:17-19

Paul

Receiving gifts of the Spirit: 1 Timothy 4:12-14, 1 Timothy 5:21-23, 2 Timothy 1:1-6, Hebrews 6:1-3

You will note in the table on the previous page that of the 20 examples of the laying on of hands there are only two that refer to the confirmation of the Spirit's call to a specific ministry. They are both very significant examples:

- the commissioning of the first seven deacons
- the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas

They are significant, because in the first one we see the human freedom in the process of decision-making and in both of them we see the confirmation of the Spirit's call and gifting.

In the first case there was a concern about the daily distribution of food to Greek and Hebrew widows. The Twelve responded with a proposal for a change in structure to fulfill this specific function. All the disciples whom the Twelve gathered to consider the matter agreed with the proposal to *"choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom."* (Acts 6:3)

"So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.' This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them." (Acts 6:2-6)

We have already mentioned the second example in Acts 13:1-4 where Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for their ministry among the Gentiles. Here the Spirit's call is clearly confirmed by the Church in the laying on of hands. The two leave fully authorized by the Spirit and the Church.

"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:2-3)

Accountability to the Spirit and to the Church

This important dual authorization is important in understanding how leaders are accountable both to the Spirit and to the Church. As we have seen in Part One, the Church's discomfort in dealing with accountability is a real challenge for the Church today. Church leaders have two sources of authority and are accountable to each of them.

Holding Oneself Accountable to God and the Church

Paul and Barnabas certainly had the opportunity to abuse their power. When Paul healed the lame man in Lystra, the people thought Paul was Zeus and Barnabas was Hermes. When the priest made preparations for sacrifices to them as gods, Paul and Barnabas had the perfect opportunity to make a major career change. They could have allowed themselves to be elevated to the highest status in the city, enjoying position and wealth. They could have displaced the Holy Spirit who called them! Instead they demonstrated servant leadership. They tore their clothes and declared their humanity. Then they shared the real purpose for their visit.

On another occasion, in an emotional farewell meeting in Miletus with the elders from Ephesus, Paul gave a long and detailed expression of his accountability to the Lord and to the elders. This speech is recorded in Acts 20:17-35. In it Paul holds himself accountable in the following statements.

- *“You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia.”* (v. 18)
- *“I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews.”* (v. 19)
- *“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.”* (v. 20)
- *“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”* (v. 21)
- *“I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”* (v. 24)

- *“I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men.”* (v. 26)
- *“I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.”* (v. 27)
- *“I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing.”* (v. 33)
- *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”* (v. 35)

Then he admonishes them to hold themselves accountable. This element of spiritual leadership is so important to Paul, that he makes it his final word to the elders before praying with them and bidding them farewell for the last time.

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:28-31)

Holding One Another Accountable

Paul also gives us an example of spiritual leaders holding one another accountable. In his letter to the Galatians Paul discusses the conflict that arose over the “hypocrisy” of insisting that Gentiles follow Jewish customs, especially circumcision. In the sentence after he lifted up James, Peter and John as “those reputed to be pillars” he had this to say about their hypocrisy.

“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, ‘You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?’” (Galatians 2:11-14)

◀
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Summary: Form Follows Function

It appears that the Lord, the apostles and other leaders placed more emphasis on function than on form. What leaders were to do and how they were to be accountable was more important than how they fit into the structure of the Way.

In our experience the Church tends to follow the same practice today. We say, “Form follows function.” We understand that the purpose of any position and the context in which that purpose is to be realized will determine how the structure will develop, how many levels there will be and what the positions will be called.

A small church will develop a structure that meets the needs of the required functions. That structure will change as the congregations grows. By the time it becomes a very large church, the structure will have become entirely different even though the functions are the same.

There is remarkably little material in the New Testament about the specific structure of church governance, leadership and management. There is a wealth of material about the functions that must be present in the Christian community. In my research and comparison with modern church practices, I have developed the perception that we have not fully come to appreciate the flexibility given to us by the New Testament to

- develop the structures that will best fit our churches
- create the positions that are required to fulfill the functions
- name the positions of governance, leadership and management
- create policies that relate the form and function to our contexts
- build in accountability systems for ourselves and each other.

In the next chapter we will explore the development of church governance from the second century through the period of the Reformation with emphasis on the changes that occurred during the Reformation.

For Reflection and Discussion

What insights did you gain from reading the history of governance in the first century church?

Are there some lessons to apply to your current situation? If so, what are they?

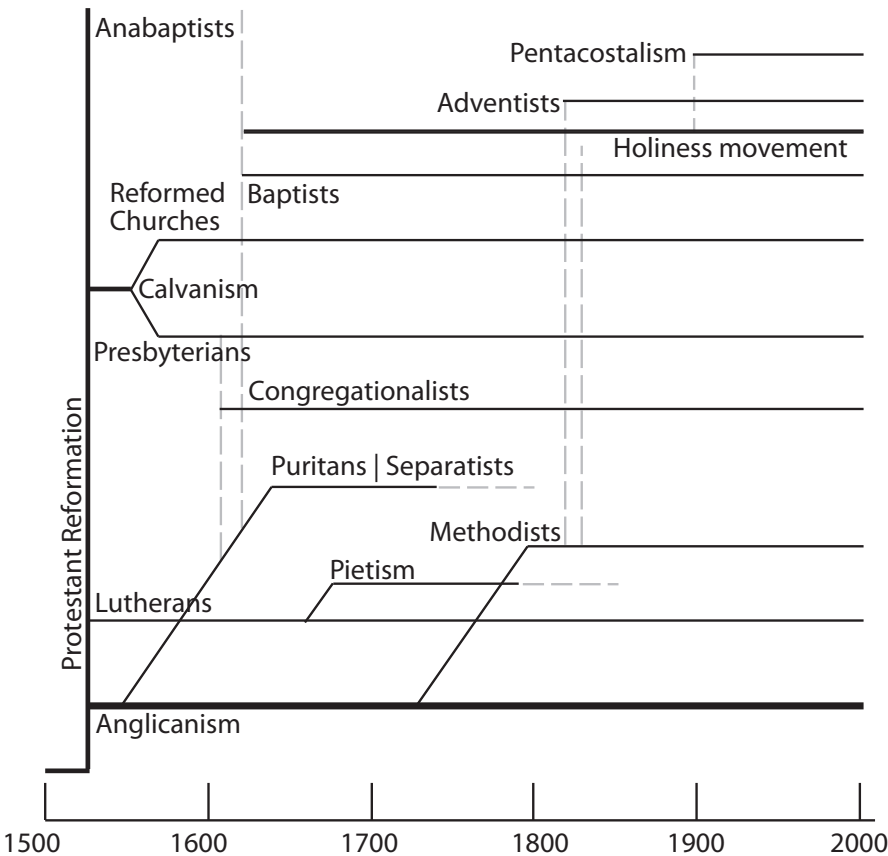


Diagram courtesy of Wikipedia.

Twenty Centuries of Church Governance

PART TWO
CHAPTER

9

Fast Forward

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the development of church governance from the first century church to the twenty-first century church. Covering 20 centuries in one chapter will either create a very long chapter or will leave a lot out. I'm choosing the latter, because this book is about how to govern churches today; it's not about church history. Still, it's important to have some understanding of what happened in the transition from the simple yet functional structure of the New Testament church to the complex and sometimes dysfunctional structures of today.

The Second Century Onward

Two Offices — Elder and Deacon

There are two primary offices mentioned in the New Testament church—elder and deacon. The terms pastor/*poimenos*, elder/*presbuteros* and overseer (bishop)/*episcopos* are synonymous terms for the same position, not three separate positions. This basic structure of elder and deacon did survive the first century according to the *Didache* or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. An AD 1056 copy of this important document written between AD 95 and AD 150 was discovered in Constantinople in 1873. In chapter 15 we read,

“Accordingly, elect for yourselves bishops (overseers) and deacons, men who are an honor to the Lord, of gentle disposition, not attached to money, honest and well-tried, for they, too, render you the sacred service of the prophets and teachers. Do not, then, despise them; after all, they are your dignitaries together with the prophets and teachers.”

A Third Office is Born

Then changes began to appear. The church began to take on a more hierarchical structure. A distinction between elders and bishops appears as the church expanded geographically and grew in numbers.

It appears that the very first element in the transition to a bishop-led church may have been the transition from some elders who were “tent-making” spiritual leaders of house churches to becoming full-time elders employed by the larger churches. The ability to focus all one’s time and energy on spiritual leadership gave those elders increased knowledge and experience and the stature that naturally went along with it. The network that developed among the rapidly growing number of house churches led to a need for spiritual leaders to coordinate their activities and to assure a standard of faith and practice. It was natural that some of the elders would become devoted to coordinating the work of other elders instead of simply providing spiritual leadership to a single Christian house church.

In the second century the two terms (elder and bishop) begin to describe different positions. Daniel Akin writes in *Perspective in Church Government* (p.52):

“It is in the writing of Ignatius (c. AD 115) that we see for the first time a three-tiered ecclesiastical system with a bishop, elders and deacons. Ignatius exhorts his readers to ‘be eager to do everything in godly harmony, the bishops presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles and the deacons, who are the most dear to me, having been entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ.’ For Ignatius, an overseer (bishop) is clearly distinct from the elders and is the singular head of the city church.”

Why Did It Happen?

Just why this transition began is controversial. Anglican Bishop Peter Toon suggests that it is a natural and God-directed process. In his contribution to *Who Runs the Church?* (p. 28) he quotes a 1930 committee of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, who expressed this general view of the emergence of bishops, the episcopate:

“The Episcopate occupies a position which is, in point of historical development analogous to that of the Canon of Scripture and the Creeds...If the Episcopate...was the result of a...process of adaptation and growth in the organism of the church, that would be no evidence that it lacked divine authority, but rather that the life of the Spirit within the Church had found it to be the most appropriate organ for the functions it discharged.”

In his rebuttal of Toon’s position, Presbyterian Dr. L. Roy Taylor, writes:

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There is a
natural tendency
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people to
assume power
that is “given”
only because
people allow it
rather than
bestow it.

“A better explanation would be that there are several factors that caused the church to move towards a model of governance similar to that of the state, namely
(1) persecution and the effort to maintain theological orthodoxy;
(2) geographical and political factors...; and
(3) efficiency of operations.”

I think there were other more human factors involved as well. As we have all observed in the politics of the state and the church, there is a natural tendency for certain people to assume power that is “given” only because people allow it rather than bestow it. This self-proclaimed position of authority gradually became the norm for the structure of the church. The result was a range of leaders who were either benevolent and efficient or authoritarian and despotic. In the centuries between the New Testament church and the Reformation we see countless examples of both. Actually, we see it after the Reformation too.

◀
In the second
century the two
terms (elder
and bishop)
begin to
describe
different
positions.

From Congregational to Episcopal

In this post-apostolic, gradual transition from a two-office structure (elders and deacons) to a three-office structure (elders, deacons, and bishops) we see a very significant additional feature—the transition from a congregational to an episcopal polity.

The significance of this change lies in understanding the shift in the source of authority. In the New Testament church the Lord gave his authority to the apostles. With

this authority the apostles appointed the first elders and deacons, but except for replacing Judas, the apostles never appointed apostles to replace themselves. During the time of the apostles, Timothy and Titus, who were not apostles, also appointed elders. Finally the individual house churches appointed elders from among their own groups. The transition from apostolic governance to congregational governance with church-appointed elders and deacons was completed in the first century.

With the second century transition to a bishop-led church, however, the appointment of spiritual leaders passed back to the spiritual leaders themselves, as it was in the days of the apostles. The concept of apostolic succession, the idea that all clergy can trace their authority back through an unbroken line to the apostle Peter, is an explanation formulated in later centuries to support this transition.

The First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea

Constantine, is known as the first Christian Emperor of Rome. He ruled from AD 309 until his death in AD 337. In the Edict of Milan of AD 313, Constantine proclaimed religious tolerance throughout the empire and ordered all property that had been confiscated from Christians to be returned. Constantine is recognized as a very significant figure in the unity of the Christian Church, which had spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond by this time. Constantine moved the seat of government from Rome to Byzantium (present Istanbul), beginning the six-year construction of a new city known as Constantinople in AD 324.

In AD 325 he invited all 1,800 bishops (1,000 from the west and 800 from the east) to the city of Nicaea, (modern Isnik, Turkey). Reports of attendance range from 250-318 bishops. Each bishop was invited to bring two priests and three deacons so there were likely more than 1,500 people present for the council. The two most significant outcomes of the Council of Nicaea were the Nicene Creed and the fixing of the date of Easter as the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox.

The primary purpose was to deal with the Arian controversy, begun by Arius, a priest from Alexandria, who believed and taught that Jesus was created by the Father and that Jesus did not exist before that. The Creed of Nicaea added the words, “begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.” This continues to be the confession of Christians today.

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This first
worldwide
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the Roman
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Bishop of Rome.

What is significant about this for our understanding of the development of governance is that this first worldwide Council of Christian leaders was called by the Roman Emperor, not the Bishop of Rome. If this isn't the first example of the state church form of church governance, it is certainly the most significant, since the results of the Council of Nicaea are still being felt today.

The Roman Catholic Church

Before long, however, there began to develop also a distinction between bishops. *"Though the status of the bishop of Rome has been growing in prominence since the end of the second century, it was in the period between bishops Leo I (bishop of Rome AD 440-461) and Gregory I (AD 590-604) that the papacy as we now know it first began to take shape,"* writes R. Stanton Norman in his Introduction to *Perspectives on Church Government* (p. 15).

Gradually, the earliest episcopal (bishop-led) form of church governance became the Roman Catholic Church for the next fifteen centuries, like a growing tree with a long straight trunk. Congregational polity has no historical significance during this long period.

The Great Schism of AD 1054

As you might expect, during this long period of time there were conflicts and power struggles within the church, but except for minor divisions, the Christian Church grew as one organic entity.

There is one very significant event, however, that has left a permanent mark on the Christian Church of today. That is the separation of the church into the Eastern Orthodox churches originally based in Constantinople (modern Istanbul) and the Roman Catholic Church based in Rome. This schism occurred over a period of time that was initiated in AD 1054 when Pope Leo IX of Rome and Michael Cærularius, Patriarch of Constantinople, excommunicated each other in a power struggle over various theological issues.

From this schism come the Eastern Orthodox churches that we know today as the Greek, Russian, Ukrainian Orthodox churches, as well as Orthodox churches in many other countries. Unlike the Roman Catholic, these churches did not become a single monolithic structure. Nor was there a reformation like that which emerged in the Roman Catholic Church in the west.

The Reformation

The political, religious, cultural and technological changes that gave rise to the Reformation are very complex. They offer material for many books. Among the factors that led to the Reformation are

- the Renaissance
- the abuses within the church as perceived by many reformers
- the need for theological reform based on Biblical truth
- the invention of the printing press, which led to the translation and publication of the Bible in many languages that empowered the people.

The Reformers' most basic purpose was to restore the authority of the Word of God over against the authority vested in an office which was created by humans. Obviously, that led to a change in the form of church governance. It was not, however, a simple change back to a congregational form of church governance, even though it certainly included that in some cases.

Leaders like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, Simons and others began to question the authority of the Pope. Specifically, they questioned the claim that the Pope was the Vicar of Christ and the claim that no one could be saved outside of the church led by the Pope.

Here I must note in particular what I mentioned in the Preface. The pattern of how authority flowed in the church was so important in the Reformation and the period that followed that four denominations were named for the form of church polity each chose: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, and Brethren. In addition, the fifth form, the state church or Erastian, was also a present form of church governance during the Reformation. Erastianism, named after Thomas Erastus, is used to denote the doctrine of the supremacy of the state in ecclesiastical causes.

During the Reformation in continental Europe, printed books began appearing in greater numbers. This technology and the Renaissance fueled the desire for literacy and learning. Scholars like Wycliffe in England and Luther in Germany began to translate the Greek text and the Latin Vulgate

into the vernacular languages of the people. As people began to take more control of their lives and the authority of the Pope was being challenged, the form of church polity began to shift back to that of the New Testament church.

To be sure the state's control of the church that Henry VIII secured in England was also evident in Germany, where the authority shifted from the Vatican to various political authorities. But for Luther, Zwingli and Simons, there was also a strong desire to return the control of the churches to the people in them. Spiritual leaders of congregations began to be chosen by the people instead of by the spiritual leaders themselves.

Congregational Governance

Congregational church governance reappeared in the sixteenth century. Lutherans in Germany and English Separatists living in Holland were among the first. In both cases, this form was a reaction against the episcopal polity of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. The predominant theme is that the local church/congregation is the final source of authority. No spiritual leader—bishop, pope, or any group outside of the local assembly of believers—may claim authority over the local church.

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Lutherans

The Lutheran Reformation began on October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther posted his *Ninety-five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* on the church door at Wittenberg. Luther was incensed that individuals were being asked to pay for the forgiveness that was a free gift through faith in Christ.

While Luther's primary purpose was to reform the Roman Catholic Church, the predictable result was the formation of a new church which took Luther's name. Luther lived at a time when temporal authorities were

also vying for the same powers that the Papacy demanded for itself. This reality tempered Luther's position of church governance, because he relied on the princes, particularly Prince Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, for his own personal safety and support during this critical time. Following the excommunication of Pope Leo X and after the Diet of Worms, it was Frederick the Wise who arranged for Luther's safe passage to seclusion at the Wartburg Castle, where Luther translated the Bible into German.

By 1526, Luther found himself increasingly occupied in organizing a new church. His Biblical ideal of congregations choosing their own ministers had proved unworkable. Luther's dilemma was that he wanted a confessional church based on God's word, personal faith and the "common priesthood of all believers," but political realities required a territorial church including all in a given locality.

To avoid confusing or upsetting the people, Luther avoided extreme change. He also did not wish to replace one controlling system with another. He concentrated on the church in the Electorate of Saxony, acting only as an adviser to churches in new territories, many of which followed his Saxon model. He worked closely with the new elector, John the Steadfast (Frederick's younger brother), to whom he turned for secular leadership and funds on behalf of a church which had lost most of its assets and income after the break with Rome.

Despite this natural tendency to accept a form of church governance controlled by the state, Luther supported the congregational form of church governance. Martin Brecht writes, "*Normally, according to Luther's understanding, the appointment of pastors and preachers should take place by election of the congregations.*" (Martin Luther, *Shaping and Defining the Reformation*, p. 68)

Luther's conviction about the congregations' right was rooted in his understanding of the universal priesthood of all believers.

"At that time (1522) the question of filling pastorates was more than an incidental administrative problem for Luther. In essence it was associated with his views on the priesthood of all believers...as he expressed them again and again in his sermons...Every Christian was responsible for judging the teachings of the church. The sermons on 1 Peter he was preaching at that time gave Luther an additional opportunity to speak about the universal priesthood of all believers and the congregation's right to choose its pastor." (Brecht, p. 68, 69)

In 1537 Philip Melanchthon drafted the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, which is part of the Lutheran Confessions. He writes,

“The most common custom of the church also bears witness to this, for there was a time when the people elected pastors and bishops. Afterwards, a bishop, either of that church or of a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands; nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation...From all these facts it is evident that the church retains the right of electing and ordaining ministers.” (Tappert, pp.331-332)

Most segments of Lutheranism today practice congregational governance, but there are efforts in various Lutheran denominations to move towards a more episcopal form. There are also examples of Lutheran State churches in Europe.

The largest Lutheran churches in North America are

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)
- The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)
- Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC)

Anabaptists

The Anabaptists (“baptized again”) grew out of the Radical Reformation which rejected not only the power of the Papacy but also held that the secular authorities had no power over the church. Congregational church governance was a natural result of rejecting both the episcopal and state church forms of church governance.

Menno Simons, a Dutch Roman Catholic priest, left the priesthood and joined the Anabaptists in 1536. He became one of the most important leaders of the movement. By 1544 the term “Mennonite” was used in a letter to refer to the Dutch Anabaptists.

Today this movement is represented by the Hutterite, Amish, and Mennonite denominations. The Relationship Model™ is already being used extensively in the

Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Canada. This denomination is one of the most committed of all denominations to the congregational form of church governance.

The largest branches of Mennonites in North America are

- Mennonite Church USA
- Mennonite Church Canada
- Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches
- U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches

Brethren Governance

Some Christians in the Reformation period went to the extreme of eliminating clergy in any form. They can best be identified by the designation “brethren”. In this form of polity, all members are equal in authority. The gifts that God has given to each male member of the congregation are used apart from any designation of office or position. Brethren churches trace their origin to the Anabaptist movement.

Congregationalists

Not to be confused with congregationalism generally, the Congregationalist movement began in England during the Puritan movement to reform the Church of England. As its name indicates, this form of church governance was a distinguishing mark distancing it from the episcopal governance of the Church of England. Congregationalists were an important part of the migration to the American colonies. The movement was heavily influenced by John Calvin, although many of Calvin’s followers adopted a presbyterian form of governance. Most Congregational churches in the United States became a part of the United Church of Christ in a 1960 merger. In Canada and in Australia, most of these churches became members of the United Church of Canada and the Uniting Church in Australia respectively.

Baptists

The origins of the Baptists are most commonly traced to John Smyth and the Separatists. In 1609, John Smyth, led a group of separatists from England to the Netherlands to start the General Baptist Church. In 1616, Henry Jacob led a group of Puritans in England with a Calvinist theology to form a congregational church that would eventually become the Particular

Baptists in 1638 under John Spilsbury. Both groups had members who sailed to America as pilgrims to avoid religious persecution in England and Europe and who started Baptist churches in the early colonies. Baptist churches were established in the American colonies from the mid-seventeenth century. In 1639, Roger Williams founded a church on Baptist principles in Providence, Rhode Island, and this is usually regarded as the beginning of American Baptist history.

Baptist churches are not under the direct administrative control of any other body, such as a national council, or a leader such as a bishop. Administration, leadership and doctrine are decided democratically by the lay members of each individual church, which accounts for the variation of beliefs from one Baptist church to another.

Congregational governance has taken on several forms. In the Reformation period and today, there are examples of single-elder, plural-elder and democratic congregational forms. What they have in common is that the source of authority is the local congregation.

The largest Baptist associations in the United States are

- American Baptist Churches USA (ABC)
- Baptist Bible Fellowship International (BBFI)
- Baptist General Conference (BGC)
- National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (NBC)
- National Baptist Convention of America, Inc. (NBCA)
- Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

and in Canada

- Association of Regular Baptist Churches
- Baptist General Conference of Canada (BGCC)
- Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM)
- Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists (CCSB)
- Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada.

Presbyterian Governance

Presbyterian governance may be described as a combination of the episcopal and congregational polities. In contrast to the other two forms, authority in presbyterian

governance flows both from the top down (as higher assemblies exercise considerable authority over individual congregations) and from the bottom up (as all officials ultimately owe their elections to individual church members).

Some Presbyterians, however, would prefer to say that the form of church governance which gives their denomination its name is simply a true representation of the New Testament church's design. The role of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is very significant to the understanding of presbyterian church polity.

I refer to presbyterian polity as a combination because of how the source of authority is defined. The people elect the leaders, but the authority comes from God, not from the people who elected them. Here is how L. Berkhof describes the combination in Systematic Theology.

"The officers of the church are the representatives of the people chosen by popular vote. This does not mean, however, that they receive their authority from the people, for the call of the people is but a confirmation of the inner call by the Lord Himself." (p. 584)

The presbyterian form of church governance is the result of Reformer John Calvin's work. Calvin was a French theologian living in exile in Geneva. John Calvin's international influence on the development of the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation began in 1534 when Calvin was 25. That marks his start on the first edition of Institutes of the Christian Religion (published 1536). Calvin influenced the doctrines of the Reformed churches. He eventually became the most prominent of those reformers.

The rising importance of the Reformed churches and of Calvin belongs to the second phase of the Protestant Reformation. Evangelical churches began to form after Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Catholic Church... He had signed the Lutheran Augsburg Confession as it was revised by Melancthon in 1540. However, his influence was first felt in the Swiss Reformation whose leader was Ulrich Zwingli. It soon became evident that doctrine in the Reformed churches was developing in a direction independent of Martin Luther's, under the influence of numerous writers and reformers among whom Calvin eventually became preeminent. Much later, when his fame was attached to the Reformed churches, their whole body of doctrine came to be called "Calvinism".

(Wikipedia, Calvinism)

The man generally considered the father of presbyterian governance is John Knox. Born in Scotland in 1510, he was influenced by Calvin, while Knox was in exile in Geneva. When Knox returned to Scotland in 1559, there was

a significant effort to replace the Roman Catholic Church with Protestant Christianity. Knox led in the establishment of the Church of Scotland by the Scottish Parliament in 1560 with the approval of the *Scots Confession*, written largely by John Knox along with five others.

Reformed and Presbyterian Churches

Today there are many Reformed and Presbyterian churches, which adopt forms of presbyterian governance. There are at least seven branches of the Presbyterian denominations in Scotland and more than 20 in North America. The largest are

- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) PC (USA)
- Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

Reformed churches also employ presbyterian governance. The two largest of about ten branches of Reformed churches in North America are

- Reformed Church in America
- Christian Reformed Church.

State Church and Episcopal Governance

Henry VIII and the Church of England

Does it seem strange to see Henry VIII in a list of reformers? You may think he needed reforming himself! As Chad Owen Brand writes in his introduction to *Perspectives on Church Government* (p. 19), “Henry VIII’s ‘reform’ of the Church of England had more to do with politics and his personal whims than it did with a genuine commitment to biblical, much less ‘Protestant,’ reforms.” Henry’s role is commonly associated with his famous divorce from Catherine of Aragon, but the story is much more complex than that one significant event.

The role that Henry VIII played in the transition of the *Ecclesia Anglican*, mentioned in the Magna Carta of 1215, from being a part of the Roman Catholic Church to becoming the Church of England is very significant to our understanding of church governance in many evangelical churches today.

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In declaring himself the head of the Church of England, Henry continued the control of the church by the state, but more important for our consideration, he entrenched the bishop-led, episcopal system in a non-Roman Catholic church. This is the form of governance that we see today in the Anglican churches and the Episcopal churches.

George Macaulay Trevelyan in his outstanding book, *A Shortened History of England*, gives a helpful perspective on the relationship between Henry VIII's leadership and the formation of the Church of England. Here are excerpts from his chapter, "The Tudors — Renaissance, Reformation and Sea Power." (pp.185-205)

The prelude to Henry's breach with the Pope was the German Reformation under Luther, which for some years almost annihilated the prestige of Rome as a centre of religious authority. In 1527 the Holy City was sacked by Charles V, Emperor in Germany...If ever there was a moment when European opinion made it easy for England to break with the Papacy, it was the generation that followed the revolt of Luther and the Sack of Rome.

The Lutheran doctrines had no sooner been proclaimed at Wittenberg than they became a power in England, though still under the ban of Church and State.

The change from mediaeval to modern society in the sphere of religion consisted mainly in a reduction of the power of the priesthood, and the raising up of the laymen, first collectively through the action of the State, then individually, through the freedom of private conscience... But while the power of the Pope and the mediaeval Church was being broken by Henry VIII, anti-clericalism appears as an independent force on the flank of both Catholicism and Protestantism, and for a few decisive years, it was the strongest of the three...

Roman Catholic zeal in England was at its lowest ebb when Henry struck at the mediaeval Church, and it failed to revive when his daughter Mary gave the old religion another chance... In the Tudor epoch as a whole, Catholic zeal had the feebleness of age and the Protestant zeal the feebleness of immaturity... It was, therefore, the supreme moment for the Erastian Prince (Henry VIII, head of the state church) who stepped into the place whence the Pope had been deposed, fully prepared, with the help of Parliament, to define the faith of all his subjects, as the great mass of them heartily desired that he should do...

By putting himself at the head of the Anti-clerical revolution that destroyed the mediaeval power and privilege of the Church, Henry VIII...became the heir of much of that power....

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*Episcopal forms
of governance
are alive and
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evangelical
community
today!*

As we shall see, this form of church governance made its way into many of the Protestant churches that came out of the Church of England. Consequently, episcopal forms of governance are alive and well in the evangelical community today! Thus, some denominations whose theology is antithetical to Roman Catholicism share the same form of polity! It happened via the Church of England.

Post Reformation Governance

The Methodists

John Wesley was a leader who was driven out of the Church of England by the authoritarian behavior of several bishops and finally left the Church of England and eventually moved to the American colonies. He took episcopal polity with him.

“In 1744, I wrote to several clergymen, and to all who then served me as sons in the Gospel, desiring them to meet me in London, to give me their advice, concerning the best method of carrying on the work of God. They did not desire this meeting, but I did...I sent for them to advise, not govern me.” (Minutes, 1176, I, pp. 60-62.)

At the conference held later that same year. *“All aspects of the work and doctrine were discussed at these sessions, and after all the viewpoints had been aired, Wesley himself made the necessary decisions.”* (Moede, p. 17.)

Though John Wesley originally wanted the Methodists to stay within the Church of England, the Methodist Episcopal Church decisively separated the Methodists in the Colonies from the life and sacraments of the English State Church. After unsuccessful attempts to have a bishop sent by the Church of England to start a new church in the colonies, Wesley took the extraordinary step of setting aside fellow priest Thomas Coke as a superintendent (bishop) to organize a separate Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784. Along with Coke, Wesley sent a revision of the Anglican Prayerbook and Articles of

Religion, all of which were received by the Baltimore Christmas Conference of 1784, which established the new church.

Today, the United Methodist Church, established in 1968, continues to follow an episcopal form of governance. Its pastors are called elders and are appointed by the bishops in the conferences in a process that involves others. Where no elder is available to a church because of lack of supply or lack of financial resources, the bishop may appoint a local leader to function as the pastor in that particular church. The governance of the United Methodist Church is described in the *Book of Discipline*.

There are more than 40 other denominations that can trace their origin to the Methodist movement of John Wesley. While each was born out of differences of some sort, most of them retained the episcopal form of governance. Among the more widely known that follow some form of episcopal governance are

- Assemblies of God
- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Church of the Nazarene
- Pentecostal churches
- Salvation Army.

Church Governance Today

This brief synopsis of the development of church governance from the apostles to the reformers brings us to today. Now we have examples of many variations of church governance. Denominations have split and splintered into multiple denominations, producing ever more variations of the three basic forms of governance—episcopal, presbyterian and congregational.

To confuse this issue even more, it seems there is dynamic tension in every major denomination caused by the desire to move away from whatever the church's official position on church governance happens to be. In the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches there are efforts to bring more lay involvement, removing some authority from the clergy. In the Lutheran Church there are ongoing efforts to increase the authority of the clergy, including efforts to establish appointments of bishops for life and efforts to authorize clergy to choose their own board members to be vetted but not elected by the church members. Some may be inclined to say that the Lutheran Church is closer to the episcopal form of governance than to congregational governance already. In the Presbyterian churches there are several divergent views on how authority should flow between the clergy and the members of local churches.

In order to benefit from this brief look at history, I am suggesting that the most important element of church governance is to understand how authority flows from the Lord to the church and then how it flows within the church. The reason that this is so important is that accountability flows in the opposite direction from authority. In my consulting practice, the question of how authority flows emerges again and again as the single, most problematic element in understanding church governance.

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In order for any church to know to whom its spiritual leaders are accountable, it must understand the source of authority for those leaders.

In order for any church to know to whom its spiritual leaders are accountable, it must understand the source of authority for those leaders. Is it the members of the church who elected them? Is it a group of leaders outside of the church? Is it a single bishop, president or superintendent? Or is it only God? This last possibility would mean that the leader is not accountable to any human being. In the next chapter we will discuss some of the issues that can bring clarity to this vexing conundrum.

Summary

In this chapter we observed the congregational form of church governance of the New Testament make an early transition to episcopal polity. The transition was associated with the office of bishop becoming different from the office of elder. This episcopal form of governance became the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches we know today.

The leadership of the Roman Emperor, Constantine, in convening the first world council at Nicaea, demonstrated the state's leadership in the church. The power of the Roman Catholic Pope to convene councils came later. The first major division within the Christian Church came in the eleventh century and led to the distinction between the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Even at this time, the predominant form of church governance was episcopal in both the east and the west.

The Renaissance, the technology of the printing press and the work of Reformers, brought about major change in the sixteenth century. While the episcopal polity continued in the Roman Catholic Church, it continued also in the Church of England and in denominations that grew in that soil, including Methodist, Salvation Army, Pentecostal churches, Assemblies of God, Church of the Nazarene, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and others.

The Reformed churches under John Calvin tended to take on forms of presbyterian governance. John Knox took Calvin's influence back to Scotland where the Presbyterian Church, as we know it today, was born.

Congregational governance is practiced by Lutherans and also by the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren denominations that come from the Anabaptist movement. Baptist churches that developed from the Separatist and Puritan movements also follow a congregational form of governance. The United Church of Christ is also considered congregational but follows a hybrid form of governance that reflects its Congregational and Reformed roots.

In the next chapter we will see how some of the concepts related to church governance can clarify our thinking and enable us to use the operating system called the Relationship Model™ in order to support an application of governance, leadership and management of our churches today. At the same time we will see why the operating system of this Model will work in all forms of church polity, even though the application this book offers may apply most naturally to the form of congregational church governance.

For Reflection and Discussion

How would you categorize the governance of your church and your denomination?

Is it a hybrid of more than one form of governance?

Do you think that your church governance and the Relationship Model™ are compatible? Why? Why not?

Making Paradigm Shifts

PART TWO
CHAPTER

10

We have finally arrived in the present era. At this point I want to explore five of the elements of our present context that sometimes create confusion and division. All five of these elements have been discussed in earlier chapters, but here we want to highlight the challenge that each brings to the governance context. Bringing clarity to these elements will enable church leaders to make the paradigm shifts in thinking required to break out of current structures and practices to a more effective form of church governance and management.

Management to Governance

The first of these is the shift from the management paradigm to the governance paradigm. The most common model I have found among the churches that have asked me to assist them with governance is not a governance model at all. It is a management model. Way back in Chapter 1 I listed the persistence of this model as one of the problems facing churches today. You may recall the diagram of one such church structure in that chapter.

The church board is often made up of the chairs of management units, often called boards themselves, e.g. Board of Education, Board of Missions. More often they

are called committees, e.g. Worship Committee, Evangelism Committee, Properties Committee.

The board becomes a meeting of a senior management team, where decisions recommended by one of the committees are ratified and where changes in budget are approved. The president, moderator, or chair provides a facilitation function for the decision-making process. The pastor in this model likely attends most or all of the committee meetings and has influence or control by virtue of the pastor's position. Usually, though, the pastor isn't usually considered a manager at all.

Much of the board time is spend in monitoring risk. The board usually does this informally, confident that someone will pick up on whatever "red flags" might appear. The degree of risk tolerance and the quality of monitoring both change with the makeup of the board. The board relies on individual experience rather than monitoring policies refined over time.

Furthermore, the management that the board is monitoring is its own. Because this type of board is made up of the senior managers (committee chairs) they have not delegated the management to any one person. Thus, the board is left to hold itself accountable for its own management.

In this model, there is very little governance taking place. As we shall see in Chapter 12, strategic planning is the most important work of governance. But this board is so busy with management—even with meetings every month—that there is no time for strategic planning. That usually defaults to the pastor and staff.

The governing paradigm reverses this structure and process. Because the change to governance is a paradigm shift, not a gradual transition, there may be a tendency for some boards to stumble at the thought of change. The idea of spending time in strategic planning, delegating management authority to someone else (the pastor and administrator), and monitoring someone else's management by policy is just too much of a change. The board may feel it is being irresponsible.

Most board members are able to make the paradigm shift, realizing that governance offers them a more effective means of controlling and directing the church's ministry than managing it themselves. I should probably mention here, however, that this paradigm shift does often lead to changes in board membership. People who want to manage prefer to move to one of the pastor's or administrator's management teams. On the other hand "big picture" and analytical thinkers are attracted to the board, because they want to govern the church's ministry rather than manage it.

The management paradigm is more natural and appears to be more aligned with our personal experience. We manage time, money, work, family and business. It's natural to want to manage the church's ministry.

The shift in paradigm may be seen as a shift from a managing paradigm to a parenting paradigm. It's no coincidence that "governess" is the title given to a substitute parent. Parenting is a form of governance. Parents give increasing amounts of authority to their children by adjusting limitations to give more freedom in planning and decision-making. With increased freedom comes increased responsibility. Parents usually have high expectations and try to provide the resources the children need to succeed. The healthy accountability that flows from this kind of parenting usually results in fulfilled children and proud parents.

Governing boards are the elected "parents" of the church. Some parents are over-protecting and don't allow their children to learn from their own mistakes. Other parents are unrealistic in their expectations and produce children that leave home as soon as possible. Good governance, like good parenting, is empowering, not controlling or "paternalistic." The board delegates as much authority as possible to the pastor and administrator. It is careful to balance resources with expectations, so that the entire staff can find personal fulfillment in their effective ministry.

Church boards who want to make the change from management to governance will realize that this change requires a change in thinking, a paradigm shift. It is not the same business as usual. Each member of the church board will want and need to evaluate whether this change is a good match for the gifts God has given to each person. Most board members wear more than one hat of responsibility in the church, but some will prefer governance to management or vice versa. Some can handle both with comfort. Any choice is okay, but to understand that a choice is required is vital.

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Good governance, like good parenting, is empowering, not controlling or "paternalistic."

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"Big picture" and analytical thinkers are attracted to the board.

Clergy and Laity

What kind of paradigm shift could possibly be required under this heading? Isn't it obvious who clergy are and who the laity are? Yes, of course, but it's the relationship between the two that deserves a closer look.

As we have already seen in earlier chapters, there is difference of opinion regarding which of the two is the source of authority for the other. Normally, our respect for the clergy suggests that the members of the clergy are the sources of authority for the laity. There is certainly significant truth to this, as I shall attempt to clarify it in the section which follows. But there is more to it.

The Relationship Model™ makes the assumption that clergy exist because God ordained for the church to have spiritual leadership. The New Testament documents the transition of the selection of these leaders in this way:

- Jesus chose the apostles (Matthew 10:1-2), then
- the apostles chose the elders, not more apostles (Acts 14:23), and later
- the church chose elders and deacons—with the apostles' blessing (Acts 6:1-6).

Thus, the people of God choose who will be the God-ordained leaders who lead the church. Perhaps an illustration of how this choice works may help.

Can you imagine a pastor arriving at a local church with this message? "God has called me to be your pastor. Let's see... I'll need some keys, a salary, a home with a two-car garage..." Obviously, this could never happen. Someone authorizes a pastor to take the leadership of a local church. God authorizes people to call pastors.

For some this may not require any paradigm shift at all. For others, it may be too much of a shift to make.

Churches that will understand this more easily are those which select their spiritual leaders in a process that flows from the membership of the local church itself.

Churches that find the shift more challenging are those for whom someone outside of the local church makes the decision of who the local church's spiritual leader is going to be. A bishop, a district superintendent or other regional authority may seek the advice of the local church in making the decision that is still the regional leader's to make. In these cases, the local church leaders are not likely to think of themselves as the source of authority for their pastor.

Increasing the likelihood is that most of these same churches allow the pastor to be a voting member of the board and in some cases also the chair of the board. Where this conflict of interest is a matter of the structural design of a denomination, it becomes even more unlikely that the local church will see itself as the source of authority for the pastor.

It's been my experience that even within the episcopal polity churches there is more and more of a tendency to consider the needs and will of the local churches. In some cases, some hybrid forms of church polity are allowing churches to choose their own pastors and to elect a member of the church to chair the board.

On the other hand some of the more congregational churches are experiencing the opposite shift. Some pastors are taking more power than their church polity would normally allow. And members of local churches are allowing it to happen.

In one recent conversation, I asked a pastor, "To whom in the church are you accountable?" He replied calmly and with the support he took from the New Testament that he was not accountable to anyone in the local church. The Holy Spirit had simply used them to call him, but his only accountability was to the Holy Spirit, not to any human being.

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"God has called me to be your pastor. Let's see... I'll need some keys, a salary..."

Spiritual and Strategic Authority

The confusion indicated in the preceding paragraph may be the result of another paradigm shift that is commonly required in the transition to governance.

The local church is the source of the pastor's authority, but there are two different types of authority—spiritual and strategic. One deals with the spiritual leadership of the church. The other deals with what the mission of the church is and what its priorities should be. A governing board delegates only spiritual authority to the pastor. To merge the two initiates a litany of confusion that goes on and on.

When a pastor is called to serve a specific church, that pastor is given the authority to be the spiritual leader of the members of that church. Delegating spiritual leadership gives the pastor the authority and the responsibility to use the two-edged sword of the Law and the Gospel within the local church. The pastor exercises that authority and responsibility when it's necessary to teach, warn, or discipline members regarding their behavior in relationship to the limits of Christian freedom defined by the Ten Commandments. The pastor is also given the authority to announce the healing power of the Gospel on behalf of the universal priesthood of all believers who have gathered in the local church.

On the other hand, determining the mission of the local church and the priorities of the mission are the responsibilities of the board. The pastor is very much involved in the process of strategic planning that determines the mission and priorities, but the governing board is proactive in this process and continues to own it. Recall the example in Chapter 1 of Rockwood Community Church where successive pastors were given strategic authority to change the Mission to match their own gifts and interests rather than the interests of the members. The result is that the board becomes a management body while the pastor assumes the strategic leadership.

To illustrate the pastor's authority in these matters, imagine the pastor who has to deal with a member of the board on an issue of morality just after the board has completed the process of strategic planning. That pastor now has a clear mandate to manage the priorities for the ministry that the board has determined. The same pastor also has the difficult duty of challenging the member of the board on a matter of personal conduct and behavior. This apparent paradox is consistent with the spiritual authority that the church has delegated to the pastor and the strategic authority that the board continues to own and lead. In fact, a healthy governing board will hold the pastor accountable for faithfulness in applying the Law and the Gospel even in difficult circumstances.

Distinguishing Elders and Deacons

The next contextual element that may involve a paradigm shift is in understanding the form and function (structure and process) of elders and deacons.

Many churches use these two terms to describe the titles that they have given to the position within the structure they have adopted. This emphasizes the form that these terms contain. Meanwhile, the functions that modern elders

and deacons fulfill may be different from the functions of elders and deacons in the first century church.

In exploring the development of governance in the first century and beyond, I shared the perspective that the early church emphasized function over formal titles and position. Some of the most important leaders are not even ascribed a title. Some of the titles, e.g. prophet, teacher, evangelist, seem to describe functions held by elders and deacons more than the formal title of a separate position. What is important in our transition to governance is that we honor the God-ordained functions necessary for a healthy church while enjoying the freedom to create the formal structure that can deliver those functions in our churches.

What may be necessary for some church leaders is to become comfortable with the use of additional terms to describe the titles and positions of a more complex church structure. Continuing the functions while changing the formal titles need not be cause for discomfort, but a paradigm shift from emphasis on function instead of form may be required.

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*A paradigm shift
from emphasis
on function
instead of form
may be required.*

The functions of New Testament era elders and deacons will always be part of the church's mission. The four broad areas of responsibility of the early elders outlined in the Elders/Apostles Relationship Description in Chapter 8 are still relevant today.

Still, the term "elders" may shift to "board of directors." The fourth responsibility of elders (healing, "anoint with oil") may become a management function rather than a governance function. The functions endure, but the form changes.

Caring for the more vulnerable members of the church, as deacons were appointed to do, is also still relevant, but the term "deacon" may give way to other terms. Remember that "deacon" appears only four times in the New Testament. When the function of deacons is introduced in Acts 6, the term "deacon" doesn't even appear. It does no harm to our faith to maintain the

function of care for the vulnerable, while delegating the function to individuals and committees with different titles. Thus, many churches have long since stopped using the term “deacon,” but they still include the function that we associate with the first century deacons.

Both terms may continue in use in the current context, but they may have different meanings, provided all the functions of the New Testament church are included somewhere in our more complex forms and structures.

Local, Regional, National Structures

The final element that needs clarification in our transition from management to governance may also require a paradigm shift for some leaders.

The flow of authority within local, regional, and national churches varies with the type of church polity in use in the denomination of which you are a member. In episcopal and presbyterian churches the flow is from the national to the regional to the local. In congregational church polity the flow is from local to regional and from local to national. There may be variations among denominations depending on the historical development. Sometimes a regional form emerges first. Sometimes the national form emerges before the regional level is established. Complicating this even further is the experience of the United Church of Canada and the Uniting Church of Australia where denominations of different polities merge to form a new one.

Role of the Local Church

The perspective I offer here is based on the principle that each local church is autonomous. The local church is free to be an independent church. There are many churches that are unaffiliated with any denomination. Most churches, however, choose to align themselves with a family of local churches. Indeed, many local churches came into being through the efforts of a regional or national level of a denomination. They never had to “adopt” a denomination. They were born into one.

Here is the irony of our present context that may require a paradigm shift. Churches that prefer to be a member of a larger family of churches (a denomination, in other words) tend to forget that they also have the option to be independent. They choose membership in a denomination because of the benefits they derive from that association, but they never lose their autonomy.

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The local congregation is thus the source of authority for both the regional and the national levels.

The choice was made so long ago, however, that few remember the theory around autonomy. Instead, the leaders regard the regional and national levels of church governance as having more authority than the local congregation. What is too often forgotten is that the regional and national leaders are elected by delegates of local congregations. The local congregation is thus the source of authority for both the regional and the national levels.

The leaders of the regional and national levels often make the same mistake of memory. They sometimes see themselves as having authority “over” the local church, when in reality both the regional and national levels are servants of the local churches who have chosen to create and to become a part of a larger family of churches.

What then are the appropriate roles of the regional and national levels of church governance? What value does either level add? Do the local churches really need both?

The appropriate roles of the two levels differ, and it’s likely that the local churches can benefit from both.

Role of the National Church

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The most important role of national church governance is to provide a definition of acceptable doctrine and practice.

In many denominations the most important role of national church governance is to provide a definition of acceptable doctrine and practice. Often this function is delegated to a group that may be described as the elders of the larger church, much like the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. In this way the theology and practice of the church is not controlled by majority vote, but affirmed by a group of leaders within the national church who are respected for their spiritual leadership.

The national church normally provides other services to the local churches. For example, the national church may represent the local churches in international mission and service. That may extend to engaging in national mission in areas of the country that are not covered by any of the regional units. It may also include electronic mission opportunities and national media liaison.



Whose property is it really?

One of the clearest examples of the confusion regarding the flow of authority between the denomination and the local church is found in the bylaw that deals with the disposition of the property of the local church if the church leaves the denomination or dissolves.

Found in thousands of bylaws in many denominations, including those with a congregational form of governance is some version of the following:

“If at any time a separation should take place on account of doctrine, the congregation and all benefits therewith connected shall remain with those voting members who continue to adhere in confession and practice to the Statement of Faith in this constitution. In the event the congregation should totally disband, the property and all rights connected therewith shall be transferred to the (name of denomination, name of region) or its successor.”

In order for a local church to become a member of this denomination, the members must agree to include this clause in its bylaws. The bylaws of the local church require the approval of the national church. The price of admission is the loss of ownership of the local church's property if that church ever leaves.

This bylaw is overtly intended to prevent a local church from leaving the denomination. It even protects the property rights of a minority of the members against the majority that may decide to leave the denomination.

Even though the national church is the servant of the local churches which choose to form and maintain a shared national identity, the national church assumes a position of authority greater than the local congregations in denying the local church the freedom of ever changing its mind.

Whose property is it really? How autonomous can a local church be, if it cannot reverse a decision to be a member of a certain denomination without losing ownership of its own property? It appears that this denomination, like others, has confused the direction of the flow of authority between it and the local churches and has lost its sense of purpose to be a servant of the local churches.

In some denominations, however, the individual churches engage directly in missions beyond their own geographical place without any coordination by the national church. In fact, in some cases the individual members are free to go to other places “as the Lord leads” without any coordination even by the local church.

The national church may also manage the training and accreditation of pastors and other spiritual leaders. This is the laying on of hands of ordination that provides the local churches with a supply of certified pastors and other professional workers for the other laying on of hands of installation or affirmation.

The national church may also provide administrative support for pension and health benefits with an economy of scale that benefits the local churches.

Finally, some national bodies also provide national training conferences for the whole church, not to replace those done by the regional church but to augment them with matters of national interest and concern.

In all of these services the national church is meeting the needs of the local churches. It’s the local churches acting in annual or semi-annual conventions that maintain the national level of church governance and elect or affirm its leaders. The local churches “own” the national church, not vice versa.



One service that the regional church provides is a monitoring of the compliance with doctrine and practice within the local churches in the region.

The Role of the Regional Church

It’s unfortunate that more time is not devoted to defining the separate roles of the national and regional levels of church governance. The unnecessary overlap between what the two levels provide is a cause for wondering if both are necessary. The need for both becomes more evident when we understand the unique ways in which each can serve the local churches.

One service that the regional church provides is a monitoring of the compliance with doctrine and practice within the local churches in the region. In this way, the national church sets the standards. The important role of

the regional church is to ensure the standards are consistent among the local churches.

It's usually the regional church that provides other parish services which includes support for

- professional church workers and their families
- church leaders in providing the services of the local church
- local churches in finding pastors and other church workers
- initiating new ministries within the region.

In my experience in working at the local, regional, and national levels of several denominations, I've concluded that everyone could benefit from a more common understanding of

- the flow of authority between the three levels of governance
- the distinct roles of the three levels of church governance
- more effective compatibility between what the local churches need and want in a pastor and what the national church and seminaries provide
- greater involvement of local churches by both regional and national levels to better understand how to meet the needs of the local churches that together "own" both the regional and national levels of church governance.

Clarifying these relationships within many denominations will undoubtedly result in changing some assumptions and making some shifts in paradigms. The result will be a greater affirmation and effectiveness of the structure without a need to completely overhaul that structure.

Summary

In this chapter I've attempted to address five areas in which paradigm shifts (new ways of thinking about existing structures and processes) can prepare the governance context for more effective church governance.

Management and Governance

It's more natural for board members to approach their work with a managing paradigm than a governance paradigm. Understanding parenting as a familiar form of governing may help to make a smooth transition to governance.

Clergy and Laity

The relationship between clergy and laity is understood differently across denominations. In congregational forms of governance, to which this application of the Relationship Model™ is best suited, clergy receive authority to be the spiritual leader of a local church from the members of that local church, not from any other source. This may require a paradigm shift for those who think of the pastor as the source of authority for the church.

Spiritual and Strategic Authority

The confusion sometimes associated with the previous paragraph may be impacted by the confusion between spiritual authority that is delegated to the pastor by the local church and the strategic authority for determining what the church's mission and its priorities should be that is owned by the board.

Elders and Deacons

The confusion associated with the structures and processes that these two terms describe may cause hesitation to transition to governance. It may help to recall that the New Testament was more concerned with assuring that certain functions be a part of the church than with what name would be assigned to the position within the church that provides that function. Thus, the terms “elder” and “deacon” are not fundamental to the titles of positions of governance, but the functions associated with them in the New Testament must be included somewhere in any modern structure.

Local, Regional, National Structures

The whole church can benefit from a clearer understanding of the roles of the local, regional, and national levels of church governance.

The local church is autonomous and has the authority and responsibility for determining its mission and priorities. Most local churches use that autonomy to choose to be part of a larger family of churches. They are the owners of both the regional and national levels of church governance. Their ownership is exercised by approving bylaws and by electing leaders at an annual or semi-annual convention of their delegates.

The national church has a specific role in meeting the needs of the local church for

- defining doctrine and practice
- international mission and service
- national electronic mission initiatives
- national and international media liaison
- training and accreditation of pastors and other church workers
- pension and health benefits.

The regional church has a specific role in meeting the needs of the local church for

- monitoring and ensuring compliance with doctrine and practice
- supporting professional church workers and their families
- supporting church leaders in providing the services of the local church
- assisting local churches in finding pastors and other church workers
- initiating new ministries with the region.

In the following chapter we discuss the structure of the application of church governance using the operating system of the Relationship Model™. Each of the next four chapters will discuss one of the four quadrants of responsibility of the church board. They are

- designing structure and governance processes
- strategic planning
- delegating management authority and responsibility
- monitoring performance and measure results.

For Reflection and Discussion

Do you resonate to any of the challenges of change suggested in this chapter? Which one(s)?

In your opinion would any of these paradigm changes make it impossible for you to transition to the Relationship Model of governance? Which ones? Why?

Designing the Tree Trunk (Governance Structure)

PART TWO
CHAPTER

11

In this chapter we will begin an examination of church governance, the first application that “runs” on the operating system of God’s design of relationships. (Leadership and management are the other two applications that we discuss later.) Our focus in this chapter is on structure, namely the relationships involved in governance, including those between

- the board and the members of the church
- the board chair and the board
- the committees and the board
- the individual board member and the board.

We will discuss structure in terms of authority, responsibility and accountability as they apply to each relationship. And we will emphasize the importance of supporting the structure with the core values evident in healthy relationships.

This model of governance focuses on the supportive strength that a church board provides, not on the board’s power. That’s why the “roots-up” organizational chart names the board as the trunk of the tree. The board must be able to support all of the structure above it.

The Board/Members Relationship

In almost all churches, the board receives its authority to govern from the members of the church. The description of this relationship belongs in the bylaws, because changes to the bylaws require the approval of members. The board does not have the authority to change this relationship. The board may recommend a bylaw change, but it takes a formal meeting of the members to make the change.

The Role of Members

The members are the true owners of the church. They choose a board because logistics make it impossible for them to govern the church directly. They elect men and women to the board who appear to have the abilities and time to govern the church on their behalf.

- Members delegate their authority and responsibility through the election process.
- Members do not and can not delegate their accountability.

The membership should give the board as much freedom as possible to develop its structure, including in the bylaws only those “rules” that members consider essential. My experience is that the bylaws go into more detail than required, probably because no board governance manual existed when they were written. Without a governance manual the bylaws are the only available depository for the details that belong in the manual.

For example, including a list of officers in the bylaws and then requiring that each position be filled by election at the annual general meeting, forces may result in

- adopting a structure that may not be appropriate for its governance
- filling the positions with people who may not have the competencies required.

The bylaws of the church contain the basic components of the relationship between the membership and the board. The board/membership relationship description that follows may be found in the governance manual only for practical purposes, not because its contents don’t appear in the bylaws, but because most bylaws include this material in a somewhat random order. Some even miss components, such as limitations of authority and expectations of responsibility.

There is a weak accountability process in the relationship between the membership and the board. The only real means of dealing with a board’s failure to govern the church is to elect other members to the board at the

◀
In almost all churches, the board receives its authority to govern from the members of the church.

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The board itself must develop the relationship between the membership and the board by putting in place accountability processes that will ensure the trustworthiness of its governance.

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The main focus of the board is on the second point above—strategic planning.

next AGM. In the real world, however, the members are not likely to have the information they need to hold a board accountable.

For this reason, the board itself must develop the relationship between the membership and the board by putting in place accountability processes that will ensure the trustworthiness of its governance, regardless of whether members themselves require it or not.

The Role of the Board

The role of the board is to direct and control the entire ministry of the church through the process of governance. Four types of activity enable the board to accomplish its responsibilities. They are to

- design the board's structure and governance processes
- provide strategic leadership by determining the church's values, services, beneficiary groups, vision, mission and priorities as well as other components of the strategic plan
- delegate management authority and responsibility to the senior pastor
- be accountable for strategic results and ensure that the church and each individual in it act within the limitations of delegated authority.

The main focus of the board is on the second point above—strategic planning. The basic question the board must continually ask and answer is, “What services shall we deliver to which people in which places and in what order of priority?”

Careful delegation of management authority and responsibility to the senior pastor (and sometimes also an administrator) allows the board to monitor management rather than manage itself. The board can then spend more time considering the needs of its members and providing strategic direction to the senior pastor to meet those needs.

The following is an example of the relationship between the board and its sources of authority.

The Board/Members Relationship Description

1. Authority

The ultimate source of all the board's authority to govern the ministry of the church is the body of members. That authority is delegated by election or affirmation.

The board's sources of moral authority are the members and the denomination of which the church is a member.

The board's sources of strategic/operational authority are the members.

The board's sources of legal/regulatory authority are the governmental authorities where the church is registered and where its services are delivered.

2. Limitations of Authority

In exercising its moral authority and its legal and regulatory authority, the board may not violate the laws of the country where it is registered and operates or the relevant policies of the national church of which it is a member church.

In exercising its strategic/operational authority, the board may not violate the bylaws of the church.

3. Responsibilities

The responsibilities of governance of the board are to

- design the board's structure and governance processes
- provide strategic leadership by determining the church's values, services beneficiary groups, vision, mission and priorities and the other components of the strategic plan
- delegate management authority and responsibility to the senior pastor
- be accountable for strategic results and to ensure that the church and each individual in it act within all the limitations of delegated authority.

4. Expectations

The expectations of the board are described in its governance manual, strategic plans, the annual strategic goals of the church and the annual tactical goals of the board.

In fulfilling its strategic and operational responsibility, the board shall seek and respect the counsel of the members of the church in its strategic planning process and in its governance of the strategic mission and priorities.

5. Accountabilities

The board is accountable to the members of the church and to the civil authorities where it is registered and where it delivers its services.

The board's accountability will be exercised by the submission of required documentation to government authorities and by clear and true reporting to all of its stakeholders—members, staff and volunteers, and strategic partners.

The Board Chair/Board Relationship

This relationship is documented in the governance manual, because the board's approval is required for any changes to the relationship. Additional authority from the members is not required. The board chair may not make changes to the relationship, because the board is the chair's source of authority.

The board chair leads the processes of governance to

- design the structure and the processes
- plan for the future
- delegate management to the senior pastor
- monitor performance and measure results.

Leadership of the process is essential to the success of the board chair/board relationship. This crucial element of the chair's responsibilities is not commonly practiced.



How can it happen that a group makes a decision that does not reflect the thoughts and opinions of the individuals within it? Here are some common reasons:

1. One or more members of the board dominate the discussion. They speak more with emotion than reason. People feel intimidated and belittled. The chair either willingly allows it to happen or can't control it.
2. A small group has already made a decision prior to the meeting. They manipulate information in such a way that the board doesn't have the full picture. Pressure is applied to trust those who have already looked into the matter.
3. The chair has a personal agenda. Instead of relinquishing the chair at the beginning of the specific item, the chair uses his or her position to jockey the decision around to his or her way of thinking. Some board members agree with the chair's position. No one calls the chair on the inappropriate behavior.
4. The material has been sent out beforehand. However, preparation by board members is so poor that many are embarrassed to speak to the matter, even though they aren't comfortable with the discussion or the decision. They believe that their lack of preparation disqualifies them.
5. The senior pastor has surprised the board with a new recommendation. Instead of providing alternatives and highlighting their strengths and weaknesses so the board can make an informed choice, the senior pastor makes a single recommendation. Not having the recommendation ahead of time, the board "rubber-stamps" the senior pastor's idea.
6. The shy board member, who has deep insights and is always prepared, does not speak up. The chair fails to ensure that all board members contribute to the discussion. The quiet member's insights are never heard.

The ideal relationship between the board chair and the board is like that of an orchestra conductor and the musicians. Each member of the orchestra specializes in producing a certain sound. The conductor's role is to lead a process of blending those sounds, without personally producing any of the sounds. Together, conductor and musicians bring a beautiful symphony to life.

Process that results in quality decisions is the responsibility of the chair. Almost every time a board makes a decision that most of its members don't personally support, I would say that the chair has failed in the chair's responsibility to lead the process effectively.

In my experience it makes little difference whether the chair abuses the chair's position or simply lacks the competencies required to be a good chair. I have observed chairs working from an authoritarian value system, abusing the authority of the chair, and from a *laissez-faire* value system, unwilling to use the chair's authority. The result is the same: poor process and flawed decisions.



Think back to a board meeting where the discussion of an issue went badly. After the meeting, a typical conversation between you and another board member might follow this format... You mentioned to someone that you didn't agree with the board's decision. Your fellow board member said that she didn't either. She only voted for the motion because there was so much pressure. You agreed with her that it would have taken forever to overcome the passionate arguments in favor of the decision, so you both just gave up. In talking to other members, you realize that the majority of board members disagreed, but the motion passed anyway.

The following facing pages list the 20 competencies required for an effective board member.

Board Member Competencies

Accountability — welcomes objective evaluation of working relationships and performance of self and others.

Ambiguity tolerance — operates effectively when the group is unable to resolve an issue or reach a conclusion and is willing to take a measured risk even when the outcomes are uncertain.

Commitment to the organization — the attachment a person has to the organization when its values, vision and mission are aligned with his/her own.

Communication — gives and receives information with clarity, attentiveness, understanding and perception.

Conceptual thinking — makes connections between apparently separate issues, seeing patterns, trends or relationships and developing mental frameworks to explain and interpret information.

Conflict resolution — ensures conflict is resolved with justice and fairness in order to restore healthy relationships.

Effective judgement — applies common sense, measured reasoning, knowledge and experience to come to a conclusion.

Empathy — shows awareness and appreciation of the feelings concerns and needs of others.

Independent thinking — maintains own convictions despite undue influence, opposition or threat.

Initiative — grasps opportunities and proactively ensures that neither issues nor people are forgotten or overlooked.

Inter-dependence — works effectively with others demonstrating commitment to the group decision or activity.

Logical thinking — breaks issues down into their constituent parts and predicts cause and effect in a sequence of steps.

Objectivity — draws conclusions by impartial evaluation of other perspectives and views without prejudice or bias.

Open-mindedness — maintains an open and flexible mind towards new information, thoughts and ideas, welcoming the opportunity to grow in knowledge and understanding.

Personal integrity — trustworthy and conscientious and can be relied on to act and speak with consistency and honesty.

Process orientation — makes decisions and seeks outcomes by consistent application of a logical sequence of agreed steps.

Self-awareness — accurately assesses strengths and weaknesses and can manage them successfully.

Self-esteem — respects and likes him/herself, confident in his/her self-worth and capabilities.

Stewardship — makes the best use of resources while striving for high standards and a balance between effectiveness and efficiency.

Transparency — has no hidden agendas but is open with information while maintaining the privacy of individuals.

Choosing the Chair

Not every board member can be an effective chair. Although the competencies required of a board chair are the same as for board members, it is the strength of certain competencies that makes the difference, e.g. a real commitment to process, not just an orientation to it. These two competencies set the chair apart from other board members:

- process orientation
- objectivity.

Process Orientation

Boards make the best decisions by consensus, based on information, discussion and debate. This is achieved only when the chair follows a process of an agreed, logical sequence of steps, taking into consideration the thoughts and perspectives of all board members.

Involving all board members takes time. An authoritarian chair usually finds it difficult to stick faithfully to process. Beware the board whose decisions are made by a few members in the car on the way to the meeting! Coming to the table with a predetermined decision to be “rubber-stamped” is likely to overlook important information, leading to frustration and the devaluing of other board members.

A board chair needs to be committed to process rather than pushing through the ideas of a few or seeking quick solutions. In this way, the board member will prevent mistakes and spare people from being hurt. Following the agreed decision-making steps takes longer initially but ensures the best outcome. Decisions are more likely to be consistent, fair and transparent with ownership and commitment from all board members.

The wisdom that a church board accumulates through the years is captured through a careful process of committing policies and processes to writing. This provides assurance that board decisions are not dependent on the whim of a few members on any particular day. A chair who makes certain that board decision-making is based on a commitment to follow written process, ensures that decisions are based on accumulated wisdom, not by reinventing the wheel.

Objectivity

It is surprisingly easy for a chair, even one with honorable intentions, to influence the outcome of a decision by expressing personal views. The chair is often in closer contact with the senior pastor than anyone else. The chair may also be perceived to have more information. Because board members respect the chair (they were the ones who elected the chair) those who are uncertain about the issue may be influenced by the chair and agree to the position the chair takes.

The chair is the chief servant of the board, not the individual with the most power. In my view, it is unwise for a board chair to cast a vote at all, and very unwise to cast a deciding vote in any but exceptional circumstances. Such a circumstance may be when the board has no choice but to make a decision, e.g. related to a legal contract, even when that decision emanates from a divided board. Normally, it is wiser to let a matter die and to reformulate the motion for later consideration. Groups that proceed on strategic issues with divided commitment are far less likely to succeed. Chairs who “push things through” are weak leaders, not strong servants.

How does a board chair deal with strong personal convictions in matters of importance to the chair? And how does a chair bring to the table information crucial to a quality decision—information that perhaps only the chair may have?

A board chair may certainly speak for or against an issue. The proper way to do that is to relinquish the chair to the vice-chair or another board member who can lead an objective process. The chair should give up the chair before the agenda item is brought to the table and return only after a decision has been made.



Board Chair Checklist

Here is a checklist that a board chair can use to assure good board process:

1. Ensure that the item has been included on the agenda and supported by information in the board preparation materials.
2. Provide these materials to board members at least a week before the meeting.
3. Ensure that all board decisions, wherever possible, are based on choices, not recommendations. Governance should be proactive, not reactive.
4. Avoid taking a position on the issue without relinquishing the chair before the agenda item begins. Return to the chair only after the matter is decided.
5. Ensure that the motion is clearly presented in writing and understood by the entire board. Handle any amendments or substitutions in the same manner.
6. Ensure that no individual or group dominates the discussion and that every member is heard.
7. Encourage issue-oriented debate and disallow personal attacks. If necessary, call a recess to cool things down or delay the matter till the next meeting.
8. Attempt to achieve consensus through discussion rather than settle for a simple majority.

Process. Process. Process. It's a beautiful thing when it happens, but it doesn't happen automatically.

Following is the board chair/board relationship description. The vice-chair follows these same principles of leadership.

Board Chair/Board Relationship Description

1. Authority

The board chair receives his or her authority by the election of the members (sometimes the board) to lead the governance processes.

The board shall provide the board chair with the material resources required for that process.

2. Limitations of Authority

In the fulfillment of the responsibilities of this position the board chair may not

- take any action not authorized by the board
- direct the decision-making process towards any specific outcome
- give management direction to the senior pastor or the pastor's staff
- cause the board to be in violation of the limitations of its authority
- prevent any proposal from any board member from being considered at the next meeting.

3. Responsibility

The responsibilities of the board chair are to

- lead the governance process, including the preparation of the agenda, ensuring the flow of relevant governance information to the board and chairing the meetings of the board
- lead the process of designing and maintaining board structure and process
- initiate the strategic planning process
- lead the process of delegating authority and responsibility to the senior pastor
- lead the process of board accountability, including an evaluation of the strategic results, the annual review of the performance of the board, the individual board members, the senior pastor, and a process of evaluation of the board chair
- act as an official spokesperson of the church to the stakeholders and the public.

4. Expectations

The expectations of this position shall be negotiated in the annual review of the board chair and shall include

- preparing for and attending every meeting of the board
- managing the flow of all relevant governance information to the board members
- ensuring that all decisions are documented accurately in minutes, policies and other documents
- ensuring that the requirements of the board's accountability to civil government and the stakeholders are met
- conduct that is consistent with the core values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership.

5. Accountabilities

Accountability in this relationship is mutual.

The board is accountable to the board chair for

- providing all the authorization and resources required for the responsibilities
- providing an annual review of the board chair's performance
- negotiating reasonable expectations of the board chair's responsibility
- expressing affirmation, involvement and servant leadership in its relationship with the board chair.

The board chair is accountable to the board for

- performance with respect to the negotiated expectations
- compliance with the limitations of authority of the position.

Scheduled at predetermined annual intervals, the relationship review shall be led by the Relationship Review Committee and may include one additional person who is not a member of the board.

It shall include

- a review of the authorization and resources provided and values expressed to the board chair
- a review of the board chair's performance towards expectations of the responsibilities of the relationship
- a negotiation of expectations for the next planning period
- a review of the authorization and resources required for the next period, including plans for personal development.

Another very significant feature of the board chair's responsibility is the relationship between the chair and the senior pastor. This issue is mentioned in the limitations of authority section in the relationship description above. We will deal with senior pastor/board chair relationship more fully in Chapter 13 in the context of the senior pastor's authority.

The Committee/Board Relationship

When a board forms a committee, it delegates some of its authority and responsibility to a smaller group. Committees can both help and hinder the governance process. The important issues to understand are just how much authority the board is delegating and for what purpose. The purpose of specialized or *ad hoc* committees is to assist the board in fulfilling its governance role, not to manage the church.

These relationship descriptions should be documented in the governance manual, not the bylaws, because the board should be authorized by the members to decide what committees it requires to support the governance process and what responsibilities to assign to each committee.

Specialized Committees

The committee structure may be used when the board requires particular skills for policy development or for specialized monitoring or measuring. There are three committees which we consider essential to any church board with a fourth one that is optional:

- Governance Committee
- Financial Audit Committee
- Relationship Review Committee

The Governance Committee

The transition to governance may seem straightforward enough, but there is considerable work necessary to orient current and new board members. There is also significant work involved in adding and revising policies and reviewing the relationships within the board and its committees.

Not all board members have the competencies or the interest in the fine points of maintaining a governance model, but at least three or four members of any board will have competencies in the conceptual thinking skills that good governance requires. Our experience is that with a *Governance Committee* of qualified board members to focus on governance, there is minimal risk that the board will revert to a focus on management,

►
Any board member who actually enjoys reading this book very likely has the competencies required for this work.

particularly when incoming board members are properly oriented. The simple test for choosing members for this committee is this: Any board member who actually enjoys reading this book very likely has the competencies required for this work. People are good at what they like and like what they're good at.

We highly recommend the creation of a Governance Committee as a standing committee at the same time that the board chooses to implement the Relationship Model™.

The Financial Audit Committee

The Financial Audit Committee is a prime example of a standing committee set up to take on a specialized form of governance on the board's behalf.

The board has an important, even vital role in monitoring the financial planning and financial condition of the church as well as in monitoring the risk management of the senior pastor and administrator. This responsibility requires skills that many board members lack. Only a few board members of churches are able to understand sophisticated financial statements. In some cases there may not even be enough to form a committee. Those who make up the Financial Audit Committee—from within or outside the board—can provide the vital function of monitoring the finance-related limitations and expectations policies on behalf of the board. While the board is still accountable for the financial health of the church, it may have to delegate some of its authority to specialists.

►
The Financial Audit Committee is a monitoring, not a managing committee.

We would suggest that every governing board establish a properly functioning Financial Audit Committee. Doing so will empower a board to devote more time to governance and will be less likely to be drawn into management. Note that this committee is not the same as the traditional Finance Committee that has an active role in the management of finances. The Financial Audit Committee is a monitoring, not a managing committee.

The Relationship Review Committee

The role of the Relationship Review Committee is to review the working relationships within the board. They include the

- board chair/board relationship
- committee/board relationships
- committee chair/board relationships
- board member/board relationships
- senior pastor/board relationship
- administrator/board relationship.

These relationship reviews occur annually except for the reviews of the board member/board relationships. To avoid an excessive work load, these relationships are reviewed once at the end of the first year of each term of office.

The format for each of these reviews follows the four bullet points listed in the Accountability section of each relationship description. (See p. 205 for an example.)

The Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is another example of a committee with a specialized function, one that also requires more time than any governing board could give to the task.

A mature, governing board would have one or two of its members participate on a committee that nominates individuals for election to the board. The committee itself, however, would be a committee of members, not of the board. This gives members some control over who will represent them on the board—a very important point. It prevents a board from becoming self-perpetuating and from straying too far from the will of members. On the other hand, board participation ensures that the committee deals realistically with the competencies required for board membership. Boards whose members are appointed by a national body or in some way other than through a membership may not require any involvement in the nomination process. Thus, the Nominating Committee may not be a standing committee in all churches.

Ad Hoc Committees

Unlike a specialized committee which is likely to be a standing committee, an *ad hoc* committee will exist only while the specialized function is needed. An ad hoc committee, e.g. a building committee, may support the decision-

making process and add quality when it does pre-work in bringing options for the board to consider. Such options invite more thought and discussion, allowing the board to be proactive instead of reactive, thus increasing the quality, sense of involvement and ownership by board members.

Extraordinary Management

A committee may also be formed to handle a specialized management function that the board decides not to delegate to the senior pastor, such as managing investments or a major building project.

► *It is a misunderstanding to think that a governing board will absent itself entirely from management issues.*

It is a misunderstanding to think that a governing board will absent itself entirely from management issues. It should decide, however, which issues it will retain and which it will delegate to the senior pastor. This does not mean that the board has a license to surprise the senior pastor by taking over an area that has previously been the senior pastor's responsibility.

Misuse of the Committee Structure

Sometimes committees are established to perform functions that the full board is capable of doing more effectively. A Strategic Planning Committee is an example of this. Reasons given are "to save time" or "to avoid extra meetings." There are several risks to good governance from this practice. They include

- disempowering board members not on the committee
- reducing the quality of the final board action
- reducing the sense of board ownership of that action
- abuse of power by a small group within the board.

The Committee Chair/Committee Relationship

This relationship is slightly different from that of the board chair. The chair may need the same specialized skills as other committee members and may need to participate actively in the decision-making process. This



Deciding Which Committees are Appropriate

Here are some questions to guide a board in deciding which committees to establish. If the answers are “yes,” the committee will likely be a positive element to the governance process. If “no,” the board should not establish the committee.

- Does the committee add value by performing a specialized function that the board cannot fulfill itself?
- Does the committee add value by researching specific issues and bringing options to the board instead of recommendations?
- Does the committee avoid managing, shadow-managing, or pressuring management with “advice”?
- Does the committee add value to the governance process without disempowering non-committee board members or distancing them from the issues?

The best quality of governance normally results from full board involvement! The extra time it takes adds value.

is particularly true for the Financial Audit Committee. Thus, the limitations of authority are not the same as for the board chair. This relationship is also documented in the governance manual, because the board has the authority to make changes.

The Board Member/Board Relationship

The primary role of the individual board member is to participate in the process of governance. Members study information and decision-making materials, are involved in discussion and debate, and share in the decision-making process of consensus building and voting.

Individual board members have no authority or responsibility to act on behalf of the church as individuals except by specific delegation from the board. Yet, as a member of the board, each shares to a major degree the authority and responsibility for the health of the relationships within the church, its members, and other stakeholders.

The Board Member/Board Relationship Description

1. Authority

The board member is authorized by the members by virtue of his or her election to the board to participate in the governance of the church. Once elected the source of authority is the board.

The board shall provide costs of board planning retreats, board members' liability insurance, board materials and resources for orientation and training.

2. Limitations of Authority

Without specific authority from the board, an individual board member may not

- speak officially on behalf of the board or church
- enter into any legal or financial agreement on behalf of the church
- give direction to the senior pastor or the administrator of the church.

3. Responsibility

The responsibility of each board member is to

- participate in the governance process of the board
- share in the responsibilities of the board as defined in its board/membership relationship description
- represent accurately and support the official positions and decisions of the board when interacting with members, the stakeholders and the public.

4. Expectations

Each board member is expected to

- read *Church Governance Matters, Relationship Model™ of Governance, Leadership and Management* (Stahlke, 2010) and participate in an orientation program in the Relationship Model™ and the bylaws, governance manual and strategic plan of the church
- read reports and study materials provided for preparation of board meetings

(cont'd on next page)

- attend all board meetings and meeting of committees of which he or she is a member or to indicate to the board or committee chair the reason for his or her inability to attend
- participate actively in discussion and the decision-making process
- display personal conduct that reflects the values of the church.

5. Accountabilities

Accountability in this relationship is mutual.

The board is accountable to the board member for providing the authorization, resources, affirmation, involvement and servant leadership required for the successful realization of the responsibilities of the position.

Each board member shares in the board's accountability to the members for achieving strategic results, and in governing the church with due diligence and integrity and in its accountability to civil governments for compliance with all relevant laws and regulations.

Each board member is accountable to the board and to the civil government's regulatory body under whose laws the church is registered, for handling the finances of the church with integrity.

The board member is accountable to the board for performance with respect to the negotiated expectations and for compliance with the limitations of authority of the position.

The components of this working relationship shall be reviewed at predetermined intervals at the initiation of the board and shall include a

- review of the authorization and resources provided and values expressed to the board member
- review of the board member's performance towards expectations of the responsibilities of the relationship
- negotiation of expectations for the next planning period
- review of the authorization and resources required for the next period, including plans for personal development.

Did We Forget the Treasurer?

No, we didn't overlook this traditional board position.

The planning and management of financial resources are management processes. Mature governing boards realize that a volunteer treasurer cannot be held accountable for the management of hundreds of thousands of dollars actually managed by others. The position is symbolic. The treasurer may submit a report or a budget, but the presentation is only a polite gesture to an obsolete position. Why does the position continue? It is sometimes included in the bylaws because of regulatory requirements.

Perhaps in new, small churches without paid staff, a treasurer can manage the finances on behalf of the board. Once that board hires its first employee, the treasurer should consider himself or herself a volunteer staff person in addition to being a member of the governing board.

This is not to say that the board should not be involved in the finances of the church. By no means. Planning and monitoring of the church's financial planning and financial condition is a matter for the entire board to deal with through governance. This is usually delegated to the Financial Audit Committee. For this reason, the bylaws may be accommodated by making the treasurer the chair of the Financial Audit Committee.

If the entire board does not fulfill this monitoring role, it will delegate it to a Financial Audit Committee of specialists, not to an individual treasurer.

Summary

In this chapter we identified and defined the four primary relationships within the board:

- the board and the members of the church
- the board chair and the board
- the committees and the board
- the individual board member and the board.

The other very important relationships involving the board are the ones with the senior pastor and the administrator. The board/senior pastor relationship and the administrator/board relationship are discussed in Chapter 13.

By defining the five components for each of these relationships, the board can design a structure for its governance in which the entire board, the board chair, the committees and individual board members will know the limitations of their authority and the expectations of their responsibility.

With this structure in place, we move to the other three processes of board responsibility in the next chapters.

For Reflection and Discussion

Are you comfortable with the concept of the board as the trunk of the tree?

Do you find the relationship descriptions with their five components helpful? Why? Why not?

How does your experience of working with a board chair compare to the concept of the board chair's role outlined in this chapter? Can you support the role as described here?

Strategic Planning

PART TWO
CHAPTER

12

Ask one hundred churches to show you their strategic plans, and you will find that half of them don't have one. The other half will have nearly fifty different versions. There doesn't seem to be any standard format for strategic planning, even after two thousand years of Christian Church history. It's time to establish a common model for this process. After all, it's the primary responsibility of a governing board. Strategic planning answers the "what" question. Most strategic plans include a lot of tactical planning material that answer the "how" question. In this chapter we are going to distinguish between these two types of plans and focus on what elements must be included to create a true strategic plan for your church.

Strategic Planning Defined

Strategic planning is often called *visioning*. Sometimes we hear the term *long-range* planning. The three names describe the same process, but in this book I have chosen strategic planning to describe this important process, because I want to contrast strategic planning with tactical planning discussed later on.

Strategic planning is the responsibility of the board. In an ever-changing environment, the most important question the board must continually ask and answer is:

“What services shall we offer to which people in which places and in what order of priority?”

A second, and equally important question is:

“What outcomes do we expect the delivery of our services to have in the lives of people?”

The answers to these two vital questions become the core of the church’s strategic plan.

The board cannot answer these questions without being in regular touch with its members and other stakeholders.

The one who can best identify and introduce these members and stakeholders is the one who likely knows them best—the senior pastor. The senior pastor should involve other members of the management team to suggest names of people who can help the board understand the future. And, of course, senior managers are themselves important stakeholders. We’ll consider this in more detail in environmental scanning just ahead.

Strategic or Tactical – What’s the Difference?

Tactical Planning

We’ve defined strategic planning above. There is another form of planning that we want to mention here, because it is a different process done by different people. Tactical, or operational planning, is the responsibility of the senior pastor and the senior management team. This is a much more detailed document, one that forms the basis of all expectations of responsibilities from the ministry team and the individuals in it. The tactical question is: “What programs shall we develop to deliver the services within the limits of our resources?” We will deal with this type of planning in Chapter 15. We mention it here to differentiate tactical from strategic planning. If your church has a *vision* or a *long-range* or *strategic* plan that is more than ten pages long, you may assume that it incorporates both strategic and tactical plans.

The difficulty with the practice of combining strategic and tactical plans is that it creates confusion about what the governance and management components are in the planning process. Boards often drift into management, leaving ministry staff to take up the governance responsibility for making strategic decisions.



“What services shall we offer to which people in which places and in what order of priority?”



A strategic plan for a multimillion dollar mega-church or a country parish will be the same length—six to ten pages.

Strategic Planning Simplified

Strategic planning should be simple, straightforward and brief, enabling the board to give clear direction to the senior pastor without becoming entangled in tactical planning. In the Relationship Model™, a strategic plan for a multimillion dollar mega-church or a country parish will be the same length—six to ten pages. The strategic plan will be kept current by board interaction with stakeholders, as well as by annual review and revision of the plan.

In the Relationship Model™ strategic planning consists of building a strategic foundation that includes *input*:

- strategic context,
- values,
- beneficiaries,
- services and
- places

and *output*:

- vision,
- mission,
- priorities,
- strategic goals, and
- critical success factors.

The ten components of a strategic plan identified above include:

1. Strategic Context

The first step in the strategic planning process is to identify the “context” (current culture and environment) in which your church finds itself. To set this context, we look at two areas:

- *Historical Context*: Provides an overview of key events and historical realities that have brought your church to its present status and will play a role in determining its future. These provide an important part of the context for the strategic direction to follow. The elements of your church’s history that may be mentioned here may include:

- doctrinal positions
- historical church polity
- denominational uniqueness
- roles of women and men
- ethic origins and language
- immigration history
- significant historical events.
- *Environmental Context*: The significant factors that need to be considered in shaping the strategic plan for the future for your particular church can be easily brainstormed. Most of the factors you will think of will overlap categories. It is less important which category you use to contain the factor than it is to record the factor somewhere. The best way to benefit from this exercise is to plan to use the list at each meeting by selecting one of the factors for discussion. That way it becomes a practical exercise, not simply a theoretical one that will never be used.

Here is a sample of factors that can be identified by using these four categories:

Spiritual

- Emphasis on spirituality instead of the Christian faith
- Consumerism as religion
- Patriotism and faith
- Relationship between Islam and Christianity

Cultural

- Disintegration of the importance of marriage
- Homosexuality and same-sex marriage
- Global village and witnessing in other cultures
- Ethic shifts in the immediate area
- Youth and shifts in morality

Economic

- Gospel of prosperity
- Unemployment and Christian care
- Christian responsibility and foreign aid

Political

- Conservatism, liberalism and Christianity
- Capitalism, socialism and Christian response to need
- State vs. church responsibility for the poor

These may be identified by the board in a simple but important brainstorming exercise.

Environmental scanning is more than just another element of strategic planning. This will occupy most of the board's time in the meetings to come! It's the way in which the board gains the expertise required to make changes to the strategic plans and priorities going forward. A powerfully effective means of understanding the future is to invite carefully selected guests with specialized expertise to speak to the board at each meeting about areas the board has identified in the above list of environmental factors.

In my view, a board should spend at least 50 percent of its time listening to and learning from a parade of people entering its boardroom who have some "stake" in what your church does for people. That parade should include

- members and member/volunteers
- funding sources (government, strategic partners)
- representatives of the regulatory bodies, e.g. government and denominational leaders
- specialists in the fields in which the church works
- partners and other churches in the community.

The church's potential for meeting new challenges can then be further analyzed with a S.W.O.T. analysis:

- internal strengths and weaknesses
- external opportunities and threats.

2. Values

Values may be expressed in at least three categories:

- personal (e.g. integrity, openness, truthfulness)
- relationship-oriented (e.g. affirmation, involvement, servant leadership)
- organizational (youth, families, seniors, music, worship, outreach).

The identification of values is extremely important for a church because it identifies your uniqueness and what your church will contribute to the world. Many churches

have identified personal and/or relationship-oriented values, but have neglected to articulate their *organizational* values.

Why is this important? Because organizational values will drive all of your services, programs, activities and events. They represent those special interests important enough for your church to be created and sustained around them.

Every church bases its mission more on organizational values than it does on the needs of people around them! This is normal and healthy. For example, a church that provides a traditional denominational worship service may choose not to offer a more contemporary form even though many more people in the community would attend.

I ask my clients, “*Why do people drive by ten churches to come to yours?*”

People are naturally drawn to the church that reflects their own values. That may be

- a love for music or liturgy
- activities for youth
- focus on the family
- activities for seniors.

Even the people who work in the church’s infrastructure—finance, administration, maintenance—will normally prefer working in a church whose organizational values match their own personal interests. An accountant recently immigrated from Germany may choose employment in a church that uses the German language, even though it is farther to drive and the benefits are less attractive.

We choose to meet the needs that interest us, not necessarily those that are most urgently needed, the closest to home or the most cost-effective. This is important to acknowledge with affirmation. God promised to give us the “desires of our heart.” When God does that, it’s important to celebrate who we are. It is important that the whole church identify its organizational values. Failure to do so may lead to attempts to meet needs that are compelling or more cost effective, but not in the area of interest or expertise of the church’s members.

3. Beneficiaries, Strategic Partners and Other Stakeholders

This component and the next are so closely related that it doesn’t matter which is taken first. They are inseparable.

◀
“Why do people
drive by ten
churches to
come to yours?”

Beneficiaries are the individuals and groups who are the focus of the church's values—*the direct and primary recipients of your services*. They may be expressed by ethnic background, gender or age groups, physical or emotional or economic wellness, or any other designation that enables the church to identify individuals or groups in mutually exclusive terms. To begin to identify the beneficiary groups, the church must consider the needs for which it wants to provide its services.

This step should also include an identification of *strategic partners and stakeholders* of your church. Strategic partners are the key organizations or groups with whom you share your mission. Strategic partners may work alongside you in providing or coordinating services to your beneficiary groups. These may include regional or national levels of your denomination, missions your church supports along with community-based organizations that assist your church or are supported by your church.

Finally, *other stakeholders* are individuals and/or groups who may be impacted in some way by your church, but do not directly receive your services (e.g. government, suppliers, neighborhoods).

Identifying and distinguishing between beneficiary groups, strategic partners and other stakeholders proves to be an extremely useful exercise for a church as many are confused about *who they primarily exist to serve*. In this confusion, much energy, time and money can be spent on activities that are extraneous to the mission of the church.

The easiest beneficiary group to miss is the the staff and volunteers of the church. Some leaders argue that the staff—even the board—are a means to the end of providing services to the beneficiaries, not beneficiaries themselves. In the case of a church, the staff and volunteers are usually members and are therefore in the group of direct beneficiaries—twice!

In the Relationship Model™ we take the view that member fulfillment (productivity) and staff/volunteer

fulfillment must be in balance for a church to be successful. For this reason we suggest that the staff is always one of the beneficiary groups to benefit from the church's mission. The volunteers in the church are not merely a means to another end.

4. Services/Needs

Strategic services deliver outcomes (benefits) to the beneficiaries. Services are different from programs in that services are strategic (*what* the church does) while programs are tactical (how the church delivers the services). For example, the Sunday morning worship service, memorial services, family devotion and private worship are all programs that deliver the service of worship.

Strange as it may seem, some churches may not be able to list the services they offer. That is because there is so much focus on the programs delivering the services that the services themselves may remain undefined. Ask your board or management team to take five minutes to list on paper the services the church offers and another five minutes to compare the lists. You are likely to find some interesting variations.

A helpful exercise is to list all the programs your church has operated in the past and present, including those contemplated in the future. Then begin to group those programs by the services they deliver. This same exercise will pay additional dividends when we get to priorities, because we shall see how our resources are divided among the programs and services.

Some programs may deliver more than one service simultaneously. For example, the Sunday morning worship time may deliver benefits for worship, fellowship, Christian growth (discipleship), and outreach. It is important to identify what needs the church wants to meet with the services you offer.

What Are the Services That Your Church Offers?

In my work with churches of many different denominations, I have found that all offer the same five services, although different denominations give different names to them. In addition there other services that some churches offer because of special values they hold. Here are the five services and the various names they are given.

1. Worship
2. Discipleship – Learning – Education – Christian Growth –
Spiritual Care – Christian Care – Stewardship

3. Fellowship – Community Building
4. Social Ministry – Social Justice – Service – Social Service – Ministry
5. Witness – Outreach – Missions – Evangelism

Other services that some churches provide:

6. Academic Education – Parochial School
7. Assisted Living – Seniors Accommodations
8. Health Services such as provide by a parish nurse

In the popular and highly respected book, *Purpose Driven Church* by Pastor Rick Warren, the five purposes of the purpose-driven church are the first five services listed above. They are the same five services delivered by the New Testament Church.

An important part of the process of the step of identifying your services is the consideration of the *needs that drive your services*. Needs are the factors or conditions present in the environmental culture outside of the church and/or beneficiary groups that are important considerations in the development of new services or changes to existing services. As we have pointed out, how a church responds to these needs will be highly dependent on organizational values and other factors that may be pressing upon them.

Many churches conduct a needs analysis to determine if assumed needs are present or to identify expressed needs within the beneficiary groups. This needs analysis will often involve gathering input from the beneficiary groups. Some of these needs may be uncovered during the environmental scanning activity included in Step #1.



In my work with churches I have found that all offer the same five services.

5. Places

This is a geographical reference to where the services are delivered. It may be expressed in terms of countries, states, provinces or counties, cities and towns, or locations in a city, depending on the scope of the church. The easiest way to think of places is to imagine concentric circles with local, regional, national, and international flowing out from the center.

This component is also a priority of the mission, because locations change with increases or decreases of need, organizational capacity, plans for expansion, political and economic factors. Accordingly, boards will want to review this component annually. Only when beneficiary groups, services and places have been accurately identified has the board answered the strategic question, “What services shall we provide to which people in which places and in what order of priority?” Then we can complete the last five components of the strategic plan—the outputs.

6. Vision

This is a statement of the difference you believe your church will make to the beneficiary groups, if you are effective in delivering your services. It describes a *future state*. The vision is challenging, drawing the members of the church into the future, motivating them to achieve more than they imagine possible. Vision is outward looking. It should focus on the people whose needs you are seeking to meet, as opposed to the type of church you want to become. It is a type of broad outcome statement about the impact your church hopes to have beyond the planning horizon. Vision determines mission, not the other way around.

A vision is not organizational navel-gazing. “Rockwood Community Church will be the largest congregation of Christians in the city” is not a vision statement.

Now here’s a vision! “*We can see the day when every man, woman and children in our city will have had a meaningful introduction to the Lord Jesus as personal Savior.*”

OUR VISION

We dream of a day when God’s kingdom values reign in our city and region to such a degree, that they have impact on the furthest reaches of the globe, for the glory of God.

Willow Park Church, Kelowna, British Columbia

No soul left behind.

Zion Lutheran Church and School, Cloverdale, British Columbia

The Vision of PTC is that everyone in Three Hills and beyond feels a part of God’s family.

Prairie Tabernacle Church, Three Hills, Alberta

7. Mission

The mission is a statement of purpose of what the church exists to accomplish. It is the church's expression of how it intends to realize the vision. Some churches call this the purpose statement. It should be built on the work done on beneficiary groups and services and will normally make reference to both. It may also have a reference to geographical place.

The mission statement is the simplest, shortest, most accurate expression of the church's reason to exist. It should be used frequently in newsletters, press releases, advertisements, interviews and every other opportunity so as to link the name of the church to its purpose.

This statement should be one short sentence that every board and staff member can memorize and use both frequently and naturally. Any mission statement that cannot be easily committed to memory and spoken as part of a natural conversation needs more editing. You should be able to share it in the time an elevator moves between floors.

"The mission of GovernanceMatters.com Inc. is to enable churches and not-for-profit organizations worldwide to balance the fulfillment of their members' and stakeholders' needs with the personal fulfillment of their staff and volunteers."



*Vision
determines
mission, not the
other way
around.*



*You should be
able to share it
in the time an
elevator moves
between floors.*

OUR MISSION

"Knowing Jesus personally and receiving Him as both Saviour and Lord. Growing in faith through the Holy Spirit by fellowship, study and worship. Going in service and commitment to share the Father's love, through Christ to the world."

Zion Lutheran Church and School, Cloverdale, British Columbia

"The Mission of PTC is to glorify God by praying, teaching and caring locally and globally."

Prairie Tabernacle Church, Three Hills, Alberta

"Our purpose is to know, to live, to share God's love."

Ascension Lutheran Church, Edmonton, Alberta

There is a tendency to put too much detail into a mission statement. When a mission statement has numerous points to explain the main one, the statement begins to overlap with the statements of services. People who hear the mission statement should be able to comprehend the purpose of the church without getting lost in the detail.

8. *Priorities*

The challenge in setting priorities is to determine how resources will be allocated among competing beneficiary groups, services and places. Priorities may be expressed in the allocation of

- operational expenditures (for delivery of the services of the church)
- human resources (staff and volunteer hours or fulltime equivalents)
- capital expenditures and assets.

Most frequently, churches will want to express their priorities in terms of money available for delivering the services of the church. These allocations do not include administrative services and infrastructure, which usually do not exceed 35 percent of the total financial resources. Infrastructure expenses are those required to maintain the facility and the processes that cannot easily be allocated to a specific beneficiary group or service. Those costs must first be subtracted from the total available financial resources before the balance is prioritized.

The amount that is spent on infrastructure (e.g. office expenses, systems, maintenance) may be a subject of a limitations policy. This limitation gives the senior pastor freedom to develop the infrastructure by placing a maximum percentage that can be used for those costs.

The easiest way to allocate resources in this manner is to create a grid with beneficiary groups on one axis and services along the other. If you deliver services in more than one place, you will need to develop this type of a grid for each place. The table that follows shows how a church might allocate financial resources among the five services and five beneficiary groups.

Priority of Target Group by Services

The first time that you follow this exercise may result in some surprises of how you have been allocating your precious financial resources. I encourage my clients to affirm what they discover about their allocations, because even though they never looked at their priorities in this way, they did ask God to direct their ministry. Now it's time to affirm that what they *actually* have done is what they *should* have done.

	Worship	Fellowship	Discipleship	Missions	Service	Total
Children	5%		10%			15%
Youth (13-18)	5%	5%	10%			20%
Young Adults (19-30)	5%	5%	5%		5%	20%
Adults	10%	5%	5%	10%	5%	35%
Seniors	5%	5%				10%
TOTAL	30%	20%	30%	10%	10%	100%

◀
*There is a
tendency to put
too much detail
into a mission
statement.*

You may also use this type of grid to allocate staff or volunteer time. In fact, you may discover that the value of the thousands of hours of volunteer time by members exceeds the value of the financial resources. It is unfortunate that volunteer time is seldom measured. I suggest that each church create a database of talent within the church and log all volunteer hours in categories that reflect the type of talent that is offered.

This resource is more easily increased than financial resources, and is often under-valued and under-developed. For example, I have observed that some large churches prefer to hire staff for church cleaning and maintenance rather than recruit volunteers for this important aspect of administrative ministry. It seems to some that the financial burden is preferable to establishing a structure and process for organizing the time and talents of the members of the church.

If the church has never formally set priorities in this way, it may seem like a challenge to know how to start. Following is the best way to approach the first effort:

- Prepare a grid for each resource that you wish to prioritize, e.g. volunteer time or operational expenditures, by placing the beneficiary groups down the left side and the services along the top, as shown in the table above.

- Ask the senior pastor or administrator to analyze your current resource allocation for each of the categories you selected in the matrix. This will have to be completed for the next session, using the operational, capital budgets and balance sheet from the last completed fiscal year. You may also want to determine if you would like to analyze the allocation of staff and volunteer time. This can sometimes be a difficult task, however, with some effort and estimating it can usually be done and the results are often surprising.
- Before the next session, fill in the grid with the actual allocation of resources that you are currently using.

Allocating resources in this way allows the board to give clear direction to the senior pastor in developing the tactical and the financial plans (budget) that will support them.

For the first year of the strategic plan, the most practical approach to setting priorities is to continue the present allocation. This will also allow the board time to develop tools to measure strategic outcomes, set baselines and establish strategic goals. These will most likely have implications for how resources will be allocated in the second fiscal year. During the first year, the board will also be able to review the current priorities in the light of

- the values of the people within the church
- the needs as expressed by the members, staff and other stakeholders
- any restrictions of available resources
- other factors that change the variables above, e.g. political and economic.

9. Strategic Goals

As we have already seen, in order to establish strategic goals properly they need to be S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant to the mission and Time-limited). These goals can only be set after the following steps are completed:

- Step 1: Identifying indicators of results
- Step 2: Establishing baseline measurements
- Step 3: Establishing strategic goals.

Steps 1 and 2 are described in detail in Chapter 14, Monitoring and Measuring (The Accountability Process), but since they are vital to Step 3, I will introduce the entire process here. Setting strategic goals will not be possible in the first strategic plan developed for many organizations. Instead, the board will devote itself to identifying indicators of results and establishing a baseline measurement.

► *Measuring strategic outcomes, namely the difference the church makes in the lives of people, is important and challenging.*

◄ *Allocating resources in this way allows the board to give clear direction to the senior pastor.*

Measuring strategic outcomes, namely the difference the church makes in the lives of people, is important and challenging. Many organizations have measured tactical goals instead of strategic goals. Those that do measure strategic results sometimes measure them anecdotally, using success stories to satisfy themselves and their members that the church is making a difference.

What is the difference between strategic results and tactical results? Organizations may measure the number of people who participate in a given program. That is a tactical measurement. The strategic measurement is concerned with finding a way to measure the degree to which the program delivered the service and met the needs of the members. In other words, we want to measure what happened in the lives of the members who received the service, not just the numbers of and cost per member.

The key to strategic measurement lies in finding effective ways to hear the answer from members themselves. No attempt to measure strategic results will be complete without this type of interaction.

10. Critical Success Factors

Because this last element of the strategic plan is really tactical (how we accomplish the mission), not strategic (what the mission is), we introduce it here but will expand on it more fully in Chapter 14 – Monitoring and Measuring (The Accountability Process).

Critical success factors form the bridge between the strategic plan developed by the board and the tactical plans prepared by the staff. Often overlooked, they are the missing link in the relationship between governance and management. Critical success factors address two areas:

- the most significant tactical initiatives being planned in the next three to five years
- areas of risk that fall within the senior pastor's circle of responsibility.

When you hear the term *strategic direction*, the direction suggested is usually not strategic at all. It is a very important tactical element that describes how the church plans to fulfill its mission in the years ahead. Here are some examples that might be included in this section:

- purchasing property for relocating the church
- engaging an architect to design a new sanctuary or other building
- awarding a building contract and completing construction
- completing a capital campaign to raise funds required for construction
- making the transition from a managing board to a governing board.

The reason that these are not strategic is that none of them represent the mission of the church. Each may be critical to the success of the mission, but each describes how the mission will be achieved, not *what* the mission is.

If they are tactical, why do they not appear in the senior pastor's tactical plans? They are placed here because even though they are tactical, they are outside of the authority of the senior pastor and the senior staff to plan and to manage. They require the board's decision and will likely be managed through a special committee or contract or both.

The second significant area of factors that are critical to the success of the mission includes those areas where the board wants to monitor the risk associated with the management by the senior pastor and staff. These allow the board to monitor the senior pastor's management of risk, without becoming excessively involved in management itself. They do this by making 8 to 12 statements, each beginning with the words, "We must..." These indicate to the senior pastor what the board expects to see addressed in the church's tactical plans for the year. This is vital for the board in monitoring the compliance of the tactical plans with the strategic plans. Unless this step is completed successfully, the board will drift back into the familiar practice of shadow managing.

On the next page is a list of areas that a board may consider "critical to the success" of achieving the mission. I encourage boards to select the "ten or so" areas they wish to address in the strategic plan, and thus control development of tactical plans without intervening directly in management.

Before working only with the suggestions below, spend some time brainstorming.

- Ask each person to write ten sentences that begin with "We must..."
- Share them within the group to identify common issues.
- Select those that the group agrees are critical to your success.

Critical Success Factors – Suggested Topics

Relationships

- Relationships with members/donors/funding sources
- Relationships with regulatory authorities
- Relationships with staff/volunteers
- Relationships between board/staff volunteers
- Strategic alliances
- Staff/volunteer recruitment, retention, development
- Values

Processes

- Governance
- Management
- Planning – strategic/tactical
- Services/programs/products
- Communication
- Marketing/fundraising
- Monitoring and measuring

Finance/Infrastructure

- Operating funding
- Financing (operating credit)
- Financial management
- Capital needs
- Reserves
- Buildings and property
- Systems/equipment

Here is a sample of how these categories can take the shape of critical risk factors.

Critical Success Factors

For the Board's Management

10.1 Governance

We must complete implementation of changes in our governance.

10.2 Strategic Planning

We must maintain a current strategic plan.

For the Management of the Senior Pastor & Administrator

10.3 Tactical Planning

We must maintain current tactical and financial plans.

10.4 Communication

We must communicate effectively at all levels.

(cont'd on next page)

Critical Success Factors

For the Management of the Senior Pastor & Administrator

10.5 Management

We must manage our operations effectively.

We must develop and maintain buildings and property to adequately support the ministries of the church.

10.6 Finances

We must ensure that there are sufficient resources to meet ongoing expenses.

We must manage our finances efficiently and effectively.

We must have adequate monitoring of designated funds.

We must ensure that there is adequate monitoring of infrastructural and operational borrowing.

10.7 Capacity

We must build capacity to allow us to respond to future ministry opportunities.

10.8 Monitoring & Measuring

We must identify and monitor our critical risk factors

We must measure our member satisfaction.

10.09 Relationships

We must ensure that we are maintaining a positive working relationship with our members, pastoral team, denominational leaders and other strategic partners.

We must ensure that we maintain compliance with city, provincial and national laws and regulations.

We must ensure that we are adequately equipping staff and volunteers to carry out the ministries of the church.

We must ensure that our fundraising and marketing initiatives maintain positive relationships with all our stakeholders.

10.10 Services & Programs

We must prioritize key ministry areas effectively.

10.11 Capital Needs

We must ensure that capital investments are developed and maintained to adequately support the ministries of the church.

During the first year of this planning period we plan to identify indicators for each of these risk factors, develop limits of acceptable risk, and begin to monitor each critical risk factor.

Keeping the Strategic Plan Current

Completing the first formal and documented strategic plan is the beginning of a wonderful journey for the board that wants to monitor the present, measure the past and focus on the future!

It is against this common understanding of values, vision and mission that governing board members can build a challenging and rewarding future for the entire church, including themselves.

This important board policy document is not to be put on a shelf. It contains the strategic direction for the senior pastor and the staff. It is the dynamic foundation for all that happens to benefit the members.

We live in a constantly changing world. Some changes are dramatic—even devastating. More often, however, change occurs so gradually that considerable time goes by without our realizing that our strategic plans for the future are gradually losing their relevance.

The Planning Horizon Keeps Moving

►
The strategic plan outlined above is intended to look forward only three to five years.

The term “long-range plan” has given way to the “planning horizon” and “window of opportunity.” The strategic plan outlined above is intended to look forward only three to five years.

As I have said before, the wise governing board will spend at least half of its time educating itself to the changes that are impacting the members and, therefore, the church itself. This time is used to listen to stakeholders, including members and their families, staff and volunteers, funding sources, regulatory agencies and government planning departments. Every stakeholder has something to add to an understanding of the environment’s impact on the church.

I suggest preparing an annual calendar of invitations to stakeholders who together, over the course of an annual planning cycle, can give a balanced view of the future.

The board may also wish to visit the geographical areas in which service delivery takes place, particularly if that involves a different culture than that of its members.

Where time, distance and cost prevent the entire board from visiting the service delivery area, the senior pastor and a rotating number of board members may make exploratory trips.

The purpose of visiting stakeholders and site visits is not simply to hear the stories that reinforce our wisdom. Rather, the challenge is to learn how to make a good thing better and more relevant in a changing environment.

Revising the strategic planning document should be done at the end of that annual cycle. It will take far less time than the first time, but the quality of the document and its relevance will increase with each revision.

The outcome indicators will gradually change and the accuracy of measurements will improve, as the board gains experience with the success of its mission.

In the next chapters on delegating management authority to the senior pastor and monitoring and measuring, we will see how the governing board can make the time available for strategic planning without forgetting the past or losing control of the present.

Summary

This chapter is a presentation of the strategic planning process. Defining the ten essential components of the strategic plan allows the board to keep the strategic plan short and clearly focused on strategic issues. The first five are inputs, the second five are outputs. They are

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Strategic Context | 4. Services | 8. Priorities |
| (past and present) | 5. Places | 9. Strategic Goals |
| 2. Values | 6. Vision | 10. Critical Success |
| 3. Beneficiaries | 7. Mission | Factors |

The Critical Success Factors build a bridge from governance to management, allowing the board to monitor the senior pastor's management of risk without intervening directly in management. The tactical plans are management's response to the board's strategic direction. Because this last element is tactical, not strategic, we have decided to discuss it in more detail in Chapter 14, Monitoring and Measuring (The Accountability Process).

Next, we discuss what may be the most critical relationship within the church, the senior pastor/board relationship.

For Reflection and Discussion

If you have a strategic plan, what tactical elements does it include, using the definitions of strategic planning in this chapter as a guide?

Which would you say that your board does more: manages risk itself or monitors the risk management of the pastor and/or administrator? Share some examples to illustrate your observation.

Delegating Authority and Responsibility

PART TWO
CHAPTER

13

Introduction

It is when rethinking the role of the pastor that people encounter one of the most significant paradigm shifts. Church boards and pastors are so accustomed to thinking that the church manages through committees reporting directly to the board, that some find it difficult to think of giving management authority to the pastor. The pastor, on the other hand, is accustomed to watching ministry happen all around the pastoral office, with little or no control of the ministry that people think the pastor should be doing. And to make matters even more confusing, volunteers and members turn to the pastor anyway, asking how the pastor wants something done, as though the pastor really was their source of authority.

Many pastors and church leaders are frustrated with the confusion of having multiple committees reporting to a board with so little planning and coordination, but there doesn't seem to be any working alternative. This chapter provides an alternative that clarifies the role of the pastor and all the volunteer members in carrying out the various ministries of the church. Warning: try this at home. You will be challenged to think different thoughts about the role of the pastor. The good news is that there is an alternative to relieve the pressure on pastors who would rather not manage the entire work of the church or who don't have the gift of administration.

Delegating Authority and Responsibility

Every relationship in a church is of great importance. One particular relationship, however, exemplifies the overall health of the church—the senior pastor/board relationship. It will determine, more than any other, just how well the relationship between governance and management functions in practice.

When designed properly, this relationship can have a very positive effect on both board and staff. When operating effectively, the board will concentrate on strategic issues without losing control of management. The senior pastor will have the freedom to design the management structure and process, yet receive clear strategic direction and input into future beneficiaries, services and priorities. Such a healthy relationship creates a win-win situation for both governance and management, board and pastor and staff.

Calling a Senior Pastor

Selecting a senior pastor is probably the most important decision any church will make.

Members of churches realize the vital importance of calling the right pastor to provide them with spiritual leadership. Very few churches will delegate the selection of a pastor to the board. Choosing a pastor is almost always outside of the circle of authority of the church board. The members may allow the board to act as the search committee, but sometimes they may not even delegate that authority to the board. For example, they may strike a special *ad hoc* search committee to develop a short list, sometimes with denominational assistance. The final decision is usually made in a special meeting of the members of the church.

The Senior Pastor and Board Membership

In some denominations it is common for the senior pastor to be a board member and sometimes even the board chair as well. As a result, the same senior pastor who receives authority from the board leads the governance process that grants the authority to the senior pastor. This obvious conflict of interest has led to many inefficiencies and abuses.

Having the senior pastor as a voting member of the board is unnecessary and should not be considered. The roles of governance and management are too likely to become blurred, with the senior pastor having more influence in strategic issues than appropriate. What is worse is the potential for outright abuse of authority, when the pastor controls the board.

►
*The board chair
and the senior
pastor are peers.*

The Board Chair and the Senior Pastor Are Peers

In the Relationship Model™ no authority flows directly between the board chair and the senior pastor. The board chair and the senior pastor are peers. The role of the chair is to lead the board governance process. The role of the senior pastor, on the other hand, is to lead the process of management.

The governance process transmits authority to the senior pastor. When the chair informs the senior pastor of a board decision, the chair is informing the senior pastor with the board's authority, not authorizing the senior pastor personally. The chair may relay only those decisions that are documented in board minutes or board policy.

It is not uncommon to hear that “the senior pastor is accountable to the board *through the chair*.” This expression is confusing at best and dysfunctional at worst. The senior pastor has the authority to address, as well as to make written communication to the full board. The chair may be a conduit for that information flow as a normal process. The chair, however, has no authority to interrupt that flow or require that it pass through the chair. For example, the insistence of one board chair that the senior pastor submit a report to the chair 72 hours before releasing it to the full board is indicative of the dysfunction that can occur in this relationship.

The senior pastor/board chair relationship is critical to the success of the governance and management processes. Both parties and the board must be very clear on how authority flows between the board and the senior pastor. In the Relationship Model™ this is documented in the senior pastor/board relationship.



I was having a quick lunch by myself in a crowded café. Seated at a table next to me were two men in heated debate. It was animated to put it mildly. I couldn't avoid being distracted by their conversation, particularly when I heard the words "board chair" in the conversation. At that point I actually started listening.

One said to the other, "I don't report to you. I report to the board."

"Yes," the other replied, "but you report to the board through the chair."

"I will continue to report directly to the board," came the reply.

They were debating the flow of authority from the board to the senior pastor and the accountability back to the board. It didn't sound like a happy relationship. I don't remember what I had for lunch.

Components of the Senior Pastor/Board Relationship

We now explore the five components of a senior pastor/board relationship as set out in the Relationship Model™. To remind you, they are

1. Authority
2. Limitations of Authority
3. Responsibility
4. Expectations of Responsibility
5. Accountability

1. Authority

The Circle of Authority for anyone includes three components:

- Authorization
- Resources
- Competencies

In this section I want to discuss each component with special emphasis on the competencies required for success in pastoral leadership.

In most churches the members do not delegate to the board the authority to initiate or to terminate the employment of the senior pastor. Members choose their senior pastor. Once called and installed, however, the members ask the board to be the pastor's source of authority on the church's behalf. This means that the senior pastor is accountable to the board as a whole, not to any committee of the board and not to the chair.

Authorization

Having said that all the authority delegated by the board is delegated to the senior pastor, the board's only employee, just what does that include? It means that the senior pastor has access to all the human and financial resources, as well as the information and time needed to achieve the results expressed in the strategic plan and other governance policies.

In order to achieve the results the senior pastor has the freedom to

- design the management structure
- create and fill the senior management positions
- manage the human and financial resources
- manage the ministries of the church.

That freedom does not include delivering new services to existing beneficiaries or existing services to new beneficiaries not included in the strategic plan as we shall see when we discuss the section on limitations. It does, however, include developing new programs that will be efficient and effective in delivering the services to the members and other beneficiaries who are identified in the strategic plan.

Resources

Gathering resources for the church's ministry is normally called "stewardship." The gathering of financial resources for a church is often limited to offerings, sometimes with the addition of some form of pledging annual giving. In many churches this happens rather naturally with neither the board nor the senior pastor and staff making any overt efforts to "raise funds." Fundraising is a normal concept in not-for-profit organizations, but in the church it's usually called "stewardship" which is more a passive process than a proactive one. This is a biblically sound concept, which in some cases becomes over spiritualized. The result is that some churches think that nothing can be done to develop the necessary resources to support the church's ministry.

I have found that some churches are changing this practice by becoming more proactive. The concept of developing the stewardship of members is being enhanced by other forms of fundraising. I think this is normal, healthy and consistent with the concept of stewardship. After all, the collection plate and pledging are two programs of fundraising. Bake sales, rummage and lawn sales have often been a part of this process. Inviting major gifts from members for designated projects has become more frequent. I suggest that it is appropriate to include an administrative factor in such proposals to prevent the infrastructure from struggling as a result of the popularity of designated or restricted funding. Most churches spend about 25 percent of operations on infrastructure, so this would be a logical amount to release in any proposal for project funding. Naturally, it's a matter of integrity that everyone be aware of that policy.

In addition some churches are developing "user pay" methods of developing resources. This is a natural means of funding retreats, seminars and other types of one-time or short term events. Another form of this is offering community services such as child care that also provide funding for other church programs. Renting space to community organizations is another example of this source of funding.

Another source of income is grant income from foundations or government. This source of funding is particularly relevant in relationship to the social services that are a part of the church's ministry.

Senior Pastor Competencies

According to our research, it is vital that a senior pastor possess the 20 most important competencies listed in the box that follows.

Senior Pastor Competencies

Achieving Competencies

These generally lie above the iceberg water line and are, therefore, possible to improve by training:

- A. Commitment to God** — entirely devoted to God, desiring to walk in daily dependence and to reflect God's character in thought, word and deed.
- B. Communication** — listens attentively and speaks to both mind and heart with effectiveness and clarity.
- C. Conflict Resolution** — enables conflict to be resolved effectively with justice and fairness in order to restore wholeness and healthy relationships.
- D. Initiative** — seizes opportunities showing creative insight into what might be accomplished.
- E. Life Experience** — demonstrates a breadth of personal knowledge, understanding and experience beyond the church and parish.

Thinking Competencies

Often below the surface, there is a limit to how much they can be changed by training. They reflect a person's cognitive ability:

- F. Reasoned Thinking** — absorbs information with understanding, applying logical analysis and intelligence to bear on its interpretation.
- G. Development Orientation** — open-minded towards new insights, ideas and information, seeking out opportunities to improve knowledge and understanding.

(cont'd on next page)

Leadership Competencies

Often below the surface, these may be improved through increased knowledge and experience. They are affected by a person's attitudes and self-image:

- H. Accountability** — acknowledges the need to hold oneself accountable to others, willingly giving and receiving feedback
- I. Effective Management** — creates an environment where people, activities and resources are managed with energy, vision and clarity
- J. Interdependence** — acknowledges one's need of others, working with them in order to fulfil the values, vision and mission of the church.
- K. Leadership** — releases creativity in others by delegating and discipling them so they can develop towards their potential.
- L. Encouragement** — actively gives others hope in the future, re-energized and determined to go on.
- M. Stewardship** — makes the best use of resources balancing effectiveness with efficiency.

Personal Competencies

These mostly lie well below the surface and are, therefore, hard to change by training. Although all competencies are personal, these particularly reflect individual attitudes, traits, motives and self-image:

- N. Humility** — demonstrates a servant attitude towards others.
- O. Personal Integrity** — open and trustworthy, honest and consistent in speech and actions
- P. Self-esteem** — respects and likes oneself showing confidence in own self-worth and capabilities.
- Q. Resilience** — operates effectively despite disappointments, showing perseverance and stamina to overcome difficulties.
- R. Self-awareness** — accurately assesses personal strengths and weaknesses and manages them effectively.
- S. Empathy** — shows warmth and sensitivity to others, recognizing and appreciating their feelings, concerns and needs.
- T. Tolerance** — accepts people, circumstances and opposing views without showing frustration, discrimination, prejudice or bias.

►
*The most
empowering
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2. Limitations of Authority

The most empowering action that a board can take in its relationship with the senior pastor is to make clear the limits of the authority it delegates. These limitations allow the senior pastor to take action with confidence 100 percent of the time, not just 1 percent when the board is in session.

A board may delegate as much authority as it wishes. As with the Ten Commandments, the principle is that it is easier to give ten limitations than a thousand permissions. Thus, the number of limitations is small, but they are clear and comprehensive. Both board and senior pastor understand that if the answer isn't "no" in the limitations policies, then the answer is "yes," and the senior pastor is free to act.

Some limitations originate with the board. They include the strategic plan and the limitations policies in the governance manual. Others originate from an authority beyond the board. These include limitations imposed by the denomination at the regional or national level. Other limitations emanate from legal/regulatory authorities in government.

You may review the senior pastor/board relationship description later in this chapter for specific limitations recommended for this important relationship.

3. Responsibility

The board focuses on the senior pastor's broad areas of responsibility. If a list of responsibilities has more than six items, it likely includes tasks as well as responsibilities. The senior pastor/board relationship description later in this chapter includes the five primary areas of senior pastor responsibility.

The emphasis is on the senior pastor's freedom to develop the structures, processes, management policies and procedures necessary for the church to realize its mission.

The board must also delegate to the senior pastor its responsibility for providing the human and financial resources needed for success. The anomaly is that these

are tactical issues, not strategic. They deal with how the church achieves its mission, not the mission itself.

The church does not exist to raise funds or to hire staff, yet both are critical to the fulfillment of mission and realization of the strategic goals. The senior pastor becomes the one responsible for financial stewardship and for recruitment of staff and volunteers.

4. Expectations of Responsibility

Expectations come in three forms:

- goals (quantifiable)
- standards (qualitative)
- specific tasks (the details)

Strategic Goals

The senior pastor is expected to achieve the strategic goals negotiated with the board of directors. The goals that flow from the annual strategic planning process are carefully balanced with the available human and financial resources, information and time. To be fair to the senior pastor, accountability for the expected responsibilities must be negotiated in terms that are S.M.A.R.T.

The expectations negotiated with the senior pastor should measure strategic results, not the tactical means by which those results were achieved.

The senior pastor will learn from experience what programs fail to achieve the results required by the strategic goals. The pastor will have to make adjustments to tactical plans regularly during the year, sometimes abandoning one program altogether in order to meet the strategic results negotiated with the board.

The only tactical exception relates to fund development and staff recruitment. The board will also want to negotiate expectations of these responsibilities, since it must be satisfied that the goals are achievable. Fundraising (financial stewardship) goals should never be based on need but on realistic resource development for the church to reach its strategic goals (quantity and quality of service delivery).

Standards

Standards must be achieved for whatever areas are appropriate for the church. These standards will vary widely and include doctrine and practice, quality, behavior, safety, risk management, etc.

Standards should be defined carefully and then expressed in measurable terms. “Best possible” is not an appropriate standard since it cannot be measured without additional definition.

Specific Tasks

A common reason why traditional senior pastor job descriptions go for three or four pages, including a long list of “responsibilities” is that there are numerous tasks mixed in with the responsibilities. The one I like the best is the last one in the list: “other duties which we didn’t think of when we wrote this job description.” I exaggerate only slightly.

Tasks are the third category of expectations. The board may wish to specify some tasks that are part of one of the broad areas of responsibility. “Visit the sick” is an example of such a task that relates to the broad responsibility expressed as “lead the process of delivering the services of the church.” This is clearly a task, not a separate broad area of responsibility.

◀ *The expectations negotiated with the senior pastor should measure strategic results, not the tactical means by which those results were achieved.*

▶ *The way to ensure the senior pastor’s success is to be specific in the definition of goals, standards, and tasks*

The Key Word is Negotiation

The way to ensure the senior pastor’s success is to be specific in the definition of goals, standards, and tasks (quantity, quality, and the details), then set them at a level agreed upon as achievable by the senior pastor.

Sometimes, however, expectations are imposed by authorities beyond board control. For example, the standards for doctrine and practice may come from the denomination. Quality or safety standards for maintenance or construction are mandated by regulatory authorities. Where this is the case, resources must be negotiated to meet the required expectations. The senior pastor or administrator cannot be put in the position of having to attain standards impossible to achieve with the staff and budget currently available. In other words, negotiation will always be required to balance the circles of authority and responsibility acceptable to both the

board and the senior pastor. Normally, the responsibility is adjusted by negotiating expectations. Sometimes changes in the authorization or resources have to be negotiated in order to achieve the balance.

5. Accountability

We have stated several times throughout this book that accountability is a positive concept. It consists of monitoring performance—including personal behavior—and measuring results. That measurement is affirming, involving and demonstrates servant leadership when applied to the negotiated goals and standards. If these are not achieved, both board and senior pastor need to learn from the experience and determine how each can adjust the limitations and expectations for success in future.

Accountability is also mutual. Notice how it is addressed in the senior pastor/board relationship description that follows. The board is accountable to the senior pastor for providing the authorization and resources required for success. The senior pastor is accountable for achieving the goals and standards without violating the limitations of the pastor's authority.

Should Only One Person Report to the Board?

Conventional wisdom suggests that only one person should report directly to the board. All other reporting should be through the senior pastor. All expectations of strategic results are negotiated through the senior pastor. In this way all authority and responsibility for management flows through one person, the senior pastor. For staff there is no confusion about who is in charge and accountable for everything that happens.

On the other hand, some churches and not-for-profit organizations may benefit from having two persons reporting directly to the board. In an educational institution we may see a president and an academic dean (a director of administration and a director of education). In an arts organization we may see an executive director and an artistic director. In a hospital we may see a chief executive officer and a chief medical officer.

Likewise, one of the most helpful ways that churches have found to relieve the pastor of management responsibility is to create a second management position accountable directly to the board—the position of administrator. The administrator receives all the authority and responsibility for the infrastructure of the church. Infrastructure includes all responsibilities related to the property, equipment, finances, and systems. It may also

include the human resources component, including both staff and volunteers, although this is an option, not a requirement of creating this position.

Three vital elements make this dual-leader arrangement work:

- shared values
- mutually exclusive responsibilities
- strong competencies.

If any one of these is absent, the church will suffer from confusion, perpetual conflict and ultimately, dysfunction.

►
On the other hand, some churches and not-for-profit organizations may benefit from having two persons reporting directly to the board.

Shared Values

We have said repeatedly that the values with which we use power and treat people are more important than the design of structure and processes. Nothing is more important than being within the relationship-oriented section of the values continuum.

If both the senior pastor and an administrator, also reporting to the board, affirm, involve and demonstrate servant leadership to one another, there is likely to be a smooth working relationship. They have a natural tendency to find a balance between ministry effectiveness and their personal fulfillment. Most of us have seen relationships work well because of this alignment of values even though structure and processes may be informal. But what if this alignment is off?

It's easy to understand what will happen if both leaders are working from authoritarian values. There will be an ongoing power struggle. If both take a *laissez-faire* approach to their work, there is likely to be sloppiness in all aspects of management and service delivery. If one is authoritarian and the other *laissez-faire*, it's not difficult to see which one will dominate and control the relationship.

The wise board will ensure that when the time comes to replace either one of these leaders, the remaining one will

be involved in the selection process. The board can then assure itself that the new leadership team will work from the same relationship-oriented value system.

Mutually Exclusive Responsibilities

A carefully designed relationship description is required for each leader. The key is for each person to have mutually exclusive responsibilities. The board and the two leaders must know specifically for what each is accountable to the board. In cases where the volume of work is such that two people are needed to manage, a clear division of responsibility will not be too difficult to attempt. Likewise, where there are clearly specialized functions (e.g. spiritual ministry, administrative ministry), it is possible to design working relationships where both parties know what unique responsibilities are expected of them.

Naturally there may be some overlap. Poor administration may prevent efficient and effective service delivery. Unwillingness to document expenditures by the administrator will result in a weak infrastructure. At least it will be apparent to the board where the weakness lies. Where overlap makes accountability difficult, the common relationship-oriented value system should enable the two leaders to work out any problems.

It is the board's responsibility to assure itself that all three of these values—affirmation, involvement and servant leadership—are in place before adding either leader to the team.

Strong Competencies

There must be a balance in the level of competencies of the two leaders. When both are carefully selected for their specialized competencies and experience, the dynamic duo can do amazing things for the church. Occasionally, they may pick up the slack for one another in minor matters or for a short term. But when the pastor has to cancel a marriage retreat because the administrator neglected to book a retreat center, there is going to be a problem and tension will appear in the relationship.

Administrator Competencies

The competencies required by an administrator differ somewhat from those required by a senior pastor. You may see how they compare in Appendix C.

It is not likely that three or more leaders can report to the board. Some crucial elements need to be in place for two to work well. Adding a third leads to complexity beyond what is practical. With three or more reporting to the board the whole board or the board chair become the chief executive officer. Governance is no longer possible and the board reverts to becoming a managing board.

Senior Pastor/Board Administrator/Board Relationship Descriptions

What follows here are two relationship descriptions for the senior pastor and administrator. Where the senior pastor is the only person accountable directly to the board, there would be a generic reference to the administrative responsibilities in the senior pastor/board relationship description. I have chosen to include the two-leader version because this model is becoming increasingly more popular among all but the smaller churches.

The senior pastor/board relationship description contains five responsibilities of this relationship. The administrator/board relationship description includes four broad areas of responsibility. In both cases there may be some specialized responsibilities, depending on the nature of the church. Notice, too, that there are references to other documents where more detail is to be found.

Normally, the limitations of authority are found in another section of the governance manual. Goals are normally found in the strategic plan. Fundraising and staff recruitment goals are found in the tactical plans.

Senior Pastor/Board Relationship Description

1. Authority

The board is the source of strategic/operational authority for the senior pastor following the pastor's acceptance of the call from the congregation.

The (national church body) is the source of ecclesiastical authority with regard to the professional status of the senior pastor.

The board shall assure that the budgeted resources required for the successful fulfillment of the responsibilities of the position are provided. Resources delegated to the senior pastor include staff and volunteer human resources, financial resources for ministry and a personal compensation package.

2. Limitations of Authority

The limitations of the senior pastor's authority are included in the Governance Manual. Without additional authority from the board the pastor may not

- cause the board to be in violation of any of the limitations of its authority
- provide services to individuals and groups not included in the Strategic Plan.

3. Responsibilities

The senior pastor shall

- provide pastoral services for the members of the congregation and for non-members who seek pastoral services
- lead the public worship of the congregation, including planning and conducting worship services and administration of the sacraments
- administer ordinances of the congregation, e.g. marriages and funerals
- Assist the board with its strategic planning responsibilities and accountability processes
- Manage the work of the employed ministry staff and ministry volunteers of the congregation.

4. Expectations

The work expectations of the senior pastor's responsibility are described in the Strategic and Tactical Plans. They are negotiated regularly as part of the annual review of the relationship.

The senior pastor is also expected to

- treat people with the values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership
- work harmoniously with the administrator
- attend all meetings of the board and senior management team
- be familiar with the congregation's Constitution and Bylaws, the Governance Manual, the Strategic Plan and the Tactical Plans and governance and management processes
- prepare regular reports of progress towards strategic goals, compliance with limitations and expectations policies, and risk monitoring for the board or its committees.

5. Accountabilities

Accountability in this relationship is mutual. The board is accountable to the senior pastor for providing the authorization, resources, affirmation, involvement and servant leadership required for the successful realization of the responsibilities of the position.

The senior pastor is accountable to the board for performance with respect to the negotiated expectations and for compliance with the limitations of authority.

The components of this working relationship shall be reviewed at pre-determined intervals at the initiation of the board and shall include a

- review of the authorization and resources provided and values expressed to the senior pastor
- review of the senior pastor's performance towards expectations of the strategic responsibilities of the relationship and the pastor's progress towards his personal tactical goals
- negotiation of tactical goals and other expectations for the next planning period
- review of the authorization and resources required for the next period, including plans for professional development.

Administrator/Board Relationship Description

1. Authority

The board is the source of authority for the administrator. The administrator has authority to manage the infrastructure of the congregation, including the physical plant, equipment and property as well as the administrative functions necessary to support the ministries of the congregation.

The board shall assure that the budgeted resources required for the successful fulfillment of the responsibilities of the position are provided. Resources delegated to the administrator include staff and volunteer human resources, financial resources for operations and a personal compensation package.

2. Limitations of Authority

The limitations of the administrator's authority are included in the Governance Manual. Without additional authority from the board the administrator may not

- cause the Board to be in violation of any of the limitations of its authority
- provide services to individuals and groups not included in the Strategic Plan.

3. Responsibilities

It is the administrator's responsibility to manage the infrastructure of (name of church) in a manner that allows the congregation to realize its strategic goals.

Specifically the administrator shall

- provide the board with the governing information it needs for its governance responsibilities, including strategic planning, building, property, equipment and administrative needs
- coordinate the planning process and present to the board tactical and financial plans that are in compliance with the approved Strategic Plan
- manage the financial resources of the congregation
- provide leadership and direction for the senior management team and the administrative staff and volunteers, including human resource services.

4. Expectations of Responsibilities

The work expectations of the administrator's responsibility are described in the Strategic and Tactical Plans. They are negotiated regularly as part of the regular review of the relationship.

The administrator is also expected to

- treat people with the values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership
- work harmoniously with the pastor(s)
- attend all meetings of the board and senior management team
- maintain a current human resources manual, including relationship descriptions for staff and volunteers
- be familiar with the congregation's Constitution and Bylaws, the Governance Manual, the Strategic Plan and the Tactical Plans and governance and management processes
- prepare regular reports of progress towards strategic goals and compliance with limitations for the board
- attend worship regularly and frequently
- appoint an archivist annually.

5. Accountabilities

Accountability in this relationship is mutual. The board is accountable to the administrator for providing the authorization, resources, affirmation, involvement and servant leadership required for the successful realization of the responsibilities of the position.

The administrator is accountable to the board for performance with respect to the negotiated expectations and for compliance with the limitations of authority.

The components of this working relationship shall be reviewed at pre-determined intervals at the initiation of the board and shall include a

- review of the authorization and resources provided and values expressed to the administrator
- review of the administrator's performance towards expectations of the strategic responsibilities of the relationship and the administrator's progress towards his or her personal tactical goals
- negotiation of tactical goals and other expectations for the next planning period
- review of the authorization and resources required for the next period, including plans for professional development.

Summary

In this chapter we dealt with the policies that relate to delegating authority and responsibility to the senior pastor and administrator and with the accountability processes of the board.

Normally, there is only one person accountable directly to the board, namely the senior pastor. As in some not-for-profit organizations such as educational, medical or arts organizations it may be possible to have two persons accountable to the church board—one for spiritual ministry and one for administrative ministry. In order for this to work effectively, the two individuals will need

- aligned values
- mutually exclusive responsibilities
- strong competencies.

The competencies required for success in the senior pastor position are a unique blend of 20 competencies that fit into four categories:

- achieving competencies
- thinking competencies
- leadership competencies
- personal competencies.

The senior pastor/board relationship description is the key to a successful and fulfilling relationship. The limitations of authority and the expectations of the senior pastor responsibilities do not all appear in this book, but they will be documented in

- the strategic plan
- the limitations and expectations policies in the governance manual
- legal and regulatory documents.

In the next chapter we will examine the fourth quadrant of a board's responsibility—monitoring and measuring.

For Reflection and Discussion

Has there ever been an open and comprehensive discussion between your church board and your pastor regarding the possibility of having an administrator accountable directly to the board?

What advantages and disadvantages do you see in having such a discussion?

Monitoring and Measuring

(The Accountability Process)

PART TWO
CHAPTER

14

►
Monitoring is the process that examines key relationships and progress along the way. Measuring deals with final results.

This chapter deals with the fourth area of board responsibility—monitoring and measuring. Monitoring is the process that examines key relationships and progress along the way. Measuring deals with final results.

I have already shared the view that accountability is a broken word in the church. By using the words above that describe the neutral functions of accountability, I hope that we can make peace with this process. Administered with affirmation, involvement, servant leadership, this process is one of the greatest gifts a church board can give to its senior pastor. Throughout this chapter I will refer to the senior pastor, but all of this applies also to an administrator where both are accountable to the board.

Monitoring allows the board to establish accountability within the key relationships of the church:

Between the senior pastor and the board, in these areas:

- senior pastor authority and responsibility balance
- senior pastor compliance with limitations and expectations
- senior pastor management of risk (Critical Success Factors)

Internal board relationships including

- board member/board relationship
- board chair/board relationship

- committee/board relationship
- committee chair/board relationship

Measuring allows the board to measure organizational results in two areas:

- strategic results (outcomes)
- tactical results (outputs).

Another important area of board accountability relates to external board relationships including relationships with

- members and attenders
- strategic partners
- other stakeholders (e.g. community, other churches)
- denominational leaders
- regulatory authorities.

Monitoring

Methods of Monitoring

There are three methods of monitoring compliance with limitations and expectations:

- internal report (verbal or written report from the senior pastor or administrator)
- internal audit (documentation review by the board or a committee)
- external audit (documentation review and report by an external third party).

The internal report is a report prepared by the senior pastor or administrator addressed to a specific limitations or expectations policy or to the risk indicators that have been established.

The internal audit is an examination by a board committee of management documentation, e.g. income and expense reports, cash flows and balance sheets (financial policies).

The external audit and report involves the engagement of an objective third party to examine internal reports and documents related to the subject of the audit and to report its findings in writing. The external audit of the church's financial accounts is the most common example of this type of monitoring.

Monitoring Senior Pastor Authority/Responsibility Balance

Every person has primary responsibility for one's personal health and fulfillment in the workplace. The senior pastor is no exception. Rare is the senior pastor who doesn't have more than enough to do, so this is an ongoing monitoring challenge. Prioritizing is usually necessary, since the senior pastor can't do everything as soon as someone else would like it done. Even with strong time management and delegating skills, work pressure often exceeds the time and other resources that are available.

The senior pastor may not be able to maintain the balance between authority and responsibility. Because of this the board may wish to consider the following:

- Maintaining a balance between authority and responsibility is critical to the personal health and fulfillment of the senior pastor.
- Only the board has the authority to adjust the senior pastor's authority or responsibility when necessary.
- The board should monitor the senior pastor's responsibility and available resources at least at every meeting.
- Between meetings the Relationship Review Committee may monitor the senior pastor's load.

The annual relationship review is the one formal opportunity to monitor this balance. The annual relationship review consists of four sections:

- working environment (including senior pastor perceptions on key elements of relationship values and structure)
- past year's work (including responsibilities/expectations and authority, limitations and accountability)
- negotiation of expectations for the coming year (goals, standards, tasks)
- resources required, including professional training.

The annual relationship review provides an excellent opportunity to assess the balance between authority and responsibility and to discuss means by which it can be maintained or regained.

►
The annual relationship review provides an excellent opportunity to assess the balance between authority and responsibility.

Monitoring Senior Pastor Compliance with Limitations and Expectations

For monitoring to be effective, the limitations and expectations must have been negotiated and documented. They are normally documented in the governance manual, the strategic plan and the senior pastor's personal tactical plans.

The governance manual contains the limitations and expectations that remain relatively constant. Some additions and minor changes may occur along the way, but for the most part they are an ongoing component of the senior pastor/board relationship. The limitations of the senior pastor's authority and expectations of responsibility may include the following policies:

- Tactical and Financial Planning
- Financial Condition - Operational Funds
- Financial Reporting
- Critical Event Reporting
- Asset Protection
- Capital Expenditures
- Restricted Funds
- Operation of Bank Accounts

The strategic plan contains limitations and expectations that are directly associated with mission and its priorities. These do change over time and are normally revised annually. Limitations and expectations of this document include

- services, beneficiaries, places
- priorities of each of the above
- strategic goals
- critical risk indicators.

The senior pastor's personal tactical goals may also include expectations related to

- program effectiveness
- staff/volunteer recruitment and retention.

When all limitations and expectations are negotiated and documented, the senior pastor is empowered to develop the management structure and processes to assure the success of the mission.

Monitoring the senior pastor's compliance with the above is an ongoing accountability process. The schedule is determined and documented under a separate policy in the governance manual. Some limitations and expectations need to be monitored at each meeting, e.g. the financial condition policy. Others may require only annual monitoring, e.g. the operation of bank accounts policy.

Monitoring Financial Issues

The titles of finance-related policies have been included in the list above. Here we deal with the nature of the board's involvement in financial matters.

► *Most boards spend an inordinate amount of time discussing financial matters.*

Most boards spend an inordinate amount of time discussing financial matters. You might, therefore, expect to read more about the board's role in financial matters in this book. The reason for not saying more is simply that financial management is just that—management. Monitoring management is a governance process. It takes far less time than the normal management approach many boards still use.

◀ *When all limitations and expectations are negotiated and documented, the senior pastor is empowered to develop the management structure and processes.*

It is vitally important, however, for the board to design and use a thorough process for monitoring financial issues. That process begins with designing acceptable limits and expectations for financial planning and conditions. This is different from the common practice of examining financial statements to determine whether they are acceptable, without first indicating to the senior pastor what the board is looking for.

The governance approach to monitoring means that the board has already thought through ahead of time what limits are acceptable and has negotiated expectations that are reasonable. When those are specific and clear, the board will know in short order the degree to which the senior pastor is in compliance.

This approach will give the board more control and assurance than a management approach of examining financial statements that carry no policy requirements.

Monitoring compliance with limitations and expectations flows naturally into the more detailed form of monitoring—monitoring the senior pastor’s management of risk, including the risk associated with financial matters.

Monitoring the Senior Pastor’s Management of Risk (Critical Success Factors)

Boards have a tendency to monitor risk informally. I think of it as a process of “good people looking for trouble in a nice way and having difficulty finding it.” Most monitoring is done by advising how the senior pastor should manage. Too often the discussion is directed informally toward whatever someone wants to highlight in the financial statements or management reports. At those times the discussion even seems to lack the awareness that it’s monitoring risk that is the task at hand.

A new form of monitoring is critical to the board’s transition from management to governance. There are three steps to this process:

- Step 1: Identify the critical success factors in which risk must be monitored.
- Step 2: Identify indicators that will enable the monitoring of risk.
- Step 3: Negotiate with the senior pastor the limits of tolerable risk.

Step 1: Identifying Areas of Risk

The primary responsibility for this step in the process rests with the board, because it is the board that is primarily accountable for the security of the church. No board member wants anything to go wrong on his or her watch, but how to know what could go wrong is a challenge for any board. Many boards rely on the intuitive questions of individual board members who have specialized interests and also on the experience of the senior pastor.

By asking fellow board members, “When you think about what could go wrong, what could keep you awake at night?”, the board may begin the brainstorming process mentioned in Chapter 12. That will result in the “ten or so” areas where risk must be monitored. The list in that chapter gives the most common areas that boards identify:

- relationships
- processes
- finance/infrastructure.

The drafting of a sentence beginning with “We must...” completes this step.

The senior pastor's involvement in this step should not determine what areas should be monitored, but the senior pastor may add to the list from personal experience. Chapter 12 also contains a complete sample list of these areas of risk.



I think of it as a process of “good people looking for trouble in a nice way and having difficulty finding it.

Step 2: Identifying Risk Indicators

The process of identifying indicators of risk begins with consulting the senior pastor. All pastors, administrators and senior management teams manage and monitor risk on a daily basis. While that process may be informal and undocumented, there is a wealth of information available from the senior pastor and senior management team. Their involvement will enable the board to save time and increase the quality of identifying indicators.

If the board has identified ten critical risk areas, there is likely going to be a minimum of 20 indicators. Some boards tend to be uncomfortable with the thought of so many things to monitor. It's perfectly understandable. When I enter a commercial jet and glance into the flight deck and notice the array of dials on the instrument panel, I think to myself, “Do they really need all that stuff?” The truth is, “They do!” Each group of instruments allows the captain and first officer to monitor factors that are critical to the safety of the flight. There are instrument groups for navigation, communication, engines, weather, cabin comfort, etc. Nothing would be gained, but something would be lost, by suggesting there should be a limit to the number of indicators.



When you think about what could go wrong, what could keep you awake at night?

For example, in monitoring the risks related to financial management here are some possible indicators:

- cash on hand
- surplus/deficit projection
- assets/liability ratio
- actual/projected YTD income.

Each one of these provides a distinct perspective on the overall security of financial management.

Some monitoring may be done by surveys. For example, a survey of the wellness of the paid and volunteer staff is an excellent and proven means of monitoring the health of the relationship between management and workers. Whether a church considers paid and volunteer staff as a beneficiary group or as a means to an end, there is risk associated with their morale and wellness.

Step 3: Negotiating Limits of Tolerable Risk

In the same way that the instruments on the instrument panel “red line,” we can identify the point in our indicators where the risk becomes intolerable. At that point the senior pastor must make the board aware of plans to reduce the risk. Failure to deal with the management of risk means that the board must move from monitoring back to management.

Applying this principle to the examples above, the senior pastor and board may agree that if cash were to drop below an amount sufficient to pay all salaries and other normal expenses for three months, the risk becomes intolerable. The “red line” may also be two months or one month, depending on the board’s tolerance for risk.

In a survey of staff wellness we can measure the degree to which staff experience affirmation, involvement and servant leadership. What would be the limit of tolerable risk in this measurement? Could a board feel confident that the staff morale was sufficient to provide quality services if less than 50 percent of them experienced these values in their relationship with their source of authority. Or should it be 80 percent or 90 percent?

When the board and senior pastor have established limits for each of the indicators, it is a very straightforward process to monitor each of the indicators on a scheduled and routine basis. Once the board has this process designed, the time at board meetings can focus on strategic issues, because it takes just a few minutes to monitor what has been carefully designed ahead of time. Only when one or more of the indicators fall below the “red line” will more board time be required.

It may take a year for a board to come to the point where all members feel confident that all critical areas of risk have been identified and indicators and limits put in place. I find that it takes commitment and perseverance to complete this task. Once this is done, however, board members can be confident that nothing is likely to go wrong on their watch.

Measuring

Measuring Tactical Results (Outputs)

Most of the senior pastor's goals are likely to appear in the tactical plans of another staff member. The board is interested only in measuring the global goals of the entire church, e.g. church attendance, net membership growth, average financial giving. It will also include the senior pastor's personal tactical goals. They may include home and hospital visits, numbers of Bible classes, membership classes, and other ministry activities that the senior pastor has not delegated to others.

Naturally, the senior pastor and other staff members will measure all other tactical plans. This chapter deals only with the accountability processes of the board—strategic outcomes.

◀
We can identify the point in our indicators where the risk becomes intolerable.

Measuring Strategic Results (Outcomes)

The primary purpose of strategic goals in a strategic plan is to improve the ability of the church to achieve its mission. Setting strategic goals cannot be done without first knowing how to measure strategic outcomes and then taking an initial measurement to establish a baseline on which set strategic goals.

In developing tools to measure the degree to which the strategic outcomes have been achieved they must be

- effective — measure the right things
- accurate — provide a true picture of strategic outcomes
- practical — enable strategic goal setting
- consistent — useful in multiple years.

Thus, strategic goals focus on the achievement of the church's outcomes of services. In order to set measurable goals, this process involves the following steps:

- Step #1: Identifying indicators of results
- Step #2: Establishing baseline measurements
- Step #3: Establishing strategic goals.

◀
Once the board has this process designed, the time at board meetings can focus on strategic issues.

Step 1: Identifying Indicators of Results

The hope of all churches is that the delivery of their services will impact individuals in such a way that they will experience some spiritual benefit. These benefits will meet some type of expressed or ascribed need.

Benefits are defined *as strategic outcomes experienced by the beneficiaries (individuals, families, or groups) resulting from the services of the church. They result in a positive changed state in personal faith and lives of the beneficiaries.*

Strategic outcomes bring the church closer to realizing its vision. They are generally *qualitative* in nature, as opposed to tactical outputs that are *quantitative* in nature (e.g. the number of worshippers or net membership growth).

In real life, however, the strategic measurements of most churches reflect tactical goals that are output-focused instead of outcomes-focused. Some churches are now experiencing increased pressure by their members to identify strategic goals that are outcome-focused. Why? Because it is no longer acceptable for churches to simply be activity-focused and busy. The identification of strategic outcomes allows us to articulate the purpose of all this activity. Collecting data to be used as indicators can be done in several ways:

- by observation
- gathering relevant statistics
- conducting interviews
- focus groups
- surveys.

Use Some Objective Data

We are interested in identifying qualitative indicators that will assist us in knowing the degree to which we have achieved strategic outcomes for our beneficiaries. Indicators enable us to measure the degree to which we have been successful in achieving our mission. They provide the information needed to determine if our services are making the desired difference for our members and other beneficiaries.

Sometimes, the tactical measurements recorded give us at least an oblique strategic measurement. For example, if church attendance is growing steadily, we may assume that people are coming in greater numbers because they are benefitting from the worship services and are sharing that with others. In this way the quantitative measurement may be giving us an oblique assessment of the qualitative benefits that people must be receiving.

There is, however, a better way.

Ask the Beneficiaries

►
*The most basic
and effective
way to measure
outcomes is the
creation of a
survey.*

The most basic and effective way to measure outcomes is the creation of a survey that asks the individuals within your beneficiaries to describe the degree to which they benefit from the services of your church. The survey becomes the measurement tool, and the survey statements reflect the indicators that tell us if a strategic outcome is being achieved. To do this we will prepare a survey designed to harvest the perception of one or more beneficiaries regarding one or more of the church's services.

◄
*It is no longer
acceptable for
churches to
simply be
activity-focused
and busy.*

It is unlikely that you will find a pre-designed tool that provides a way to establish baselines. It's more likely that you will need to design one for your church that collects relevant data about your strategic outcomes and the degree of achievement.

Stated most simply, we ask this question, "What does success look like?" We have found that that single question helps people go beyond the quantitative tactical measurements to the vital qualitative strategic results measurement. This exercise will produce positive statements to which people can respond with their perception of the quality of the services.

To keep the process as simple as possible, it is important to be mindful of the following tips when crafting survey statements. Statements should

- be worded in a way that applies to everyone who will be responding to the survey
- be worded in a way that can be responded to with one of the five words on the Likert scale
- avoid leading the reader to a pre-determined response
- describe only one indicator that is distinct from others that have been identified
- be stated in the positive—to reflect an increase in the benefit described.

Typically, respondents would rank the survey statements using a scale with a number of responses that would reflect the degree to which they are currently experiencing that outcome or agree with the statement. One type of ranking scale commonly used is the Likert Scale. Two options for Likert Scales are shown below.

Survey Ranking Scales

Rating Scale Option #1	Rating Scale Option #2
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 — Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 — Consistently
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 — Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 — Frequently
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 — Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 — Occasionally
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 — Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 — Rarely
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 — Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 — Never

Step 2: Establishing a Baseline

Establishing baseline measures is like putting a mark on the door frame to measure a child’s growth. If there is no mark to compare to, it’s difficult to know how much progress, if any, has been made or what progress is reasonable to expect within a certain time frame. Once a baseline “mark” has been made, subsequent measurements can be compared against this baseline measurement.

Take the time to design your survey carefully. The first survey becomes the “ruler” that will establish the baseline measurements to which future survey measurements will be compared. It is important to have a consistent measurement tool that you can use in subsequent years to establish progress towards your goals and how much change has occurred since the last measurement. Using a different survey would be like measuring the growth of your child using an imperial ruler one time and a metric one the next—the comparison would be meaningless, like “apples to oranges.” Survey reliability is extremely important for accurate and meaningful goal setting.

The process of establishing a baseline involves administering your survey tool and tabulating and interpreting the data.

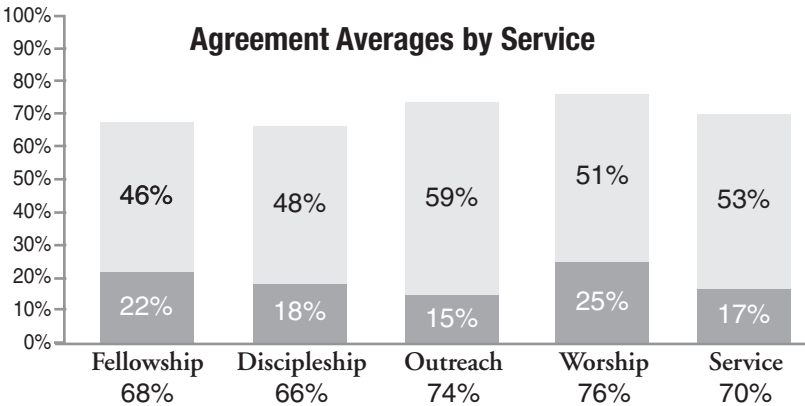
Tips for Administering Survey Tools

- Include a demographics page, giving a way for respondents to indicate specific characteristics (e.g. gender, age group, member/attender, length of membership) that will allow you to separate and analyze the data for different groups, rather than just looking at general scores for each statement.
- Include a brief description of the purpose of the survey and instructions for completion.
- Consider different ways of administering the survey, e.g. distributing hard copy or electronic copy by email or web site, or distributing a portion each Sunday for five weeks.
- Determine how you might give the respondents feedback once you have tabulated the data.

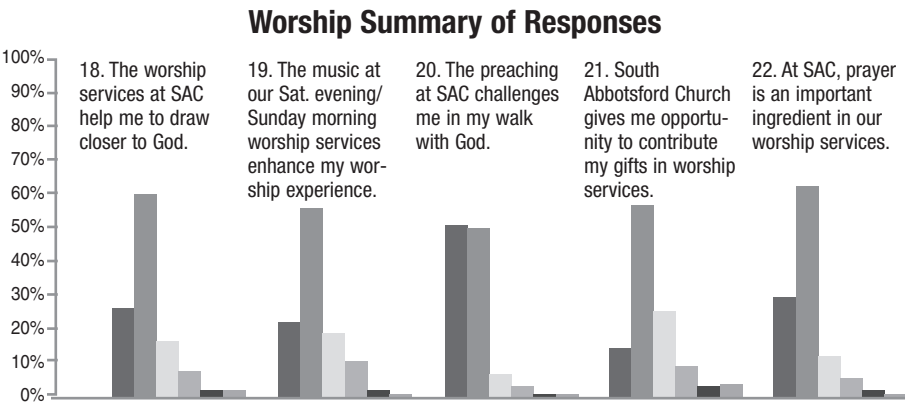
Tabulating the data involves quantifying the results in a manner that is most meaningful for your church. There are many ways to analyze and separate your data that may require the help of a consultant or staff member with some expertise. When you tabulate the data, the suggested method is a frequency distribution. This allows you to see how many respondents selected each response, e.g. 20% strongly agree; 50% agree; 10% neutral; 10% disagree and 10% strongly disagree. This example reflects a total of 70% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with a statement. Combining the two top scores is a common way to compare scores from various statements. When interpreting the data, the use of bar graphs or charts can be useful.

The following is a sample of baseline survey results from one of my clients, South Abbotsford MB Church in British Columbia.

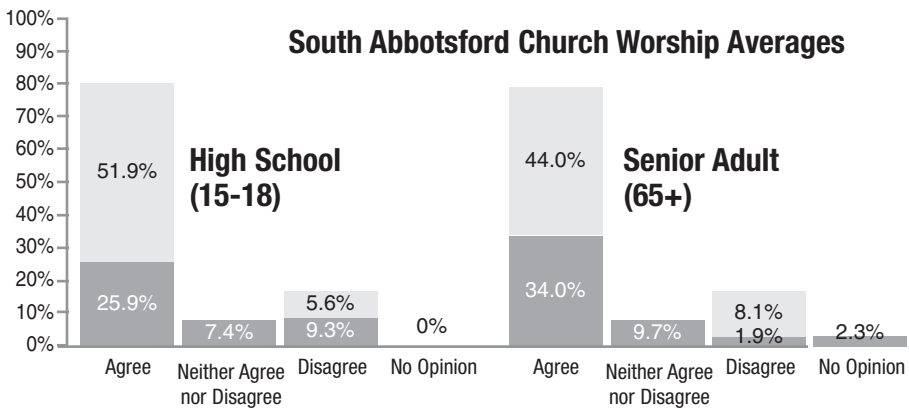
The survey consisted of 25 statements designed to describe what success looks like when people benefit from the services of the church. Members and attenders were invited to respond to the Likert Scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, or no opinion). The first level of measurement shows the average of how many “agree strongly” (dark shading) and “agree” (light shading) in each of the five services. This is the broadest display of results, because it averages all 25 of the statements in groups of five for each of the services.



The second level of measurement is by each of the individual services. This measurement displays the full range of results for each of the five statements in one service. The example shown here is for the service of worship. Here you may read each of the statements and see the results in order of strongly agree, agree, etc. By adding the percentages of the first two columns you see the total level of agreement of each statement. Notice for example, that overall 89.4% of the respondents of all ages agree strongly (45%) or agree (44.4%) that “the preaching at SAC challenges me in my walk with God.”

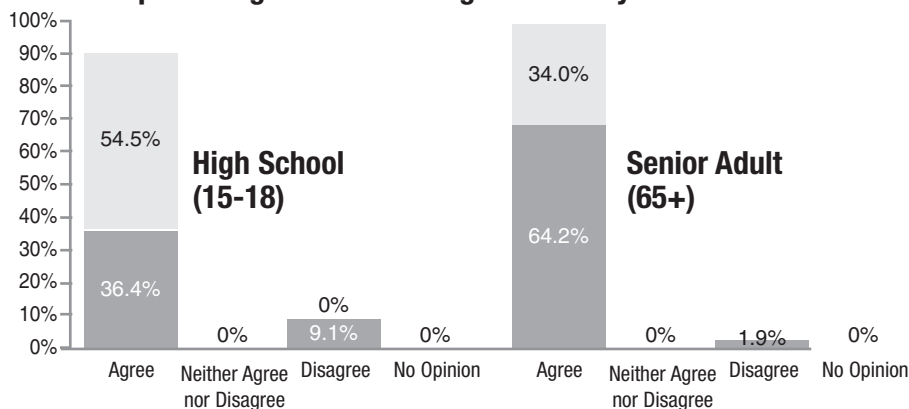


The third level of measurement looks at the average of the five statements taken together by any portion of the demographic information that was gathered when the survey was taken. In these examples, you are observing two segments of the full range of age groups. In the first are displayed the results of the 15-18 year-old high school students. 77.8% of this group agree strongly (25.9%) or agree (51.9%) with the five statements combined. Compare that with the 65+ age group where an almost identical 78% agree strongly (34%) or agree (44%) with the five statements combined. Obviously, this church has found a formula for inter-generational worship that is spiritually enriching.



The fourth and final level examines each individual statement by any demographic segment. In this case you observe that 90.9% of the 15-18 year olds agreed strongly (36.4%) and agreed (54.5%) that “the preaching at SAC challenges me in my walk with God.” If that isn’t high enough, note that the 65+ group reached 98.2% in agreement (agree strongly 64.2% and agree 34%). This is the highest score ever recorded on any survey I have administered. It’s difficult to imagine setting a goal for the future level of benefit for this age group.

The preaching at SAC challenges me in my walk with God.



Step 3: Establishing Strategic Goals

Strategic goals will always be focused on achieving one or more of the services provided to one or more of the beneficiaries included in the mission of your church. We call these *outcome-focused* goals. Remember, these are contrasted with tactical goals that are *output-focused*.

How you tabulate, examine and interpret your data gives you a number of options for how you might set strategic goals for the planning time frame. For example, if you combined survey statement scores for each service, you may set strategic goals based on services. If you looked at your data by beneficiaries, you may set specific goals based on beneficiaries.

Some churches find it useful to examine average frequency scores for each of their services or beneficiaries and then select priority areas or groups. Once these have been selected, specific outcomes within each could be selected and strategic goal statements written for each.

Another option would be to select specific service/beneficiary combinations that have been identified as priorities for the next planning period. This selection might be based on low scores that were revealed in the results and/or outcomes that reflect areas of need that have been identified by the beneficiaries. They may also be selected on the basis of the amount of resources that are being allocated.

Depending on the size and complexity of your church, I suggest that you establish at least 5 and no more than 10 strategic goals for your church to achieve during the strategic planning time frame of 3 to 5 years.

Regardless of how you “dice and slice” the data, the strategic goals you set should meet the S.M.A.R.T. criteria previously described. Here are examples of strategic goal statements and the baseline measurements on which they were set.

Strategic Goal Statements

Strategic Goal Statement for Worship (Based on a baseline of 77%)

“At the end of the first year of this planning period at least 80% of our members and attenders will report that they agree or agree strongly with the five survey statements related to worship.

“In the next three years we will have increased the agree/strongly agree percentage by 3 percentage points in worship, discipleship, and fellowship and by 4 percentage points in outreach and service.”

The detailed examination of strategic results in a survey of this type also helps the pastor and staff to negotiate goals for the next 3 to 5 years with the board that are realistic. The comments invited with each survey statement give more valuable information to the staff to enable them to make changes to the programs that deliver the services. Pastor and staff need to consider together what new staff positions, programs, equipment, training would be required to raise a result of 77% to 80% in one year. In this way the strategic goals are negotiated with the board and continue to be S.M.A.R.T.

►
Remember that strategic goals are negotiated between senior pastor and board.

Remember that strategic goals are negotiated between senior pastor and board. The board must ensure that the senior pastor has the resources required to fulfill these strategic goal expectations within the planning timeline. Progress towards these goals can be measured annually using the same survey tool used for establishing the baseline measure. Once the strategic goals have been agreed upon, the board may want to revisit resource allocation to ensure that it reflects the priorities identified in the strategic goals and enables the senior pastor to ensure that these are realized within the planning timeframe.

Exercising the Board's Accountabilities to Stakeholders

The board has different accountabilities to different stakeholders:

Members: The board is accountable to report the strategic results of the church's mission in clear, accurate measurements. It is also accountable for acting in good faith in all matters, particularly in the use of resources, both human and financial. The primary mechanisms for that accountability are the annual report and the annual general meeting.

Regulatory Authorities: The board exercises this accountability by filing the required reports to denominational offices and government agencies.

Internal Board Relationships: The only means by which members can hold the board accountable is by election. The board must, therefore, develop an accountability process to measure its own performance and that of its committees, chair, other officers, and individual board members. The primary responsibility for this is delegated to the Relationship Review Committee. I have found that if it is left to the board as a whole, it simply doesn't get done. There is too much detail and time required.

Summary

In this chapter we dealt with the policies that relate to the accountability processes of the board. Monitoring and measuring are neutral processes that when properly administered are a blessing to those being monitored and measured.

The process of accountability consists of monitoring the present and measuring the past. Monitoring includes

- the balance of authority and responsibility delegated to the senior pastor
- compliance with limitations and expectations policies
- the senior pastor's management of risk.

Measuring normally takes place in the annual relationship review and consists of

- comparing strategic results to goals
- comparing the senior pastor's personal tactical results to goals.

The chapter concludes with a presentation of the board's accountabilities to its members and other stakeholders, and its own internal accountabilities for performance.

For Reflection and Discussion

How is the quality of your ministry measured at the present time?

Would you find it helpful to measure the results of your ministry by developing a survey?

Why? Why not?

The Pastor as Leader and Manager

PART TWO
CHAPTER

15

Introduction

With this chapter we present the application of the Relationship Model™ to the leadership and management of a church. It is not a subject that would normally appear in a book about governance. The Relationship Model™, however, is an operating system for the entire church, not only its governance. The same design of healthy relationships—values, structure, processes—that balances the productivity and personal fulfillment within governance, delivers similar benefits to other relationships

- between governance and management
- within management teams
- between the church and its members.

►
The church culture that grows out of the Relationship Model™ has the strength that only a single design for all relationships can provide.

The church culture that grows out of the Relationship Model™ has the strength that only a single design for all relationships, consistently applied throughout the church, can provide. It is neither a disjointed model nor a double standard to create misunderstanding and confusion between board and staff. This benefit distinguishes the Relationship Model™ from other governance or management models.

Important Note: This entire chapter is written from the perspective of a one-leader structure where the administrator is a member of the senior management team and receives his or her authority from the senior pastor. If you are an administrator, senior pastor, or board member of a church that uses or is considering a two-leader structure, it will be necessary for you to “read” this chapter with that filter. Some portions of this chapter will apply equally to both and some portions will apply more specifically to one or the other.

In Chapters 12—14 we dealt with the board’s role in the Relationship Model™ for

- strategic planning
- delegation of authority and responsibility to the senior pastor
- monitoring and measuring strategic results (outcomes).

In this chapter we discuss the role of the senior pastor in these three processes, but from the perspective of management:

- tactical planning
- delegation of authority and responsibility to staff and volunteers
- monitoring and measuring tactical results (outputs).

The senior pastor occupies the pivotal position at the top of the trunk of the organizational tree. All nutrients that flow from the board (the trunk) up into the branches and leaves (staff and volunteers) must pass through this position.

The senior pastor has no operational authority except from the board following the call by the membership of the church. Staff and volunteers have no operational authority unless it comes from the senior pastor.

There are many kinds of churches. All are at various stages of the organizational life cycle. All have different financial conditions. All have unique facets. To meet their needs during different phases of their life cycles, churches may require different kinds of senior pastors. Senior pastors come in all shades and colors. Take a look at the box that follows.

Types of Pastors

- big picture visionaries who can't remember details and those whose strength is managing the details of the present
- grizzly bears and teddy bears
- preachers and professors
- prima donnas and those who prefer a backstage role
- brilliant theologians who find difficulty dealing with the realities of the pastoral ministry and those who are solidly practical but who don't seem to have a frame of reference
- pastors who talk too much and those who don't share their thoughts
- lions and lambs
- pastors whom the staff wish would leave yesterday and those whose eventual departure is too awful even to imagine
- builders and wreckers
- computer experts and those who plan to retire before being forced to buy their first one
- preachers who inspire and preachers who put you to sleep
- reckless and fearful
- bean counters and bean growers
- pastors who wear their hearts on their sleeves and those who don't appear to have one (a heart, that is)
- lone rangers and team players
- and everything in between

Leadership

This is a chapter specific to the senior pastor's leadership position, not a chapter about personal leadership. Personal leadership is the process of influencing others for the common good. That comes in Chapter 17 when we climb to the top of the tree to meet the many personal leaders. Yes, the senior pastor must demonstrate personal leadership, but there is a distinction between personal leadership and the senior pastor's leadership position. When we combine the personal leadership qualities of the senior pastor and the pastor's leadership position, the subject takes on even more significance. The successful senior pastor not only demonstrates strong personal leadership, but develops and celebrates the leadership of everyone else in the church.

Organizational Culture

Why is it that some churches are very productive but at the expense of staff and member/volunteer fulfillment?

Why is morale consistently high in some churches and chronically low in others?

I believe that values are of fundamental importance to the church's culture and, therefore, its success. Because the senior pastor is the board's only employee and all authority delegated to the staff and volunteers passes through this single individual, how the senior pastor values the use of power will ultimately affect everyone in the church, as well as its members. Senior pastors who succeed in leading the delicate, dynamic balance of member satisfaction and staff/volunteer fulfillment virtually all share the same core values.

If there is an imbalance between member satisfaction and staff/volunteer fulfillment, its origin may very likely be in the way the senior pastor values the use of power. Church culture is best defined simply by saying that culture is "the way we do things here." Where the senior pastor is positioned on the continuum of values related to power (*laissez-faire* to authoritarian, Chapter 2) will have a major impact on the church culture.

The senior pastor who consistently demonstrates behaviors that flow from affirmation, involvement and servant leadership will shape the culture of the church in a beautiful way. The governance manual of the Relationship Model™ mandates the following policy on how members, staff and volunteers can expect to be treated:

“The senior pastor is expected to demonstrate the values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership in all relationships with members, the board of directors, staff and volunteers.”

The Role of the Senior Pastor

The senior pastor is the link between governance and management. Thus, the senior pastor spends time focusing on

- strategic issues with the board
- tactical issues with members, staff, and volunteers.

It is the senior pastor’s responsibility to lead the processes of planning, resource development and management for the church’s ministry. Here again are the five broad areas of responsibility found in the senior pastor/board relationship description:

- provide pastoral services for the members of the congregation and for non-members who seek pastoral services
- lead the public worship of the congregation, including planning and conducting worship services and administration of the sacraments
- administer ordinances of the congregation, e.g. marriages and funerals
- Assist the board with its strategic planning responsibilities and accountability processes
- Manage the work of the employed ministry staff and ministry volunteers of the congregation.



If there is an imbalance between member satisfaction and staff/volunteer fulfillment, its origin may very likely be in the way the senior pastor values the use of power.

The Senior Pastor's Role in Governance

The Senior Pastor's Role in Strategic Planning

Although it is the board's responsibility to position the church for the future, it cannot fulfill that responsibility without the senior pastor's involvement. In almost all churches, the senior pastor is in the unique position of being closer to the needs of members than any other single individual.

The senior pastor is vital to the process of strategic planning. The pastor is the key to identifying stakeholders who can keep the board up-to-date with changes that shape member needs and the services that will meet those needs. These stakeholders may be members, denominational, corporate, and community leaders, and members of the academic and social services communities. Selected stakeholders should enter the boardroom on a regular basis. Changes in the beneficiary groups and service delivery locations can also be determined only by close interaction with stakeholders, whom the senior pastor may be in the best position to identify.

Vision—Board or Senior Pastor—Whose Is It?

Vision is a component of the strategic planning process. Sometimes “visioning” is used to refer to the entire strategic plan. The strategic planning relationship between the senior pastor and the board is a very delicate balance. In one sense, the vision that draws the church into the future belongs neither to the board nor to the senior pastor. It belongs to the entire church, the members and attenders.

On the one hand, the board cannot develop the vision without the senior pastor. On the other hand, the senior pastor must not develop the vision for the board. It is a shared responsibility that they both accomplish for the entire church.

Can or should the senior pastor be an influence in developing the vision for the future? Definitely! At the same time the senior pastor should maintain the perspective that it is the board's responsibility to develop and maintain that vision on behalf of the members. The senior pastor can do this by giving the board options rather than recommendations about whom the board invites into the boardroom to share needs and perspectives for the future.

It is very common for a board to depend on a senior pastor to develop the vision. We have probably all heard a board member say “Our senior pastor is a real visionary.” Or “Our senior pastor has a very clear vision of where he

wants to take this church.” These sentiments suggest a board that has abrogated its strategic role. In such churches one may observe a shift of services, beneficiary groups and priorities, because the vision changes with each senior pastor.



In almost all churches, the senior pastor is in the unique position of being closer to the needs of members than any other single individual.

Observing Other Trees

Like each tree, every church is unique. Like all trees, all churches share similarities. Forming relationships with other pastors can be a very helpful way to learn more about the changing needs of members. You can

- hear what others are experiencing
- have a sounding board to test ideas
- discuss obstacles in developing approaches to meet member needs.

For-profit corporations may also offer an important perspective. They are sometimes closer to the changes in economic, political and social environment. They may have a larger research and development budget and other systems from which the senior pastor can benefit. Members of church boards may often serve as conduits to this type of information.

Other learning opportunities include seminars, leadership forums and membership in service clubs. All these give leaders important strategic insights.



On the one hand, the board cannot develop the vision without the senior pastor. On the other hand, the senior pastor must not develop the vision for the board.

Thinking in the Shade of the Tree

“What do you actually do with your time?” a senior pastor may be asked. Sometimes, the sense is that the answer “nothing much” is anticipated. The reality is that the senior pastor should find time to lie in the shade of the tree doing “nothing much.”

Taking time to think, to read, and to pray, to put into perspective the infinite number of variables that the senior pastor observes, is a vital ingredient to the pastor’s role in strategic leadership. Some leaders do this literally by “resting” in the shade of a tree, some by walking,

jogging and cycling. Some wake up in the middle of the night with creative insights spelled “i-n-s-o-m-n-i-a.” Others have a special retreat where they can be alone with their thoughts or a book.

Senior pastors whose senior managers are well-empowered or have churches large enough to employ an administrator, really help give the senior pastor time to consider strategic leadership. This strongly supports the board in planning the future.

We mention these activities not because senior pastors are unaware of them, but because we’ve observed that some leaders either feel, or are made to feel, that time for such activities is time they shouldn’t be taking from their management functions. The point is that this kind of strategic leadership is vitally important to the future success of the church.

The Senior Pastor’s Role in Delegating

In the Relationship Model™ the senior pastor is very much involved in determining how much authority and responsibility the board will delegate. The senior pastor/board relationship review gives both the senior pastor and the board an opportunity to assess the quality of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership that the senior pastor has experienced from the board. It also permits both to consider the balance between the authorization and resources available on the one hand, and the negotiated expectations of the senior pastor’s responsibility on the other.

In churches with managing boards the board is more likely to focus on the senior pastor’s management of resources than on its obligation to ensure there are enough resources to cover the responsibilities. Not so in the Relationship Model™.

Negotiating Expectations

As we said in Chapter 13, expectations take the form of goals (quantity), standards (quality) and specific tasks (the details). The senior pastor’s primary goals are the strategic goals in the strategic plan. These are primarily qualitative in nature, but quantified by the use of measuring tools that are developed as part of the board’s responsibility for measuring strategic results (outcomes). They do not include the secondary, tactical goals.

Standards, on the other hand, are likely to be imposed on the entire church by the denomination and other regulatory authorities. In such cases they are not likely to be negotiable.



Taking time to think, to read, and to pray, to put into perspective the infinite number of variables that the senior pastor observes, is a vital ingredient to the pastor's role in strategic leadership.

Thus, in the negotiating process, the senior pastor must be a full partner with the board in ensuring that there is balance—balance that allows the senior pastor to fulfill the expectations within the limits of what is available. Where expectations cannot be reduced, resources must be increased. In planning the operational year, both parties must be satisfied that the balance is in place.

The Senior Pastor's Role in Monitoring and Measuring

Monitoring Tactical Plans

When the senior pastor (or administrator, in the case of a two-person structure) brings the tactical plans to the board before or just after the start of the fiscal year, the Financial Audit Committee and the board will monitor that

- the plans reflect the strategic vision and mission and priorities
- the operational aspects of the tactical plans are linked to the strategic goals, that is, they will contribute to the achievement of the outcomes specified in those goals
- the limitations and expectations policies dealing with financial planning give the senior pastor clear direction as to the parameters acceptable to the board
- all of the risk indicators that are necessary for the board to monitor risk instead of managing it themselves have been negotiated and put into place.

In this way the board indicates to the senior pastor in advance what it will find acceptable. This is very different from the traditional process of “approving the budget.” It is in this difference that the board can make the greatest transition in its relationship with the senior pastor.

When meeting with the board, the senior pastor can assure the success of the tactical planning process by making clear references to the strategic plan, as well as the

financial limitations and expectations policies. Once the board sees that operational and financial plans comply with approved strategic plans and financial planning policies, it can make that declaration in a motion recorded in the minutes. This is how the senior pastor can support the board in taking a governance approach to planning, versus the traditional “approving the budget” approach. Governance gives

- the board more control over the mission and strategic outcomes of the church
- the senior pastor more authority to manage the resources for the success of the mission.

Monitoring Performance

The senior pastor is responsible for the management of finances. During the operational (fiscal) year this management will be monitored on a regular basis. Here, too, the senior pastor (and administrator) will work closely with the board in providing the data needed for responsible monitoring.

Monitoring of financial planning and managing policies is done by the Financial Audit Committee, composed of financially literate board members, plus any non-board members required for their financial expertise. The treasurer of the congregation is the chair of the Financial Audit Committee, except in small congregations where all of the financial processes are performed by the treasurer. In that case the treasurer cannot be a member of the Financial Audit Committee, because monitoring his or her own management would be a conflict of interest.

The senior pastor will have in place income/expense, cash flow and balance sheet documentation for all the church’s funds and accounts. The Financial Audit Committee must have regular and timely access to these important management documents so that they can monitor senior pastor compliance with governance financial policies...the internal audit referred to in Chapter 14. Careful scrutiny by board specialists of the actual documents is the only way for a board to be assured that the senior pastor/management team is exercising accountability for the church’s finances. The wise senior pastor will regularly provide the best possible displays of accurate information so that the committee and board feel confident that they exercise appropriate control without getting into time-wasting, detailed management issues.

I know of no single item that will make a greater difference to the transition from board management to board governance than getting this part of the

relationship right. Once the governance manual is in place with the relevant policies, and the board and committee chairs follow these policies, it is the senior pastor who holds the key to the success of this aspect of the relationship.



Governance gives the board more control over the mission and strategic outcomes of the church.



Strategic measurements are the responsibility of the board. They cannot be accomplished, however, without the full involvement of the senior pastor and staff.

Measuring Results

Strategic measurements are the responsibility of the board. They cannot be accomplished, however, without the full involvement of the senior pastor and staff.

The senior pastor can add important momentum and commitment to the process of measuring results that are truly strategic.

The senior pastor can enhance the wisdom that an ever-changing board acquires on the difference between (a) measuring what impact (strategic outcomes) the church wants to achieve through the delivery of their services and (b) how it accomplishes these strategic outcomes.

Ironically, this is the easiest contribution the senior pastor can make and often the most needed. We still see churches that measure program numbers instead of the results of the services those programs provide, and churches that rely on

- net growth in membership
- church attendance
- communion attendance
- financial giving per member.

The least likely strategic measurement that a church makes is the measurement of staff and volunteer fulfillment. Many churches still believe that staff and volunteers are simply an important means to an end, not beneficiary groups in themselves. The senior pastor can do a lot to champion the measurement of this strategic result.

The Senior Pastor and Management

In Chapter 10, we suggested that there is a natural tendency for a board to focus on tactical management issues, leaving the senior pastor by default to handle strategic issues. Some senior pastors may feel a sense of disempowerment by having to “give back” to the board the task of strategic planning, including “visioning.” The pastor may feel limited, not empowered, by having to manage how the church delivers what the board has defined as its vision, mission, beneficiary groups, services and strategic outcomes.

Some senior pastors may need to make a paradigm shift in order to experience the enormous empowerment the governing board gives a senior pastor to manage the mission.

Services and Programs

One area in which the senior pastor’s empowerment to manage can easily be seen is in the distinction between strategic services and tactical programs.

When we lead a board and senior staff through the strategic planning process, we usually include a brainstorming session designed for the group to accurately define its strategic services. Invariably, the flip chart is filled with a mixture of services and programs. In many churches board and staff think of programs as the focus for their work instead of the services those programs provide.

The services the church provides is a matter for the board to determine as part of its strategic direction. Which programs will deliver those services most effectively and efficiently is the management issue that the senior pastor and staff are empowered to develop.

Thus, far from being disempowered by the board’s limitations of which services the church provides, the senior pastor is empowered to work creatively to develop tactical programs that will effectively deliver the strategic services.

Building on Strengths

►
A luxury that nearly every senior pastor can enjoy in leading the management process is choosing to work in areas of interest and strength while delegating areas of weakness and lesser interest to others.

A luxury that nearly every senior pastor can enjoy in leading the management process is choosing to work in areas of interest and strength while delegating areas of weakness and lesser interest to others.

Senior pastors have many areas in which they have to be productive. They include

- preaching and writing
- theology and teaching
- planning
- people management
- financial management
- financial stewardship.

As any church grows, it becomes apparent that a senior pastor must make choices about how to prioritize limited time and energy. Some senior pastors focus on preaching and teaching, some on counseling and communication, some on other professional elements of the church's mission, e.g. worship, music, outreach.

►
The same need that brought the senior pastor into the position may become the reason to leave.

In larger churches a senior pastor must match personal strengths to the changing needs of the church. The same need that brought the senior pastor into the position may become the reason to leave. For example, a senior pastor who is known to be a "turn-around" pastor may have completed one's leadership role when the church has turned around. To stay longer than the personal areas of strength and interest prevents both the senior pastor and the church from being effective in the next stage of their respective development.

Change doesn't usually lead to the necessity of departure but to the need for a more specialized role, adapting the senior pastor to one's areas of strength and interest. Thus, while the senior pastor has the luxury of choosing what that contribution should be, the senior pastor must be able to identify both areas of strength and of weakness.

This can be done in several ways:

- professional assessment tools
- personal introspection
- input from family, friends, board members, peers, staff and volunteers.

Governancematters.com Inc. has developed strength surveys that enable senior pastors, administrators, managers, board members and board chairs to assess their relative strengths in the competencies required for each position. Every senior pastor, however, already has some sense of one's personal gifts and areas of strength. I think the easiest way to assess that is to recognize that "we like what we're good at" and "we're good at what we like."

A senior pastor is wise to acknowledge areas of disinterest and weakness relative to areas of strength. It doesn't help to deny disliking a task simply because it's part of the job and has to be done.

This kind of honesty flows naturally for a senior pastor who self-empowers with the values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership. These values produce self-esteem and self-awareness, two of the most important senior pastor competencies. The willingness to celebrate strengths and accept weaknesses also allows the senior pastor to hear what others have to say. There is a wealth of wisdom available to the senior pastor from the experience and perspectives of people with more authority, peers and staff. That's why the assessment tools we have developed include self-perception and the perceptions of these three groups.

It's this process of self examination and board feedback that may lead to the decision about moving to the two-person structure by adding an administrator. As long as a senior pastor is in place, the competency set of gifts of that pastor are the most important determining factor in how the administration is structured. The three basic options are

- the pastor serves as the administrator
- the pastor delegates administration to a member of the staff
- the board delegates administration to an administrator directly.

Management Structure

In the one-person model structure, the Relationship Model™ gives the senior pastor the freedom to design the structure of the church's management. The senior pastor is in the best position to respond to changes in size, complexity, the effects of technology and many other factors. Changes in

structure should not normally require board approval. That approval should already be given within whatever limitations the board has assigned. For example, the board may limit the maximum percentage of operational expenses that can be allocated to infrastructure.

Operational and Financial Management

In the tactical planning process of the Relationship Model™, the senior pastor and the senior management team receive the freedom to develop the tactical plans—both operational and financial. I prefer “tactical plans” to “the budget.” The word “budget” focuses too much on the financial aspect of plans and not enough on the operational aspect, i.e. the management of the money rather than what the senior pastor and staff actually do with it.

Proper tactical planning is the key to receiving the board’s empowerment for operational and financial management. Tactical planning includes

- operational plans that are linked to the strategic plan
- financial plans that reflect the financial planning policy.

You will see both elements when looking at a budget, though the focus is often more on the numbers than on the words that describe the operational plans.

Financial management is what the name implies—management. The senior pastor is empowered within the strategic plan and the financial policies to plan, evaluate, change plans, and to allocate or re-allocate resources to achieve the strategic goals of the church.

Summary

In this chapter we examined the role of the senior pastor in governance and management.

We noted that the personal leadership qualities of the senior pastor are particularly critical because the senior pastor's leadership position spreads the values, which the pastor models, throughout the church. The personal leadership quality of the senior pastor is a primary factor in shaping the corporate culture "the way we do things here."

We discussed the role of the senior pastor in governance. We examined that role in three processes in which the senior pastor interacts with the board:

- strategic planning
- delegation of authority and responsibility to the senior pastor
- monitoring and measuring.

We went on to cover the role of the senior pastor in management, highlighting the empowerment that the board gives to the senior pastor by keeping its focus on strategic issues and delegating tactical issues to the senior pastor.

Four illustrations of this empowerment to manage the church are freedom to

- develop the programs that provide the services
- focus on areas of strength and hire others in areas of relative weakness
- structure the management of the church in order to achieve the strategic goals of the church effectively and efficiently
- develop operational and financial plans and to manage those plans and resources.

For Reflection and Discussion

What examples of support can you suggest for your senior pastor in making the transition to the type of leadership outlined in this chapter?

Does the structure of your church allow your pastor to work in areas of strength? Give examples to illustrate your perspective.

Members as Managers and Workers

PART TWO
CHAPTER

16

Introduction

Designing a management structure within the local church is significantly different from designing its governance structure because of the variables that make churches different. The most significant variables are

- size of the church
- type of services the church offers
- type of infrastructure the church requires
- competency set of the senior pastor/administrator
- national, cultural and linguistic complexities.

Because each church is unique, we will deal with some of the general aspects of structure and process affected by the Relationship Model™.

Aspects of structure:

- senior pastor span of leadership
- senior management teams
- manager competencies

Aspects of process:

- decision-making by consensus
- tactical planning
- describing working relationships

Important Note: In contrast to Chapter 15 this entire chapter is written from the perspective of a two-leader structure where both the senior pastor and the administrator are accountable to the board. If you are a senior pastor or board member of a church that uses or is considering a one-leader structure, it will be necessary for you to “read” this chapter with that filter. Some portions of this chapter will apply equally to both pastor and administrator and some portions will apply more specifically to one or the other.

Structure: Span of Leadership – Senior Pastor and Administrator

Today’s designers of organizational structure recognize the need to reduce the height of hierarchical models. Stuart R. Levine and Michael A. Crom of Dale Carnegie & Associates, Inc., speak about this change in *The Leader in You*: “Now this might come as a surprise to some people, but the pyramids are tumbling down... you can bet the future will be a whole lot more horizontal than in the past. All those rigid hierarchies, all those departmental lines, all those intricate chains of command—all of it stifled creative work. And who can afford that when the world is changing so fast?” (p. 98)

How flat can a church become? How many people can any senior pastor or administrator manage effectively? 4? 12? 100? Is there any limit? Using a fully-developed form of the Relationship Model™, a senior pastor and administrator may increase the span of leadership and effectiveness at the same time. Factors that affect their effective span of leadership include

- how the senior pastor and administrator value power
- how much they are willing to delegate
- how clearly the working relationships are structured
- how the senior pastor and administrator use a senior management team
- competencies of the senior pastor, the administrator and the senior managers
- effectiveness of communication and information systems.

Some of these were discussed in the previous chapter. Others require more attention here, because they have an impact on how a senior pastor and administrator can design a management structure with a flatter hierarchy, larger span of leadership and increased effectiveness.

Members as Staff and Volunteer Senior Managers

Many church boards are made up of the chairs of working committees (sometimes called boards). That kind of board functions in a combination of

governance and a senior management team. Because the management of the church takes up most of the board time, the board has little time left for governance.

The Relationship Model™ separates governance from management. At the outset of the transition to this Model, the individuals will be board members and at the same time the chairs of working committees. In the latter capacity they become the members of the senior management team. It's important, therefore, for these board members to know which hat they are wearing, the governing hat placed on them by election to the board, or the managing hat placed on them by the senior pastor or administrator's recruitment of them to be a senior manager.

► *There is a natural tendency for some board members to leave the board, because they favor rolling up their sleeves to do the work of the church.*

As everyone becomes more accustomed to the new structure, there is a natural tendency for some board members to leave the board, because they favor rolling up their sleeves to do the work of the church. Others who have never been interested in being on the church board, because they didn't want to be involved in the daily work of the church now become interested in governing the church. They are interested in the "big picture" of the ministry.

Some board members are comfortable "changing hats." They are comfortable being the source of authority of the senior pastor and administrator as a member of the board and a recipient of the senior pastor or administrator's authority as a member of the senior management team. What follows here can best be understood in the light of separation of the one hat of a church board involved in governance and management into the two hats of board governance and staff management. For the sake of clarity, the senior managers of whom I am speaking here are the former committee chairs in the previous structure.

Bear in mind, too, that some members of the senior management team may be employed staff and some may be members of the congregation who volunteer for senior management functions not covered by employed staff.

In managing working relationships I make no distinction between paid staff and volunteers. Both have authority and responsibility. Both have limitations and expectations. Both are accountable.

Structure: Senior Management Teams

Senior management teams are known by a variety of names. For the sake of simplicity we will abbreviate these to SMT.

The SMT: Decision-Making or Advisory?

Senior pastors and administrators may use the SMT as a decision-making team, an advisory team or both. The degree to which the team makes decisions depends largely on the success of the senior pastor and administrator in decentralizing decision-making. That, in turn, depends mainly on their values related to the use of power.

Authoritarian leaders are likely to favor centralized control, with significantly less authority and responsibility delegated to their SMTs. The SMT will primarily be an advisory group, even if they have decision-making authority “on paper.”

Laissez-faire leaders tend to want the SMT to make decisions. Poor clarity in delegation, however, often leaves the SMT wondering whether they are really a decision-making or an advisory body.

The senior pastor and administrator who work from relationship-oriented values at the centre of the values continuum, are the most likely to design a blend of advisory and decision-making functions. This is the type of SMT discussed here.

Advice or Decision?

In discussing each agenda item, it is vital that the leaders who value affirmation, involvement and servant leadership make it clear as to whether the leaders are requesting advice from the team or delegating the matter to them for a decision. It is frustrating, discouraging and disempowering for a team to think it is making a decision, only to learn later that the senior pastor or administrator were only asking for advice after the SMT had already selected a different option.



In managing working relationships I make no distinction between paid staff and volunteers. Both are accountable.



The senior pastor or the administrator, not the SMT, are the immediate sources of authority for its individual members

Team and Individual Responsibility

Each SMT member assists in group management of the entire church, as well as managing his or her own department. Thus, every member works with two relationship descriptions:

- senior management team/senior pastor or administrator relationship
- senior manager/senior pastor or administrator relationship.

Later in this chapter we will offer examples of both.

The most effective use of the SMT is to coordinate church-wide issues that involve planning, monitoring and measuring. The senior pastor or the administrator, not the SMT, are the immediate sources of authority for its individual members and, therefore, the SMT does not manage the work of individuals on the team. Instead, the team coordinates plans and changes in management issues that all managers have in common.

The SMT's responsibilities are to

- assist the board and the two leaders with strategic planning and measurement of strategic results
- coordinate the tactical and financial planning of SMT members to comply with the strategic plan and the senior pastor/administrator limitations and expectation policies
- monitor SMT members' operational and financial management to maintain compliance with senior pastor/administrator limitations and expectations policies
- coordinate changes in operations that affect other managers
- develop and maintain the management manual including all processes.

The direct management of the individual's work remains a matter between the senior pastor or administrator and the individual manager. The two leaders remain the immediate sources of authority of the team and its individual members.

The responsibilities of the individual members are contained in the unique description of the working relationship each has with the senior pastor or administrator. You will notice that part of that responsibility is to participate as a member of the SMT.

Senior Management Team Matrix

An SMT is made up of managers from both spiritual ministry and administrative ministry teams. These two groups combine to form a matrix of managers. Each support manager supports every operating manager and each operating manager is supported by every support manager. A basic matrix is displayed below.

In this matrix all members are peers. Except for the administrator, no single individual has more authority or responsibility than any other. Group decisions require the discussion, debate and consensus of all individuals. To illustrate, let's examine the relationship of the manager of financial information to other members of the team. In some churches the chief financial officer controls all expenditures. In that role she or he can instruct another senior manager that she or he may not make a certain purchase. It may not be in "the budget."

In this structure the chief financial officer is the source of information, not the source of control. Each member of the team has already negotiated with the rest of the team the amount of funding to be allocated to his or her position. It is the chief financial officer (or a member of that person's staff) who can provide information about how much of that financial resource is still available.

Admin- istrator	Human Resources	Fund Development	Financial Information	Information Services	Maintenance Services
Worship	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓
Discipleship	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓
Fellowship	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓
Outreach	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓
Service	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓	➡ ↓

Team Leadership

As with any team, a leader must guide the core processes. The senior pastor could be this leader, and in many cases does fill that role. In larger churches that have an administrator, she or he often fills the position. As the team matures, a third option that may be considered is to assign leadership to someone within the team. This team leader may be chosen by the senior pastor or administration or the selection may be delegated to the SMT itself on an annual rotational basis. The advantages of this third option include

- greater sense of empowerment for the SMT
- greater sense of responsibility for the SMT
- opportunity to practice accountability within the team
- strong environment for consensus building
- practice in leading group process by rotating leadership.



In this structure the chief financial officer is the source of information, not the source of control.

A sample SMT/senior pastor relationship description is displayed below and on the next pages.

Senior Management Team/Administrator (or Senior Pastor) Relationship Description

1. Authority

The Senior Management Team (SMT) functions by the authority of the administrator (or senior pastor) to coordinate the ministry of the church.

Resources delegated to the SMT consist of all financial resources, restricted and unrestricted, operational and capital, and include human resources of staff and volunteers.

The members of the SMT are the

- Senior Pastor
- Administrator
- Other pastors and managers of ministries (worship, youth, etc.)
- Manager of Human Resources
- Manager of Fund Development (Stewardship)
- Manager of Financial Information
- Manager of Information Services
- Manager of Maintenance

2. Limitations of Authority

The limitations of authority for the SMT are determined by common law, civil laws, strategic plans and priorities, senior pastor/administrator limitations and the limitations specific to the SMT.

In carrying out its responsibility, the SMT or any of its members may not

- hire, terminate or change the conditions of the employment of any member of the SMT
- restructure the SMT
- cause the board, senior pastor or administrator to be in violation of any limitations or expectations policies.

3. Responsibility

The primary responsibility of the SMT is to assist the senior pastor with the management of operations and finances and other matters that impact the entire church, including to

- assist the board, senior pastor and administrator with strategic planning and measurement of strategic results
- coordinate the tactical and financial planning of SMT members to comply with the strategic plan and the senior pastor/administrator limitations and expectation policies
- monitor SMT members' operational and financial management to maintain compliance with senior pastor/administrator limitations and expectations policies

- coordinate changes in operations that affect other managers
- develop and maintain the management manual including all processes.

4. Expectations of Responsibility

The expectations of the responsibility of the SMT are expressed in the values, vision, mission, services, target groups, places and strategic goals contained in the strategic plans (reviewed annually by the board) and the operating and financial tactical plans (developed annually by negotiation with the senior pastor and administrator).

The SMT and its individual members are expected to

- model the organizational values and the relationship values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership in all relationships with staff, volunteers, members and other stakeholders
- communicate or share relevant information with the senior pastor or administrator, within the SMT or between any of its members in a timely manner
- disclose to the senior pastor or administrator and the SMT any violation of their limitations of authority.

5. Accountability

Accountability is mutual. The senior pastor and administrator are accountable to the SMT for providing the authorization, resources, affirmation, involvement and servant leadership required for the successful realization of the responsibilities of the position.

Primary accountability of the SMT is to the administrator (or senior pastor) for performance and for compliance with the senior pastor/administrator limitations and expectations policies.

The working relationship is reviewed annually as part of the annual review.

Structure: Manager Competencies

An important part of selecting and designing the working relationships with managers is identifying the competencies of a manager. This applies both to paid and volunteer staff. Some of the 20 manager competencies identified are the same as for the board member, board chair, senior pastor, and administrator.

One competency is unique to managers—team orientation. (See Chapters 11 and 13 to review details of the other competencies. You will also find a table in Appendix C that illustrates how the competency sets of the board, board chair, senior pastor and managers compare with one another.)

Achieving Competencies

These generally lie above the water line and are therefore possible to improve by training. They are

- commitment to the church
- communication
- conflict resolution
- initiative
- objectivity
- process orientation
- results orientation.

Thinking Competencies

Often below the surface, there is a limit to how much thinking competencies can be changed by training. They reflect a person's cognitive ability. They are

- conceptual thinking
- effective judgment
- independent thinking.

Leadership Competencies

Often below the surface, these may be improved through increased knowledge and experience. These competencies influence other. They are affected by a person's attitudes and self-image.

They are

- accountability
- concern for excellence
- delegation
- leadership
- team orientation.

Team Orientation

A manager generally works with others in a team context. To be successful, the team needs to work in harmony, collaborating and cooperating as a united whole.

Team orientation by all members enables a team to work as one, overcoming any tendency to form subgroups or cliques. Personal agendas and domination by an individual or subgroup have no place on the team.

Group identity and commitment are built through a desire to cooperate and participate in reaching outcomes together.

Commitment does not smother independent thinking or imply mindlessly following the crowd. Decisions are made by consensus because there is a commitment to finding an outcome that the whole team produces and owns, even when there is genuine disagreement over the best course of action.

Teamwork may be built in many ways, including physically challenging outdoor activities where participants learn to trust their colleagues in difficult circumstances. Such pursuits may help develop certain skills. They may not necessarily induce a positive attitude towards teamwork, however, particularly if a manager prefers to work alone.

Sharing the same corporate values, vision and mission strengthens the bond where managers grow to guard and promote their reputation as a team, building foundations for mutual trust. Managers are not motivated by self-interest but share authority in order to reach common goals.

Team orientation usually has a harmonizing influence. Managers show support for each other and are better able to handle any conflicts that arise.

Personal Competencies

These mostly lie well below the surface and are, therefore, hard to change by training. Although all competencies are personal, these particularly reflect individual attitudes, traits, motives and self-image. They are

- empathy
- open-mindedness
- personal integrity
- self-awareness
- self-esteem.

Managing Stress

In the course of his or her work, a manager usually has to cope with situations that she or he would not necessarily choose. They may stretch and challenge the manager and create stress individually or in the team as a whole.

The obstacles may come from within the team or function or as a result of the wider internal or external environment. A manager needs the ability to overcome such obstacles, seeing them as opportunities to increase skills and develop character.

If a manager faces such difficulties with adequate personal resilience, then she or he is in a position to provide support and direction for those in the team. Others will look to the manager as role model. When a manager draws on personal resources, such as deeply held values and convictions, or on family support, without caving in under the stress, the experience increases self-belief and an ability to overcome difficulties. Whether spoken or unspoken, a manager, who shows such endurance, motivates and challenges others to endure.

Athletes provide a good example of stamina—not giving up at the first hurdle, but sticking with the challenge despite weariness and pain. The challenges at work may be different, but tenacity and endurance remain the same. Athletes, whether in individual or team events, are not distracted but keep pressing towards the goal, determined to reach it at any cost.

►
*A certain amount
of pressure is
needed to keep
individuals
focused and
motivated.*

A certain amount of pressure is needed to keep individuals focused and motivated. When pressure turns to stress, it can debilitate, and in extreme cases, paralyze. Managers are sometimes unable to think clearly or make decisions of quality.

The down side of endurance is stubbornness. Stubbornness is the inability to change your mind regardless of evidence to the contrary. Thus, the difference between endurance and stubbornness is often determined by the presence or absence of a logical argument to support the position.

The ability to overcome difficulties and complete tasks with a spirit of tenacity and endurance separates an ordinary manager from an extraordinary one.

Process: Decision-making by Consensus

The SMT is not legally bound to make management decisions. In this regard its work is different from boards who are legally obligated to make decisions. When a board cannot decide an issue by consensus, it must decide by majority vote.

►
*The greatest
advantage is the
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empowerment to
make it within
the limitations of
the SMT's
authority.*

The SMT, however, has been established to assist and support the senior pastor and administrator in their management responsibilities. Where the SMT cannot make a decision by consensus, the matter may default to the senior pastor or the administrator. This gives the SMT the luxury of making decisions by consensus instead of by majority vote. I recommend that senior pastors require SMTs to make decisions by consensus. The advantages are numerous, but the greatest advantage is the ownership of the decision that flows from the empowerment to make it within the limitations of the SMT's authority.

What Is Consensus?

Consensus occurs when the majority agrees on a certain course of action and everyone else in the group is willing to proceed for the sake of the unity of the group, even though some may not have chosen that course of action and would prefer another. Consensus does not occur if even one member of the group is unwilling to proceed with a decision that she or he cannot support.

Consensus may be unanimous, strong, medium or weak depending on the number of group members who agree with the course of action the majority wishes to follow.

A *unanimous consensus* occurs when the whole group is in agreement regarding the decision. This unanimous consensus is sometimes erroneously thought to be the only form of consensus. But consensus can occur without unanimity.

A *strong consensus* occurs when 75% or more of the group agrees and the rest are willing to proceed with the decision.

A *medium consensus* occurs when 50 – 75% of the group agrees and the rest are willing to proceed.

A *weak consensus* occurs when there are several viewpoints but no group has more than 50% support. If the group is still determined to decide by consensus, the majority may be willing to proceed with a minority viewpoint.

Consensus offers several distinct advantages over deciding by majority vote:

- There is much more involvement in and therefore ownership of the decision.
- It is easy to test the consensus with an unofficial poll or “straw vote” to see if consensus has been reached. If not, the group continues the discussion until the poll indicates that consensus has been reached or that consensus is not possible.
- Everyone in the group wins. Since consensus is a matter of freedom of expression, no one is forced to proceed against his or her will. There are no “losers” when there is no coercion, either blatant or subtle.

Consensus increases unity and commitment within a team. The process of reaching consensus, however, must be clearly understood and agreed upon by the entire team before the process begins.

Reverse Consensus

I remember the time I was working with a group of 30 members of a church, trying to achieve consensus on a bylaw revision. All but two people were willing to support the change in wording of a bylaw. It would have been an easy majority, but there would have been no consensus. I decided to ask the 28 people if they would be willing to support the wording that the two preferred. To my amazement all 28 people were willing to agree for the sake of consensus!

Consensus Required – an Expectation of Responsibility

In one senior management team, the senior pastor, using the Relationship Model™, gave the team the freedom to make all management decisions within clearly defined limits. One of the expectations was that all the team's decisions must be made by consensus. If consensus was not possible, the decision automatically defaulted to the senior pastor. This leader reported that in four years, the team has never failed to reach consensus. He explains that the team is so committed to its management responsibility, the team is willing to take the time required to reach consensus, even when it isn't unanimous.

Process: Tactical Planning

The concise and comprehensive strategic plan discussed in Chapter 12 is the key to tactical planning. Earlier, we said that the basic tactical question that the senior pastor, administrator, and senior management team must answer is, “What programs shall we develop to achieve the strategic goals within the limits of the available resources?”

In answer to that question, the SMT is responsible for developing the tactical programs to deliver the strategic services and achieve the outcomes identified in the strategic goals. In a large church, this might be a ten-page strategic plan supported by an 80-page set of tactical plans. The length of the tactical plans will be dependent on the size and complexity of the church.



*Consensus
increases unity
and commitment
within a team.*

Churches with no strategic plan run into trouble. Programs get designed without any clear understanding of the services they are to provide and the outcomes they are to achieve. If the programs “succeed” in practical terms, they are considered worth continuing. However, without clear strategic measurement of success, the church has only tactical results to guide them in the planning process.

The Role of the SMT in Planning

The SMT adds enormous value to the church in terms of tactical planning. Team members are the leaders of all operating and support departments. Virtually all resources flow through their “branches” to fuel the programs bearing fruit for members, attenders, and other beneficiaries.

If the SMT understands the strategic plans and priorities, it is in a far better position than the senior pastor and administrator to prepare tactical plans. In turn, each SMT member will involve the managers, staff and volunteers in his or her department to create efficient and effective programs that form the management matrix of operations and support.

Departmental tactical planning begins in the treetop. Those plans flow back down the tree and converge in the SMT where they are coordinated with

- strategic plans and priorities
- compliance with limitations and expectations.

SMT members should limit themselves to no more than six broad tactical goals, preferable three or four. They should conform to the broad areas of responsibility described in their relationship descriptions. To do this, the senior manager will organize the endless tasks that she or he must monitor and manage into specific broad goals. As a rule of thumb there will be one tactical plan for each broad area in a manager’s relationship description. Sometimes a single broad area of responsibility may require more than one tactical goal.

Plans will be checked during the year, since changes invariably occur, sometimes affecting every goal. Senior managers may have to renegotiate additional resources or the goals themselves with peers or their source of authority.

Any change in the financial plan will have been preceded by a change in the tactical plans themselves.

At the end of the planning period/fiscal year, the senior manager will discuss the results with staff and volunteers. The successes, failures and changes along the way will enable the team to refine the goals and plans for the next year.

Tactical Planning Simplified

Here is an outline for a goal-setting exercise that forms the heart of the annual tactical plan. On a single page (two at the most) address the following outline by describing the specifics of your plans. Keep it short and clear. Each goal statement will include

- a goal statement
- objectives
- action steps
- resources required
- measurement of results
- risk assessment.

Goal Statement

The tactical, operating goal is stated in a sentence that is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant to the mission and Time-limited). The goal statement will likely state the broadest expression of the expectations of your responsibility.

Objectives

Objectives are a more detailed expression of the larger goal. Sometimes the goal will be the general statement that becomes S.M.A.R.T. only when the objectives are added. For example, if the new Minister of Music has a goal to lead a fully functioning department of music ministry, the objectives may include

- recruiting and training a team of musicians
- preparing music ministry plans for regular and special worship services
- preparing music ministry plans for all age groups within the church
- putting into place the equipment required for the ministry of music.

Action Steps

Action steps are specific actions that must be completed in order to achieve the goals and objectives. They are usually sequential. Include only the most significant steps, not every single action you will be making. For example, action steps for establishing music for regular and special worship services may include

- researching available music for worship settings
- recruiting and scheduling music teams
- scheduling and rehearsing music for each service
- preparing and maintaining instruments and sound equipment
- designing and using monitoring and measurement systems.

It may be helpful to blend the objectives and action steps so that each objective is followed by the action steps that relate to it.

Resources Required

Financial resources should include a statement of the total operational cost of a particular goal. It should be set out in the financial planning format that the SMT has developed with the help of the administrator.

Human resources should include the number of full or part-time staff and volunteers required to complete the goal successfully. These may be grouped with other goals.

If all costs are included, it follows that the total of all SMT tactical plans will equal the budget for the year. It's important for each member of the SMT to know how much human and financial resources are available during the year to accomplish all goals.

Measurement of Results

In this section you will identify what measurement indicators will be used, the “M” in S.M.A.R.T. These are the “outputs” that the implementation of your plan produces. They may be expressions of quantity or the completion of a project, such as

- number of people served
- people recruited
- objective statements met.

It may also be an expression of an outcome (quality) that will require a description of how quality will be measured in specific programs, perhaps from a survey of clients. These program outputs are differentiated from strategic outcomes (cf. Chapters 12 and 14), in that they are specific to a particular program of the church. Program outputs generally reflect a short term change or benefit that an individual experiences as a result of participation in one of your programs. These short term outcomes should contribute to one or more of the strategic outcomes that have been identified in the strategic planning process.

Risk Assessment

The S.W.O.T. analysis is a proven means of assessing risk. Each goal should have been assessed. However, only the most significant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats need mentioning here.

Process: Describing Working Relationships

Every church is in a constant state of flux. For example, it's rare to find a church where everyone has a current, written job description. Positions are constantly evolving due to

- changes in staff
- specific talents that people bring to positions
- changing requirements
- changes in strategic plans and priorities
- changes in funding restrictions
- changes in the economy.

Few churches keep up with these changes by reviewing and revising job descriptions. It is not uncommon for a person to be hired into a senior position and learn that no job description exists. "We'll do that as soon as you get acquainted with the position," we may hear the manager explain. Because of the confusion this lack of documentation causes, it is common for people to wonder

- to whom they report
- how much authority they have

◀
It's important for each member of the smt to know how much human and financial resources are available during the year to accomplish all goals.

- how many resources they have and who decides
- what the boundaries of their authority are
- what their responsibilities are
- what is expected of them
- how their work will be assessed.

Assumptions are made often, but they differ, based on who happens to be making the assumption. It's a recipe for ineffectiveness, inefficiency, frustration, conflict and eventually brokenness.

The easiest thing a senior pastor or administrator can do within the management structure is to document all working relationships. Assuming that the values the board and senior pastor express have created a healthy organizational culture, designing and documenting working relationships will have a greater effect on achieving results and fulfilling staff than any other single factor. This is just as important for volunteers as it is for paid staff.

Describing the Entire Working Relationship

If you began reading this book with Part 2, you may want to review the full concept of relationship descriptions in Chapter 6 (Delegating Process). In this section of this chapter we discuss the application of those concepts to the design of the management structure.

The traditional approach involves writing "job descriptions." Normally, this focuses on responsibilities, which are often expressed as detailed tasks. At the end of the list you may see words that say something like: "The position may involve other responsibilities not included here." In other words,

- "We may have forgotten something else that we want you to do."
- "We may have changes."
- "We don't want to alter the job description every time there's a change."
- "We want someone to pick up the pieces that fall off other people's tables."

It's not uncommon for the list of tasks to go on for two or three pages. Little is said about authority, let alone limitations of authority or expectations. The only reference to accountability is the common expression, "reports to the administrator."

The Relationship Model™ replaces the traditional job description with a relationship description. Introducing this model into the management structure, where every staff member and volunteer has a relationship descrip-

tion, will have a significant and positive impact on the church. This should happen within the first year, because it can make such a difference for good.

To accomplish what seems like an insurmountable task, the senior pastor or administrator will begin with the senior management team as a unit. Following a training session on how to write a relationship description, the senior pastor or administrator invites the team members to write a draft description of their working relationships with their source of authority, either the senior pastor or administrator. An experienced staff person can usually do a more accurate job of describing the four or six broad areas of responsibility than the source of authority can. When the negotiation process of agreeing on limitations and expectations with the senior pastor has been completed, the draft becomes a final relationship description. Remember, the document itself is meaningless without the negotiation of expectations.

Senior managers are then able to take the process to the next level of the organizational tree. Finally, the process will reach the top where those staff and volunteers closest to the members and attenders describe, negotiate and document their working relationships.

When complete, everyone in the church, right up to the last volunteer, will be able to understand the structure and their specific role in making it successful and fulfilling.

Here is a sample relationship description for a senior manager (minister of music). Notice the reference to participation on the senior management team. In addition to the person's own areas of responsibility, the manager is responsible for participating in the senior management process. Senior pastors, administrators, and senior managers should be aware that this may take up 10 – 20% of the total work load, or up to one day per week.



The easiest thing a senior pastor or administrator can do within the management structure is to document all working relationships.



The Relationship Model™ replaces the traditional job description.

Minister of Music/Senior Pastor

Relationship Description

1. Authority

The minister of music functions with authority from the senior pastor to provide music training and support to the ministries of the church.

Resources delegated to the minister of music include the department staff, volunteers, financial resources for operations and a personal compensation and benefits package.

2. Limitations

The limitations of the authority for the minister of music are determined by the

- laws of (state, province, country)
- church's strategic plans and priorities
- senior pastor/administrator limitations policies
- limitations of the Senior Management Team
- management manual
- limitations specific to the manager's position.

3. Responsibility

The responsibilities of the position are to manage the church's music programs, including:

- music support for regular and special worship services
- music support for all age groups in the church
- recruitment, training and management of paid and volunteer musicians
- purchase and maintenance of necessary instruments and sound equipment
- participation in effective organizational management including strategic and tactical planning, policy development and decision-making through membership in the Senior Management Team.

4. Expectations

The expectations of responsibility are expressed in the tactical plans of the minister of music, which are reviewed and negotiated with the senior pastor in the annual relationship review.

The minister is expected to display the organizational values expressed in the strategic plan and the relationship values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership with staff, volunteers and other stakeholders.

5. Accountability

Accountability is mutual. The senior pastor is accountable to the minister for providing the authorization, resources, affirmation, involvement and servant leadership required for the successful realization of the manager's responsibilities.

Primary accountability of the minister is to the senior pastor for performance and for compliance with the limitations of authority and expectations of responsibility.

The working relationship is reviewed annually.

Summary

In this chapter we have examined the challenge that every senior pastor and administrator faces in designing the management structure of the church. The issues include

- understanding the senior pastor/administrator's span of leadership
- role and responsibility of senior management teams (SMTs)
- competencies required in senior managers
- relationship descriptions for senior managers, other paid and volunteer staff.

With respect to adapting the core processes to the management of the church, we highlighted

- decision-making by consensus
- tactical planning
- describing working relationships.

Decision-making by consensus is the more favorable form of decision-making in management teams. It involves everyone in the process and results in greater ownership of decisions.

Tactical planning fulfills the mission and outlines how the strategic goals will be accomplished by developing the programs to deliver the services and by allocating the resources in keeping with the strategic plan. The senior management team is empowered to coordinate this process and in return builds a strong sense of ownership in the successful delivery of services to the members.

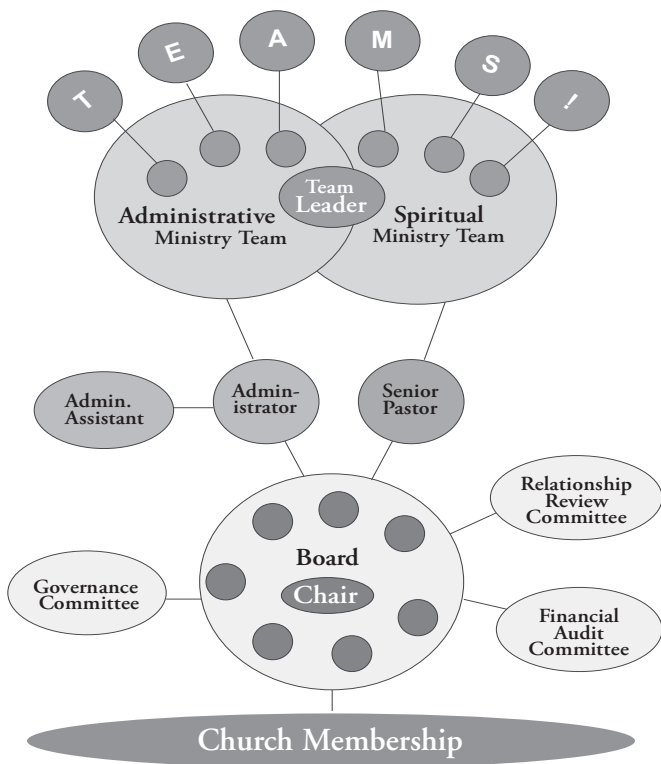
We included two relationship descriptions:

- senior management team/senior pastor relationship description
- manager of minister of music/senior pastor relationship description.

For Reflection and Discussion

Can you picture yourself wearing two hats, one as a member of the board and one as a member of the senior pastor or administrator's staff? Would you be inclined to choose one of them and discontinue the other?

Discuss the concept of regarding both paid and volunteer staff as being thought of in the same way within the structure, both having authority, limitations, responsibility, expectations, and accountability.



Leadership at the Treetop

PART TWO
CHAPTER

17

Here are at some reasons to encourage active members/
volunteers to lead:

- They have been set free by God.
- They want to give glory to God.
- They are committed members.
- They have servant hearts.
- They volunteer their time.
- They have specific gifts to give.
- They want personal fulfillment through service.

The Power of Personal Leadership

In this final chapter we explore the power of personal leadership. We envision the enormous benefits from affirming, involving and being servant leaders of every staff person and volunteer—right up to the top of the tree! Then we address the challenge of how to ensure this potential can be realized in your church.

A great deal has been written and continues to be written about leadership. Business sections of bookstores may carry one book on governance, but at least 20 on leadership. In this chapter I want to affirm many excellent

insights into personal leadership that other writers have shared, highlighting the benefits to the leaders themselves and to the churches they lead.

What is Personal Leadership?

Leadership is the competency that enables a person to influence people to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Leadership is the process that influences others for the common good. Leadership can influence others to

- create new ideas
- go in a new direction
- embrace change
- focus on relationships
- work together
- have confidence
- seek challenge
- persevere in difficult circumstances
- thrive under pressure
- achieve the mission
- become more effective
- become more efficient
- become more fulfilled.

In offering a definition of the leadership competency required by all leaders, we said that “leadership competencies can be developed by training and experience. To the extent that any person has developed his or her natural leadership qualities, he or she has personal leadership.”

This competency is not related to the position a person occupies in the church. Virtually everyone in a church can be a catalyst for change. I have often said to members, “A good idea can come from anyone—even the senior pastor.” To be sure, when the person who demonstrates personal leadership also has a leadership position, the position of authority enables him or her to multiply those personal leadership qualities. On the other hand, the person in a leadership position, who realizes the potential for personal leadership in everyone in the church, can multiply the benefits exponentially.

When we witness personal leadership in the behaviors of staff and volunteers, we are likely to observe these qualities:



Leadership is the competency that enables a person to influence people to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

- sensitivity to the feeling of others
- willingness to take time to listen
- attention to others instead of self
- servanthood (hence the term “servant leadership”)
- positive perspective
- willingness to work together
- clear focus on the vision and mission
- confidence in one’s ability
- belief in one’s own value and ideas
- creativity
- desire to make a difference
- celebrating success.

Cultivating Personal Leadership

We can nurture the leadership competency within our churches and unleash its enormous potential in a number of ways. The result is greater productivity and personal fulfillment.



Much of what we have said in this book is intended to place a greater value on the fulfillment of the staff and volunteers of churches than many people experience now.

Making Staff and Volunteers a Beneficiary Group

Much of what we have said in this book is intended to place a greater value on the fulfillment of the staff and volunteers of churches than many people experience now. We have said several times that providing personal fulfillment for people within the church is not simply a means to an end. Staff and volunteers are part of the strategic direction of a church, and should be thought of as beneficiaries of the church’s mission themselves. As I say this, I realize that the staff and members who are also volunteers are on both sides of the equation. That means that we should seek to provide fulfillment for them in both of their roles.



I have often said to members, “A good idea can come from anyone—even the senior pastor.”

The benefits of taking this position are so incredible for a church that some are still convinced that empowering a church’s people is really for the sake of productivity. They believe that staff and volunteer fulfillment is a means to effective service delivery, not an end in itself.

I am personally convinced that the design of healthy relationships compels us to balance member and staff fulfillment by placing both into the strategic mission of the church, not by making one the means of achieving the other. For me this is not a semantic nuance. Lifting the nutrients up into the treetop will produce healthy leaves and abundant fruit. Both fulfill the church's mission.

In his outstanding book, *Relational Leadership*, Walter C. Wright, Jr. writes: *"Volunteers, paid and unpaid, have something to give. But there is also something that they want, a need that must be addressed... Volunteers—all workers—want something out of it. They cannot be taken for granted. Volunteers want a return on the investment of their time. This is a foundational principle for the management of people, paid or unpaid. Only when we recognize this truth can we begin to lead people in a way that grows them and accomplishes our shared vision and values."* (p. 167)

"Give them an inch and they will take a mile." Some fear that it is simply too risky to have staff and volunteers think that their fulfillment is as important as that of the other members. Yet the shift from viewing staff and volunteers simply as a resource to viewing them also as a beneficiary group may not be the dangerous leap it appears.

Consider marriage and family. When a couple marries, two people hope to find fulfillment for themselves in fulfilling one another. When children arrive, they realize that the children are not there only for the parents' fulfillment. The children also want and need to be fulfilled themselves. Because the parents have more authority, they have more responsibility for ensuring that their children get what the parents want for themselves. The parents spend much of their adult lives finding ways to enrich the lives of their children through discipline, education, travel, recreation and a life of learning. At the same time, the entire family makes a contribution to the society around them. They seek to balance what they can give as a family with their needs as a whole family, not simply as a couple.

In a more complex church, the example differs but the principle is the same. The board must now extend its efforts by engaging a senior pastor, administrator, staff and volunteers. Because the board has primary operational authority delegated to it by election, it also has primary responsibility for its own fulfillment and that of their senior pastor, administrator, staff and volunteers. They may not take on more plans or projects than those for which they are able to provide resources. By the same token, the board must provide as much service to members as the staff can deliver, given the

available resources. The balance between member and staff fulfillment is the key.

This commitment to balancing the fulfillment of everyone working within the church with its other members and attenders is likely the most significant single factor in bringing personal leadership to its fullest expression.

A Culture of Leadership

Neither an authoritarian nor a *laissez-faire* value system will support the kind of culture that encourages personal leadership. Only when the core values in healthy relationships become the foundation for organizational culture will personal leadership be brought to full flower. We have filled the pages of this book with applications of these values. Other authors, from different backgrounds and experiences, pick up the same themes.

Affirmation

In *The Leader of the Future* produced by The Drucker Foundation, Gifford Pinchot, writes: “*Less direct leadership focuses on communicating an inspiring vision and inspiring values, on listening to and caring for followers, on leading by personal example... When indirect leadership is at its best, the people say, ‘We did it ourselves.’ The more indirect the method of leadership, the more room there is for other leaders within the organization.*” (“Creating Organizations with Many Leaders”, p. 26)

◀ Because the parents have more authority, they have more responsibility for ensuring that their children get what the parents want for themselves.

Involvement

Wright, whom we quoted earlier, speaks about involvement in terms of empowering others: “*Leadership is the process of giving power away, not collecting it. It is moving the power to influence into the hands of the people we are leading so that they can pursue the mission.*” (*Relational Leadership*, p. 135)

Charles Handy takes this concept a step further in *The Empty Raincoat*: “No longer do people believe that the centre or the top necessarily knows best; no longer can the leaders do all the thinking for the rest; no longer do people want them to.” (p. 118)

The values of affirmation and involvement jump out from comments by Ed Oakley and Doug Krug in *Enlightened Leadership*: “...virtually every study and all our combined years of experience show money has much less importance to employees than being appreciated and feeling in on things and participating in what is going on within the organization.” (p. 132)

Servant Leadership

The core value of servant leadership is addressed well in *The Leader in You* by Stuart R. Levine and Michael A. Crom. They quote Richard Barlett, Vice-chairman of Mary Kay Corporation: “My personal view of the world is that there is no need for a president or chairman unless he is dedicated to serving the needs of others and to providing resources to the people who are getting the job done.” (p. 100)

Charles Handy uses the word ‘subsidiarity’ in relation to servant leadership: “Subsidiarity sounds like another ugly word—empowerment. There is a significant difference. Empowerment implies that someone on high is giving away power. Subsidiarity, on the other hand, implies that the power belongs, in the first place, lower down or farther out. You take it away as a last resort. Those in the centre are the servants of the parts. The task of the centre, and of any leader, is to help the individual or the group to live up to their responsibilities...” (*The Empty Raincoat*, p. 126)

What may feel like a loss of control to a person in a leadership position is really the empowerment of others in their personal leadership. William C. Steere, Jr. makes this contribution in his article, “Key Leadership Challenges for Present and Future Executives,” in the Drucker Foundation’s book, *The Leader of the Future*: “Inviting this kind of participation means giving up some of what we traditionally think of as control, but the end result is one of lasting value, because people become energized to achieve more when given authority and responsibility.” (p. 276)

Freedom Encourages Responsible Leadership

In Chapter 3, we discussed the apparently paradoxical relationship between accountability and freedom. We discovered that in order to produce

accountability within our churches we also needed to apply the principle of freedom. This requires a paradigm that recognizes the potential for people to be self-directed, make wise choices and display personal leadership when they are given the space—the freedom to do so.

The freedom that God gives us within moral limits and the freedom that our human source of authority gives us to be creative, are the two most important forces that encourage personal leadership in us. It starts by understanding the freedom that God gives to us. I know of no better presentation of God's will and human freedom than Garry Frieson's work, *Decision Making & the Will of God, a Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View*.

Frieson writes, *"The distinctive element of the traditional view is the individual will of God. It is often visualized as a "dot" in the center of God's will. The key to decision making in the traditional approach is to "find the dot" — discover God's individual will for that decision.*

By way of contrast, Scripture indicates that the dot should be replaced by an area of freedom where genuine opportunity of choice is granted to the believer.

For God's children, all things within the moral will of God are lawful (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23), clean (Mark 7:19; Luke 11:41; Romans 14:14,20), and pure (Titus 1:15). In decisions that are made within that moral will, the Christian should not feel guilty about his choice; neither should he fear that his decision is unacceptable to God. God has made it clear what He wants: His plan for His children is for them to enjoy the freedom that He has granted." (p. 178, 179)

In my consulting experience I have observed that one of the greatest stumbling blocks to experiencing freedom is our misunderstanding that God doesn't give us much freedom. We appear convinced that there is a divine plan for each of us that we must learn and obey.

What's important is remembering that God's will is a

huge circle, not a dot. Equally important is the reality that we are accountable to God and to one another for how we use the freedom that God gives us in choosing how to serve our Lord.

Receiving freedom from our source of authority is the other force that encourages responsible leadership. Consider the following insights from authors Lebow & Spitzer in their book *Accountability: Freedom and Responsibility Without Control*: “*Did I want my staff to live in fear that they would say or do something wrong? Or did I want them to be free to do their job as they saw fit, to the best of their abilities?... Choosing freedom would mean that every staff member at every level would be fully accountable for his or her ideas, actions, behaviors, and performance, without anyone looking over his or her shoulder.*” (p. 19)

“*The more you try to control people, the less responsible they become.*” (p. 20)

“*I’d submit to you that people at every level within your operation are much more capable and willing to be accountable than you think, and that even sensible or subtle control programs are ultimately counterproductive.*” (p. 32)

“*You can’t ask people to be accountable unless you give them choices and trust them.*” (p. 75)

“*Have faith in people—believe that everyone wants to be great, and trust them to do great things.*” (p. 33)

Applying this principle of freedom in our working relationships not only builds accountability, but unleashes an incredible amount of personal leadership potential within the church.

Changing Structures

There are two ways in which I think a change in structure takes place:

- in the way authority flows
- in how many levels there are.

The Way Authority Flows

In *The Empty Raincoat*, Charles Handy has already made a shift from top-down thinking when he speaks of “the centre” and “farther out.” I think we

should take it the final step suggested by servant leadership. One client calls it “roots up” thinking. Do it and you upend the whole concept of how authority flows in a church. It’s a wonderful way to encourage personal leadership.

How Many Levels?

Hierarchy is a normal and healthy part of organizational life. While some people use the terms hierarchical and authoritarian as synonyms, there is a significant difference. One speaks of the flow of authority, while the other names a value system that “lords it over” staff and volunteers.

The issue is not whether there should be any hierarchy. Levels of authority cannot be avoided in a church of any size. The issue is how many levels there should be in the structure.

In *The Leader in You*, Stuart R. Levine and Michael A. Crom, write: “*Now this might come as a surprise to some people, but the pyramids are tumbling down.... All those rigid hierarchies, all those departmental lines, all those intricate chains of command—all of it stifled creative work. And who can afford that when the world is changing so fast?*” (p. 98)



What’s important is remembering that God’s will is a huge circle, not a dot.

In *The Leader of the Future*, Gifford Pinchot put it this way: “*In the times to come, leaders must find ways to replace hierarchy with indirect methods of leadership that allow greater freedom, lead to more accurate allocation of resources, and provide a stronger force for focusing on the common good.*” (“Creating Organizations with Many Leaders,” p. 29)

Working in Teams

There’s no lack of support for the impact of teams. Here’s Stuart R. Levine and Michael A. Crom in *The Leader in You*: “*Clearly, what’s been needed is a structure that loosens up the old rigidity, that could let people do their creative best*

that could fully develop the talent that's been lying dormant for years. In more and more well-led organizations, the answer is being found in teams. Increasingly often, people are being asked to work beyond their disciplines, outside their cultures, above and below their usual ranks.” (p. 98)

William N. Plamondon wrote one of the articles in *The Leader of the Future*, “Energy and Leadership.” He is speaking about organizations, but the lesson applies equally to a church. Here’s what he had to say: “...it’s time to reengineer them to support an environment that breeds energy. What does such an environment look like? It is one where

- *The organization is open to environmental information from customers, employees, competitors, and the marketplace.*
- *The team is aware of its strengths and weaknesses compared to the strengths and weakness of the competition and plays within them.*
- *Employees have a sense of purpose beyond just making money, which is guided by a core ideology as well as compelling and challenging performance goals.*
- *Authority and accountability are decentralized so that the organization becomes a collection of small, interchangeable units working toward a common goal.*
- *There are many leaders.” (p. 274-275)*

Decision-making

Decision-making, like all the other core processes, is impacted by this shift in church culture. There is a change in where the decisions are made. Instead of top-down decisions, decisions are made as close as possible to where they are implemented. As Warren Bennis says in *An Invented Life*: “*The new leader does not make all decisions herself; rather, she removes the obstacles that prevent her followers from making effective decisions themselves.*” (p. 220)

There is a change in how the decisions are made.

In “The Puzzles of Leadership,” an article in *The Leader of the Future*, Steven M. Bornstein and Anthony F. Smith write: “*Clearly, building consensus is increasingly a critical leadership skill, because leadership through influence is demonstrably more effective in building commitment and sustained performance than leadership through positional authority or outright fear and intimidation.*” (p. 268)

Recruitment

In our presentation of competencies we noted that some competencies are harder to develop than others. The personal competencies listed in Part 3, Appendix C, are the most difficult to develop, because they are associated with attitudes and values. It follows that these are the competencies that we should watch for in the hiring process. People who join the church and are strong in these competencies provide the most fertile ground for development through training.

William Plamondon puts it this way: *“The first step to ensuring that your organization is committed to its core values is to find the right people. This starts with the recruiting process... In selecting new employees—especially for customer-contact positions—it’s wisest to hire for attitude and train for skills.”* (*The Leader in the Future*, “Energy and Leadership”, p. 277)

Staff Development

What can the leaders of a church do about developing the people who are already employed?

In *An Invented Life*, Warren Bennis writes: *“Whatever shape the future ultimately takes, the organizations that will succeed are those that take seriously—and sustain through action—the belief that their competitive advantage is based on the development and growth of the people in them. And the men and women who guide those organizations will be a different kind of leader than we’ve been used to. They will be maestros, not masters, coaches, not commanders.”* (p. 107)

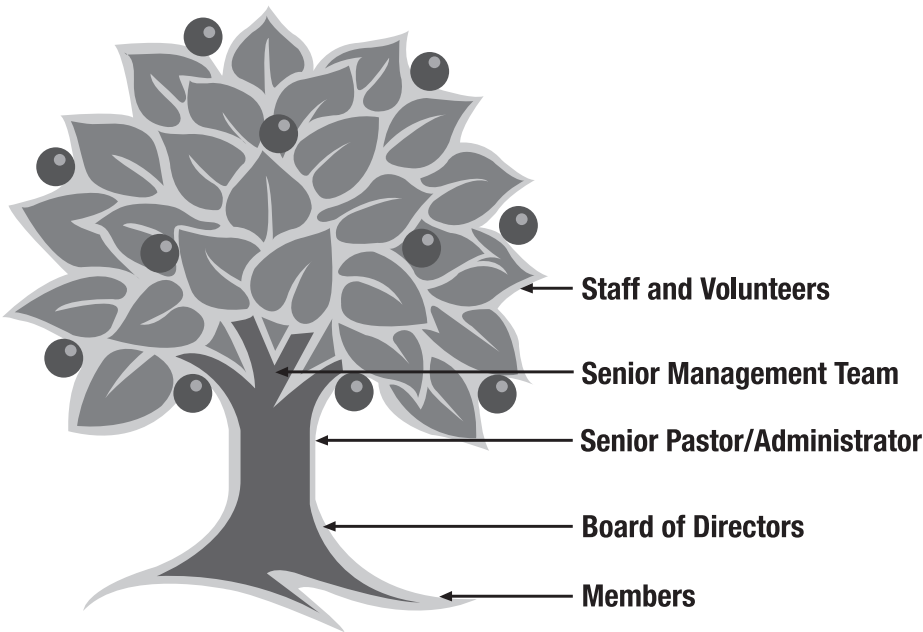
In the excellent collection of articles in *The Leader of the Future*, Steven M. Bornstein and Anthony F. Smith write in an article entitled “The Puzzles of Leadership”: *“Leadership is now understood by many to imply collective action, orchestrated in such a way as to bring about significant change while raising the competencies and motivation of all those involved—that is, action where more than one individual influences the process.”* (p. 282)

Development of personal competencies depends largely on changing values and attitudes that result in changes in behavior. The most effective means of accomplishing that is for people in leadership positions to model the core values of healthy relationships in their own behavior. People have a natural tendency to copy their role models. Observing behavior in their maestros and coaches, people will tend to behave in similar ways. Gradually values and attitudes change until the behaviors are driven from within. It's self-initiated training.

Yes, it is possible to train staff in new behaviors that over time will shift values. Unless those values are supported and modeled by managers and leaders, however, the efforts will be fruitless or short-lived. That's because the effect of the behaviors they observe in others is greater than the effect of training. Corporate culture is more easily caught than taught.

The competencies that are skill and knowledge based, the ones we call achieving competencies, can more easily be developed through training the staff and volunteers we already have.

The Relationship Model™ (Roots-up Thinking)



Summary

In this final chapter we have reached the top of the organizational tree where personal leaders find fulfillment for themselves and members. We defined personal leadership as the competency that enables a person to influence people to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

To share some insights about personal leadership we have chosen the wisdom of some of the many authors who have accumulated a wealth of personal experience and have shared their knowledge with us. While they speak to the issues of organizations generally, their insights apply to churches just as well. In fact, when we consider the high level of commitment that active members demonstrate when they volunteer in church work, we can imagine the huge untapped potential that can be released when paid and volunteer staff are empowered in their personal leadership.

◀
*Corporate
culture is more
easily caught
than taught.*

Personal leadership can be cultivated in churches by

- making staff and volunteers a beneficiary group
- developing a culture based on the core values
- changing structures
- working in teams
- our decision-making process
- recruitment
- staff development.

In the epilogue we explore the reasons why efforts to introduce new models of governance, leadership and management sometimes fail and how the Relationship Model™ can be incorporated successfully.

For Reflection and Discussion

Are you experiencing the empowerment of personal leadership in the work you are doing in your church? Give some examples that illustrate your answer.

What changes would you suggest that would allow your church to benefit from more personal leadership from you and others?

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.

Keeping the Tree Green and the Fruit Ripe

PART TWO EPILOGUE

In this chapter we will explore the reasons why churches choose not to adopt new models and programs of governance and management. We will also explore why some who do, soon fall back into old habits they had hoped to change. In light of this, we will review ways in which boards, senior pastors, and administrators can overcome this tendency to regress.

My goal, using the Relationship Model™, is to have churches work more effectively and to see their paid and volunteer staffs more fulfilled. That, however, takes more than simply talking about theory and preparing documents.

Causes for Wilting

What church has not tried to change its organizational culture, its mission and priorities, its structure or processes? And what church has not experienced real frustration in the change process? Here are some of the factors identified from our own experience and research on why efforts to change can wilt and wither:

- the values of those in power
- the confusion between the pastor's spiritual authority and the church's strategic authority
- the challenge of change and transition
- inadequate "keeper of the flame"

- inadequate training of existing people
- inadequate orientation of new people.

The Values of Those in Power

How the board, board chair, senior pastor, and administrator view their own power is one of the most significant factors influencing the success of change.

When a person has an unrealistic view of one's own importance and lacks appreciation of the worth of others, she or he soon realizes that power would inevitably be slipping away to be redistributed elsewhere in the church. Instead of recognizing the positive effect of empowering others, this person sees only the "leaking" of his or her own power. The tendency is to use his or her position to conclude that the model "wouldn't work in this church." The change to relationship-oriented leadership isn't likely even to begin.

On the other hand, when the church's leaders work from a *laissez-faire* value system, there is little threat and considerable support for the empowerment of others. Unfortunately, it takes more than a *laissez-faire* attitude to keep the winds of change moving. *Laissez-faire* leaders allow the church to float directionless. The focus on what creates meaningful change is soon lost and the new model is displaced by the original.

To succeed, it takes leadership that affirms, involves and serves those struggling with new structures and processes, and perhaps new values. Leaders of change must model the values, structure and process, nourishing the tree with its new supply of organizational energy.

I wish I were wrong, but in my experience the most significant single reason for the failure of the transition to governance is an authoritarian senior pastor or board chair. *Laissez-faire* leaders in either of those two positions will also result in failure. The only difference is that it will be more gradual, because while not being against change, the *laissez-faire* leader isn't for it either.

The Confusion Between the Pastor's Spiritual Authority and the Church's Strategic Authority

This is related to the section above, but there is a unique dynamic that exists in many churches. We have discussed it earlier, but it's relevant here because it's a primary reason why the change to governance can be so difficult for some churches.



How the board, board chair, senior pastor, and administrator view their own power is one of the most significant factors influencing the success of change.

Lay persons naturally defer to the clergy, because the pastor is seen as an authority figure authorized personally by God. We said that God does call people into the pastoral ministry by giving them the gifts required for that high calling. We also said, however, that the only way a pastor can work within a congregation is by receiving authority from someone else to serve in that particular church. Depending on the denomination that “someone else” may be a bishop, district superintendent or the congregation itself. Even the spiritual authority that a pastor exercises can only be exercised after that pastor has received the authority from “someone else” to be the pastor in that particular church.

The strategic authority of a church is a different type of authority. Yet many churches delegate the vision and mission and strategic direction to the pastor along with the spiritual authority, as though the two were the same thing. When the pastor assumes or accepts the strategic authority along with the spiritual authority, the planning process is very likely going to be authoritarian. The church is likely to go where the pastor wants to take it, not where the members might like it to go. A surprising number of churches experience this dynamic. It is very unlikely that the transition to governance will succeed in these cases, even if both pastor and board agree in theory to make the transition.



I wish I were wrong, but in my experience the most significant single reason for the failure of the transition to governance is an authoritarian senior pastor or board chair.

The Challenge of Change and Transition

The success of adopting a new governance model and relationship-oriented culture is largely dependent on two factors that relate to how we

- understand the difference between “change” and “transition”
- respond to change
- prepare for change and the transition period that follows.

Understanding the Difference Between “Change” and “Transition”

As we approach a period of change, both in our personal life and in our work life, we need to distinguish between “change” and “transition.”

“Change”

- is above the “water line”—we can usually see it
- is situational—it is event based
- generally happens quickly
- is easier to implement.

In contrast, “*transition*” is

- below the “water line”—we can’t always see it
- a psychological reorientation to change—what goes on inside an individual
- a slower process, continuing long after the change events occur.

In applying the Relationship Model™, the key change events would include

- the decision to adopt the Model
- a blending of existing governance policy into Relationship Model™ governance policy
- a review of the new policy manual by the board, senior pastor and administrator
- a strategic planning retreat.

The transition period would involve all the aspects of implementing the model at a board and management level. Some of the transition aspects for the board include

- a growing understanding of the implications of the Model for both board functioning (strategic governance) and senior pastor/administrator functioning (day-to-day management)
- adopting a new board agenda that reflects the four areas of board responsibility and a movement away from management agenda items
- creating and implementing an annual board schedule
- embracing a new way of relating to the senior pastor/administrator—as one voice or group as opposed to a small executive committee of the board
- engaging in new monitoring and measuring (accountability) activities
- allowing the senior pastor and administrator to create a new management structure
- learning what is appropriate to include on the board agenda and what is not

- analyzing issues that are brought up around the board table for their relevance to either governance or management
- displaying patience and understanding as people move at different speeds throughout this period in terms of their understanding and application of the model.

Responding to Change

It is helpful to realize that individuals respond to change in very different ways. The following categories provide an understanding of how this response can differ between individuals:

- *Trailblazer* — clears the path for change and embraces it
- *Pilot* — cautious but readily won over once they know what the change involves
- *Intellectual* — believes in change and says the right things, but doesn't walk the talk
- *Late Bloomers* — resist change for a long time and eventually embrace it; can turn into strong supporters of change.
- *Traditionalist* — won't be won over because they believe the change is flawed; "We've never done it this way before."

When introducing change and moving into a period of transition, it can be extremely useful for people to identify what pattern of change they tend to embrace when navigating new territory. Leaders can build a healthy foundation by listening to different perspectives, respecting individual responses to change and validating these differences by modeling understanding.

In addition to our response pattern to change, there is another important element in how we travel through a period of uncertainty—the *choices* we make. Our choices revolve around how we view change—as a problem/threat or an opportunity. We do have a choice about how we perceive change and how we behave in response to

change. We can see change as an opportunity to be challenged, mobilized, inspired, motivated and/or as a source of learning and growth. Or, we can allow change to immobilize, discourage, frustrate, de-motivate and/or be a source of fear. We can choose to become a “victim of change” or a “student of change.”

In dealing with how individuals respond to change, it is critical to realize that in general, there is a natural inertia that resists change, sometimes as a self-defense against an unpleasant experience. The gain of change must exceed the pain of change, or change will slow down or reverse to what was less painful.

Resistance to change may mean that people do not

- feel involved in making the changes
- understand the need for change
- understand what the changes are or how they will help
- understand what is expected of them in the process
- have confidence in the leadership of change.

Preparing for Change and Transition

It is important to carefully plan for and execute the events that are associated both with the change itself and the transition period that follows. Many churches have successfully moved through a major change and the events that ensue, only to find they are unable to cope with the challenges of the period that follows. A carefully thought out plan that incorporates elements of both change and transition will help to facilitate successful adoption and implementation of the Relationship Model™.

A thorough plan will address these elements:

- How the decision around adopting change is introduced and made
- An implementation timeline for the change events
- A consideration of the implications of implementing the change (on a short and long term basis)
- Development of a transition plan that addresses identified implications and outlines key events and factors that need to be addressed within a pre-defined period of time
- An assessment plan to determine how effectively the change has been implemented within the church.

Involving the board, senior pastor and administrator and key staff in the development of this plan will significantly increase your ability to adopt the Relationship Model™ and implement it successfully.



The gain of change must exceed the pain of change, or change will slow down or reverse to what was less painful.

Inadequate “Keeper of the Flame”

As discussed in our distinction between change and transition, the process of introducing a new governance model is very challenging. As I suggested, preparing for, implementing and navigating a period of transition requires extra time and energy from the board, senior pastor, administrator and senior managers. When the first stages of the change are complete, there is a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of satisfaction at a job well done. In turn, that is usually followed by a period of rest.

This period of rest unfortunately, just happens to be the very critical transition period we have identified. Too often, the period of rest becomes extended because of a sense that the job is over. Few realize that the process is ongoing. Not only do documents need to be written, but changes also need to be incorporated into the church's structure and processes. I wonder how many documents rest on the shelves of churches, either never having been implemented or waiting patiently to be used. Some eventually get transferred to archives as an important memory of the past.

Not only do churches fail to plan for the implementation of change and the ensuing transition period, they also fail to appoint someone to monitor the change and transition process. The board chair, senior pastor, and administrator go back to their normal routine. People wait for someone else to make things happen.

The reality is that this process of implementation takes as much effort as the time to prepare it. The work is not as intense, because it must take place over a longer period of time, but the total effort is the same. A Governance Committee, carefully composed of the board members with the strongest conceptual thinking skills, will ensure

a safe passage through the vulnerable first years and beyond. The most practical way of selecting the members who will form the first Governance Committee is to identify those leaders who actually enjoy the new governance process. If the Governance Committee acts as the “keeper of the flame,” the transition will have lasting effect.

Inadequate Training for Existing People

For complete integration of the governance model and the strategic plan, everyone up to the managers near the treetop needs to understand

- the distinction between governance and management
- how governance and management relate to one another
- the implications of the model for board members, senior pastor, administrator, managers, staff and volunteers
- how the strategic plan provides direction for the development of their own tactical plans.

Sometimes the process of change slows to a stop because not everyone in management understands how they fit into the plan. This lack of involvement will result in confusion, discouragement and possibly the feeling that all this talk about involvement was just a tantalizing puff of air, not a sustained wind of change. Like leaves, they respond with an energetic flutter, only to be stilled again by inaction.

Inadequate Orientation for New People

New people, board members, staff and volunteers, continually enter the church—and the parade of people who move in and out of leadership positions in churches is amazing. Since the new people weren’t part of the early development of change, they have no way of understanding how and why the past led to the changes that took place. Instead, they bring their own traditions and expectations of what the church’s culture should be. The result is frustration. They don’t know what is expected of them or sometimes don’t even understand the words they hear.

Providing a comprehensive orientation program for new people is essential, particularly in larger, more complex churches. Unfortunately, this takes time and energy. Instead of mobilizing these new workers, who are ready and willing to fulfill their roles in a renewed church, even more momentum is lost in the process of change.

How can we keep change moving in the right direction?

There are specific things that leaders in churches can do to keep change moving in the right direction and the tree green. They all come under the following heading:

Focus on Healthy, Balanced Relationships

Relationships are the operating system of every church. The Relationship Model™ makes healthy, balanced relationships the first and most important principle of building and maintaining healthy churches.

Focusing on this balance will result in relationships that meet the needs of the members and those of staff and volunteers. People work together. Relationships bring people into community. Without leaders being committed to that balance, the Relationship Model™ will fail.

Many books speak of being people-centred, community-focused, and caring for staff and volunteers. There is a sense, however, that this is a means to an end to create a productive church, i.e. if we don't look after our people, service to members will suffer. We believe, however, that staff and volunteers of every church are beneficiary groups themselves. The strategic plan includes them. Services are directed towards them.

Some leaders fear that emphasizing staff and volunteer fulfillment will make people lazy and have a negative impact on productivity. This may happen if too much emphasis is placed on staff and volunteer fulfillment at the expense of ministry. What I'm speaking about is achieving a balance between these two, a balance that both the source of authority and recipient are agreed upon.

We can be successful in "keeping the tree green and the fruit ripe" when we focus on relationships in three specific areas: values, structure and process.

◀
Providing a comprehensive orientation program for new people is essential, particularly in larger, more complex churches.

▶
We can be successful in "keeping the tree green and the fruit ripe" when we focus on relationships in three specific areas: values, structure and process.

Focus on Values

People demonstrate their values in their behavior. You will always be able to assess your own values by observing the way you treat yourself and others. Thus, the values that shape our behavior are where we need to focus. Understanding the continuum of how we value power will help us avoid being authoritarian or *laissez-faire*, concentrating instead on the three core relationship-oriented values. It helps if we regularly ask ourselves the following questions:

- Am I affirming this person?
- Am I involving this person in decisions that affect him or her?
- Am I acting as a servant leader to this person?

The checklists that appear under structure and process also reflect on the degree to which we express the core values in our relationships.

Affirm the Leaders

In the previous chapter I emphasized leadership from a personal perspective, not the position of leadership. I said that the personal leadership of everyone in this living tree empowers a church, not just the personal leadership of those in positions of leadership.

Affirming the leaders is not only a plea to the board and staff to affirm the senior pastor and administrator and senior managers. It is also a plea to the board, senior pastor and administrator and senior managers to affirm the leaders represented by each leaf on the tree. First, however, it is a reminder to recognize our own worth and the value of our own leadership to the church.

Affirmation isn't just a good idea and worthy of being a core value to a model of governance, leadership, management and ministry. It's a value that requires regular expression. A focus on affirmation means thinking about the value and using the word in conversations at work. It means making the commitment to make affirmation a regular part of your contribution to the organizational culture. If the people you affirm still don't think of their workplace as being affirming, at least it isn't because you aren't affirming them.

Here are three questions to ask yourself:

- Do I affirm myself in my thoughts, in my words to myself and in the way I treat myself?

- Do I affirm my source of authority in my private thoughts, in what I say to him or her and to others about him or her? Do I follow through with actions?
- Do I affirm those who look to me as their source of authority in my thoughts, my conversations with them and in the actions that follow?

Involve the Leaders

Every manager can focus on involvement, making it a regular personal contribution to the organizational culture. Ask yourself these three questions as you interact with people who look to you as their source of authority. Note that the three are related directly to the first three core processes (communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making):

- Do I make an effort to verify that I understand what is said to me?
- Do I hear the concerns of my staff and deal with conflict promptly?
- Do I involve people in the plans and decisions that affect them?

Be Servant Leaders for the Leaders

I have tried to demonstrate the energy we release in others when we support them instead of “lording it over” them. We can focus on this important value by assessing our own thoughts, words and actions:

- Do I support this person?
- Do I express my support in words?
- Do my actions reflect the support that I feel and express?

Focus on Structure

“Keeping the tree green and the fruit ripe” requires a clear focus on the technical components of structure: authority (with limitations), responsibility (with expectations) and accountability (monitoring and measuring). Here is a

simple checklist on how to be confident that you have an adequate and ongoing focus on structure.

- Does every staff person, volunteer, committee and work group have a relationship description completed and/or revisited in the last 12 months?
- Does everyone above have a clear understanding of the limitations of the authority delegated to him/her/them written in the relationship description or limitations policies in the governance or management manual? And has it been revisited in the last 12 months?
- Does everyone above have a clear understanding of the expectations delegated to him/her/them written in the relationship description, strategic and tactical goals, standards and other documentation? And has it been revisited in the last 12 months?

While this is a concise checklist, it is also comprehensive. Keeping these three things current requires commitment to the time and energy it takes.

Time passes quickly in every church. Documents become stale while we still think they were reviewed “recently.” I recommend that you maintain a list of the position of every staff member, volunteer and work group in a database that will allow you to record the appropriate dates for review of the relationship and its documentation.

Every group and individual delegating authority to another individual or group is responsible for ensuring that the three items in the checklist are complete and current. This is not a task for which the senior pastor and administrator are responsible, even though the senior pastor and administrator are equally accountable to the board for seeing that it is complete and current throughout the church.

This means that the number of relationship reviews to be completed and kept current by any individual is not greater than the number of individuals or groups reporting to that person.

Once the governance manual and the strategic plan are in place, it is my view that no church, regardless of size, should require more than one year to complete a relationship description for every person and group working in that church, whether they are paid or volunteer.

Focus on Process

If structure is like a snapshot of the tree, process is a time-lapse motion picture. It shows the tree growing and bearing fruit.

Focus on process can be monitored with the checklist that follows. This checklist may be part of the board's annual self-evaluation of governance performance, as well as that done by senior management teams. In addition, every person who delegates authority to another may find it helpful to use these questions in the first part of the relationship review. In this process the recipient of authority reviews the performance quality of the source of authority in keeping the structure clear and leading the six core processes effectively.

Each of the questions may be asked at any level of the church. They begin with "I" where an individual is asking them and "we" where the board, committee or a management team is using them. They apply to the relationship with your source of authority and to the relationship with the recipients of your authority. The answers to these questions are valid when the perceptions of both parties in any relationship are the same.

- Do I reflect the core values of affirmation, involvement and servant leadership in the manner in which I lead the process of
 - communication?
 - conflict resolution?
 - decision-making?
 - planning?
 - delegating?
 - monitoring and measuring?



No church, regardless of size, should require more than one year to complete a relationship description for every person.

Communication

- Does our communication demonstrate affirmation of one another?
- Do we listen to one another, clarifying until we understand what we hear?
- Do we support one another in the feelings behind our thoughts even when we disagree with the other's thoughts, points of view or conclusions?

Conflict Resolution

- Are we able to disagree and debate issues without those issues becoming destructive to our relationships?
- Do I go privately and without delay to individuals whom I believe have violated my values or offended me?
- Which of the three statements most accurately describes you and/or your church's approach to conflict?
 - I/We usually avoid dealing with conflicts even though everyone knows they are there.
 - I/We usually deal with conflicts in a way that drives people further apart.
 - I/We usually deal with conflicts in a way that results in resolution and reconciliation.

Decision-making

Do I delegate decisions clearly to my staff, negotiating the limitations of their authority and expectations of their responsibility?

- Do I make it clear to my staff when I'm delegating the decision to them and when I'm asking for input into a decision that I intend to make myself?
- Do I ask for input from my staff in decisions that affect them—decisions that I cannot or choose not to delegate?

Planning

- Do we have both strategic and tactical plans that were revised in the last 12 months?
- Has our board determined what factors are critical to the success of our mission? Does our staff know them and refer to them in the tactical plans?
- Do our plans have goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to the mission and time-limited (S.M.A.R.T.)?

Delegating

- Is there a balance between my authorization, resources and competencies and the expectations of my responsibility?

- Does my understanding of the limitations of my authority give me the freedom I need to succeed in my work?
- Have the expectations of my responsibility been negotiated and agreed upon by my source of authority and me?

Monitoring and Measuring

- Do I participate in regular monitoring of the limitations and expectations policies that affect my working relationships?
- Do I provide a review annually of my working relationship with all those who report to me?
- Do I receive a review annually of my working relationship with my source of authority?

You Are Not Alone

The mission of GovernanceMatters.com Inc. is to enable churches worldwide to balance the fulfillment of their members' needs and the personal fulfillment of their staff and volunteers.

The primary vehicle for our ministry is the Internet. We also offer personal consulting and training where requested. We seek to offer practical tools of high quality at costs that churches can afford, accessible from any location in the world.

The Relationship Model™ is trademarked, copyrighted and available for use under license from GovernanceMatters.com Inc. One permanent license fee for the ongoing use of the model is included with the purchase of some of the workbooks and tools. All of our other governance and management tools, surveys and materials are copyrighted and available for use under license at nominal costs. This enables us to maintain quality control and to share updates and new developments with members.

Boards, senior pastors, administrators, and managers may order materials easily on our website: www.relationshipmodel.com. All prices are available at that site.

Here are some of the publications, tools, surveys and workbooks available in hard copy and/or downloadable files.

Church Governance Matters

by Les Stahlke

You may purchase copies of this book in quantities for your board or management teams. Discounts for volume purchases are offered on the website. This is the basic text for any application of the Relationship Model™ in your church.

Governance Manual Development

Support in the development of a governance manual based on the Relationship Model™ is available in three levels of support. Purchase of any of these options includes the license to use the Relationship Model™ in one church in perpetuity at no additional cost. Details for price and ordering are on the website. The license fee includes one year of support via telephone and email to support you in the transition to governance.

Basic

We can provide you with a workbook file that you may print and distribute to your board. Working as a group, you may make the changes and additions to the policies and then submit your completed workbook to GovernanceMatters.com Inc. for review, recommendations, and certification. The cost for our review of your work is also included in the purchase price.

Advanced

GovernanceMatters.com Inc. will adapt the workbook to incorporate your current bylaws and governance policies so that your group work will be much more straightforward, requiring less time and effort on your part. Working as a group, you may make the changes and additions to the policies and then submit your completed workbook to GovernanceMatters.com Inc. for review, recommendations and certification. As above, the cost for the perpetual license is also included in the purchase price.

Personal, On-site Consultation

A licensed consultant from GovernanceMatters.com Inc. will prepare the workbook as per the advanced option and meet personally with your board to facilitate your board retreat in learning the Relationship Model™ and completing the governance manual in a single day. The consultant will make the revisions and return a finished electronic file for your formal approval. Find the location and contact information for the consultant closest to your location at www.relationshipmodel.com.

Strategic Planning

GovernanceMatters.com Inc. has developed a strategic planning process workbook that may be used in one of two ways:

Self-Directed Planning

We have prepared a detailed strategic planning workbook based on the Relationship Model™. Going through this workbook together in a day-long board retreat will result in material that we can review and edit for your formal approval. This book (*Church Governance Matters*) is required reading for the board's effective strategic planning. There is no additional cost for our review, editing and recommendations.

Consultant-facilitated Planning

This more intensive process will begin with a similar process—the preparation of a workbook based on your existing planning documentation. A trained consultant will facilitate your board retreat. A clear, concise strategic plan will emerge in one day.

Future Directions Survey

This additional module may be added to either option above. It surveys stakeholders on the components that

will be included in your strategic plan. It provides a clear expression of needs and priorities, allowing the board to plan with confidence and effectiveness. The cost will depend on size and complexity of the group. This module is highly recommended for the first effort at strategic planning.

Strategic Outcomes Survey

This module may also be added to either option above. It is a measurement tool that is developed from the strategic outcomes and indicators your group has identified during the strategic planning process. This survey is distributed to the beneficiary groups to provide a baseline measure that allows for the establishment of S.M.A.R.T. goals. It can also be used to measure progress towards strategic goals in subsequent years. The cost will be dependent on the size and complexity of your church. Depending on the number of services and beneficiary groups of a church, there may be more than one survey required.

Distance Learning

GovernanceMatters.com Inc. also offers distance learning via interactive Internet-based learning software for

- board members
- board chairs
- senior pastors
- administrators and managers
- consultants.

Courses are offered on an ongoing basis with small groups of enrolled students forming a “class.” Mentoring by an on-line specialist and interaction with the other students provides a highly effective, low cost, training program. *Church Governance Matters* is required reading for full courses and recommended reading for modules. See the website for details of offerings, dates and prices.

Relationship Descriptions

The preparation of relationship descriptions is one of the modules of the distance learning program. Providing practical training in how to write a relationship description, this module includes a license to use the copyrighted format in your church in perpetuity at no additional cost.

Relationship Reviews

An additional module trains you and your staff members in the process of reviewing the working relationships. The review forms are copyrighted and available for use in your church in perpetuity free of charge. This service includes one free review of the changes and additions you may wish to make to personalize the process to your church.

Strength Surveys

GovernanceMatters.com Inc. offers comprehensive surveys that assess the strengths of the 20 competencies associated with board members, board chairs, pastors, administrators, and managers. Particularly useful when evaluating internal candidates for career development or additional responsibility, these surveys include a 100-statement questionnaire completed by a person's source of authority, peers, recipients of authority and the person him or herself. Up to 12 reviewers may participate in each survey. The questionnaire is composed of behaviors that express the degree of presence of each of the 20 competencies. Reviewers are invited to assess the frequency of their observation of these behaviors in the person being reviewed. The survey indicates how strongly each competency is present.

Comments are solicited from all reviewers to add perspective to the scores given to each of the statements in the questionnaire. These are presented in the final documentation to amplify the perceptions of the reviewers.

A professional analysis by a consultant experienced in this particular assessment tool will provide a wealth of information about the strengths and the significance of the data and the graphs. The consultant also offers suggestions and recommendations for professional development. Two confidential hard copies are bound and mailed to the person in the church authorized to receive one and to distribute the other to the person being reviewed.

Obtaining questionnaires for review, pricing and ordering may be done by visiting the website.

***Embrace* — a Newsletter for Boards, Senior Pastors, Administrators and Managers**

GovernanceMatters.com Inc. offers an electronic newsletter to assist board members, senior pastors, administrators, and managers stay current with governance and management issues. Each issue includes practical help, refinements and ideas that have proven effective by others using the Relationship Model™ in their churches.

The newsletter is sent to one email address for printing and distribution by you or for forwarding to your internal email list. The quality is high, and there is no cost, thanks to the Internet distribution system.

Free On-line Forums

Board chairs, directors, CEOs and managers may register at www.relationshipmodel.com for free forums to discuss with peers around the world a wide range of issues regarding governance, leadership and management.

Summary

In this chapter we dealt with the reality of keeping the structure and processes of governance and management alive and healthy, growing and producing fruit. In doing this we have to be prepared to make changes.

Change is challenging. Some of the blocks to continued growth include

- the values of those in power
- the challenge of change and transition
- inadequate “keeper of the flame”
- inadequate training of existing people
- inadequate orientation of new people.

It is possible to “keep the tree green” by focusing on relationships, the operating system of all churches.

We do this by paying close attention to

- values
- structure
- processes.

The chapter includes a series of questions in a checklist that enables a church's leaders to monitor organizational performance in the values, structures and processes that maintain productivity and staff fulfillment.

The chapter concludes with a list of resources available on www.relationshipmodel.com. They include

- *Church Governance Matters* by Les Stahlke
- governance manual development
- strategic planning
- distance learning
- board governance assessment
- senior management team assessment
- staff fulfillment assessment
- relationship review forms
- strength surveys for board members, chairs, pastors, and administrators
- *Embrace*, an electronic newsletter for boards, pastors, administrators and managers
- free on-line forums for board chairs, board members, pastors, administrators and managers.

For Reflection and Discussion

What strengths do you see in the Relationship Model™ as presented here that will help your church become more effective in its ministry and fulfilling for its staff and volunteers?

What weaknesses in the Model can you identify?

What impediments within your church can you describe that need to be addressed in order for this Model to work?

Appendices

PART Three

Appendix A Definition of Terms

Note: Words that appear in italics have their own entry elsewhere in this appendix. Some of them are technical terms in the Relationship Model™. Their meanings are specific and may differ from other common uses of the words.

Accountability—the third primary component of a direct working relationship. It is the positive process of monitoring progress and measuring results. *Authority* (with *limitations*) and responsibility (with *expectations*) are the other primary (and secondary) components.

Administrator—the chief executive officer of the church, hired by the *board* primarily to lead the process of managing the infrastructure. The administrator receives *authority* and *responsibility* from the board and is accountable to the board. The administrator has no *authority* or *responsibility* for *governance* and is not a member of the *board*.

Affirmation—the first and most influential core value in the *Relationship Model*™. Affirmation is the expression of the high value we place on each individual in any circumstance. It may take the form of respect, sensitivity, compassion or forgiveness. Affirmation encourages, builds, enables, empowers and ensures the fulfillment of each individual in the *church*. Affirmation of ourselves and others is the most significant factor influencing the structure and processes of our relationships.

Authority—the first component of a relationship. Authority at any level in the *church* is always limited by the person or group who is delegating authority to others. In the *Relationship Model*™ the *Circle of Authority* includes *authorization*, *resources* and *competencies*. Power, when used in a positive sense, is synonymous with authority.

Authoritarian—the name given to the value system on the continuum of values related to the use of *authority*. With this value system “might is right” and obedience produces rewards. An authoritarian value system may result in abuse of power and harm to healthy relationships.

Authorization—one of three components of the *Circle of Authority* along with *resources* and *competencies*. Authorization may be thought of as the act of sharing power, i.e. having “the keys to the car.” It is delegated by the *source of authority* at the point of hiring and ends when the working relationship ends.

Beneficiaries—the groups of people whom the members through the *board* choose to serve. Beneficiary groups may be described by their type and by their geographical location. Direct beneficiaries are distinguished from *stakeholders* who are indirect beneficiaries of the *mission*.

Board—governing body of the *church*. Elected by its members, the board receives its *authority* from its members and the government. *Responsibilities* include designing and implementing its own *structure* and *process*, directing *strategic* priorities, delegating *management authority* and *responsibility* to the staff. The board also monitors performance and measures *strategic* results.

Board Chair—a member of the *board*, elected by the board primarily to lead the *process of governance*. The board chair may also represent the church to other organizations, to the stakeholders and to the government authorities. The board chair receives *authority* and responsibility from the board and is accountable to the board. The chair normally has no *authority* or *responsibility for management*.

Board Members—members of the *board* who have been entrusted with the *governance* of the *church* by those who elected or appointed them. Board members are individually accountable to the voting members and governments for their personal behavior and collectively accountable to them for their *governance* of the *church*. *Board members* are sometimes referred to as directors.

Bylaws—the official document stating the relationship among the members of a *church* and between the members of the *church* and its *board*. The bylaws may be changed only by action of the members and form the basis of the *governance manual*.

Church—the group of believers that makes up an individual, local congregation. The word is generally used to describe the local church, but occasionally also the regional association of local churches or the denomination as a whole.

Circle of Authority—See *Authority*.

Circle of Responsibility—
See *Responsibility*.

Committee—a group designated by the *board* to assist the board with the development of *governance policies* and with monitoring the *executive board member* compliance with the

limitations and *expectations policies* of the board. Committees have a singular responsibility to assist with *governance* and have no *responsibility for management* except by special authorization from the board.

Competencies—the underlying characteristics of people that make them successful at certain tasks. Competencies include skill, knowledge, experience, values, attitudes, and self-perception.

Consensus—an official form of decision-making in which the board agrees without a vote on a decision or a course of action. Consensus may be recorded in the *minutes* with the words “It was agreed that...” Consensus may be unanimous, if every *board member* agrees with the decision. Consensus also exists when some *board members* agree with the decision while others prefer a different decision but express a willingness to support the decision of the majority or plurality. Consensus is not achieved when one or more *board members* do not agree to support the decision of the majority or plurality. In this case the decision-making process must default to a vote by the *board members* present.

Critical Success Factors—the factors that the board determines are critical to the fulfillment of the *mission* of the *church*. They are factors that relate to the *management* of the *church* that would typically fall within the *senior pastor/administrator's* Circle of Responsibility. Critical success factors form the final component of the *strategic* plan and form a bridge between the *strategic* and the *tactical* (*governance* and *management*) functions. The *senior pastor/administrator* is expected to address the critical success factors in the tactical plans, enabling the board to monitor the senior pastor/administrator's management of risk without becoming involved in managing as a board function.

Expectations—one of two secondary components of a relationship. Expectations are associated with *responsibilities* and are usually expressed in the form of *goals*, standards and specific tasks. The quantifiable expectations may be expressed in *S.M.A.R.T. goals*. The qualitative expectations may be expressed as minimum standards and standards to which we aspire.

Forgiveness—is the expression of *affirmation* in a relationship that has become broken. It allows us to accept the offending party even though there is no hope of return of what was

taken by the offending party: money, health, reputation, life. Forgiveness sets the forgiving person free from hate and the need for retaliation and opens the door to the possibility of reconciliation.

Goals—an expression of the *expectations of responsibility*. Goals may be *strategic* or *tactical* and are always negotiated by the *source* and the *recipient* of delegated *authority* to assure the balance between *authority* and *responsibility*. *S.M.A.R.T.* Goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant to the mission and Time-limited.

Governance—the process by which a *board* directs and controls the church through policy rather than individual management decisions. Governance involves designing board *structure* and *process*, directing *strategic priorities*, delegating *authority* and *responsibility* and measuring and monitoring results. Governance is a more effective method of control than *management* for larger and more complex churches. The *board* is accountable to the *members* for achieving *strategic outcomes* and to the appropriate government agency for remaining within the *limitations* of law.

Governance Manual—the manual that describes the *values*, *structure* and *processes* of *governance* for a *church*. This manual is within the *authority* given to the *board* by its members in the *bylaws* of the *church*. The board has the *authority* to approve and revise the governance manual as necessary.

Healthy Relationship—a working relationship is healthy when a balance exists between the *authorization*, *resources* and *competencies* on the one hand and the *expectations* expressed in *goals* and standards on the other. In the case of an entire *church*, the relationship between the staff and the members is healthy when member satisfaction (productivity) and staff fulfillment (satisfaction) are in balance.

Involvement—the second core value in the *Relationship Model*TM. Involvement allows people the freedom to express ideas, thoughts and feelings about all matters that affect them. Involvement produces a sense of ownership for those who have *responsibility* related to what they helped to shape and plan. It is directly related to the degree of *accountability* people accept for their work.

Justice—is the acknowledgement by the offending party, or a third party with *authority* in the matter, of the wrong that was committed. Justice includes a fair compensa-

tion for what can be repaid. Repayment can take one or more forms: acknowledgment, apology, amends, restitution, fine, imprisonment or capital punishment.

Laissez-faire—the name given to a value system on the continuum of *values* related to the use of *authority* in a *church* where conflict tends to be avoided or denied. To varying degrees, this value system exhibits lack of clarity on roles and *responsibilities*. Traditions and assumptions are more common than *policies* and *goals*. In its extreme form, *laissez-faire* is identified by a complete abdication of *authority*.

Leadership—the process of enabling individuals and groups to express their *values*, realize their potential for service and personal fulfillment. Leadership is characterized by being affirming, involving and supporting. All individuals in the *church* have an opportunity to provide leadership to others.

Limitations—the limiting and defining element of delegated *authority*. Limitations are normally expressed in negative terms to create the *Circle of Authority*, which defines clearly the freedom we have in fulfilling our *responsibility*. Defining limitations of authority eliminates the need for returning to the *source of authority* repeatedly for permission to act.

Management—the process by which the staff transforms the *strategic* direction of the *board* into services and programs that benefit the *stakeholders*. Management works within the defined *Circle of Authority* to fulfill the expectations of its *Circle of Responsibility* and is accountable to the *board* both for *strategic outcomes* and for remaining within the *limitations of authority*.

Minutes—the official record of the *board*, containing the result of the *governance* process in the form of *policies* and *strategic* decisions, as well as exceptional management decisions. The board minutes are the only way the board communicates its decisions and directions to the staff through the *executive board member*.

Mission—a term given to the statement that contains the core reason for the *church's* existence. The mission statement makes reference to the *beneficiaries*, the *services* and sometimes the geographical location where the *church* works.

Model—a design that provides the framework for a *board* and the *senior pastor/ administrator* to develop the *structure* and *process* (form and

function) of *governance* and *management* in order for the church to fulfill its *mission*.

Not-for-profit Organization—a type of organization in which the purpose is to deliver products and *services* to clients, not for profit, but as an expression of the *values* of the members and *stakeholders*. Sometimes called “non-profit” the *organization* may generate a surplus even though that is not its *mission*.

Organization—a generic name given to a corporate entity, *church* or *charity*. The term includes the entire organization including the membership, board and staff.

Policies—are the expression of the *board governance process*. There are four types of policies in the *Relationship Model™*.

1. Board *structure* and *process*
2. *Strategic* direction
3. Delegating *authority* and *responsibility* to the *senior pastor/administrator*
4. Board *accountability* (monitoring and measuring).

Process—the third element of a direct working relationship. The six core processes of a working relationship are: communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, planning, delegating and *accountability* (monitoring and measuring).

Recipient of Authority—a term that designates the flow of *authority* in a working relationship. The phrase is distinguished from the *source of authority* who delegates *authority* and *responsibility* to the recipient of authority and to whom the recipient of authority is accountable.

Reconciliation—is the restoration of a broken relationship that can only be achieved after forgiveness, *justice* and appropriate repayment of loss have been experienced by both parties in the broken relationship. It is the weld that unites brokenness.

Relationship Model™—a name describing a *model* focusing on the *values*, *structure*, and *processes* of relationships in a *church*. Usually used to distinguish from an *authoritarian* structure, a relationship-centered structure is based on the three core values of *affirmation*, *involvement* and *servant leadership*. The three core components of a relationship are *authority*, *responsibility* and *accountability*. Secondary components are *limitations of authority* and *expectations of responsibility*. The model is

realized through the processes of *governance, leadership, management* and service delivery.

Repayment—the willing expressions of an offending party to “right the wrong.” It may take the form of an apology, public acknowledgement, financial compensation, time. These expressions may precede or follow forgiveness in the reconciliation process.

Resources—the second of three components of the *Circle of Authority*. Resources may be human and financial resources, information or time. See also *Authorization* and *Competencies*, the other two components of the *Circle of Authority*.

Responsibility—the second component of a relationship. Responsibilities within a *church* are typically described in a *committee* relationship description or an individual relationship description. Responsibility is further defined by *expectations* of responsibility.

Servant Leadership—the third core value in the *Relationship Model™*. Experiencing servant leadership is being lifting up by your *source of authority* instead of being put down. Servant leadership seeks the well-being and fulfillment of the *recipient of authority* as an end in itself, not merely as a means to the end of greater productivity or member satisfaction.

Services—the term used to describe the *strategic services* that a *church* offers in order to meet the needs of its *beneficiaries*. The services are delivered through programs that the *executive board member* and the staff develop to deliver them effectively and efficiently.

S.M.A.R.T.—an acronym describing the five characteristics of a goal. S.M.A.R.T. goals (strategic or tactical) are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant to the mission and Time-limited.

Source of Authority—a term that describes the flow of *authority* in a working relationship. Intended to replace the term “boss,” which reflects an *authoritarian value* system, *authority* and *responsibility* flow from the source of authority to the *recipient of authority*. *Accountability* flows in the opposite direction, back to the source of authority

Stakeholders—individuals and groups who have a “stake” in the work of the church. In a *church* they include the members, attenders, *strategic* partners, regional and national levels of the denomination, and the people who live in the community. The *board* consults the individuals within these groups for *strategic*

direction. The term encompasses both the direct *beneficiaries* of the services and those who are affected indirectly.

Strategic—describes the focus of the board’s *responsibility*, the “what” of a church. This includes defining the *values, beneficiary groups, services, vision, mission, priorities, strategic outcomes* and *goals*. The result of all the board’s *strategic* direction to the staff is contained in the *strategic* plan of the church.

Strategic Outcomes—benefits or changes experienced by the *beneficiaries* (individuals, populations or communities) that are delivered by the *services* of the church. They are broad-based statements that describe a changed state in behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition and/or other attributes. Strategic outcomes contribute to the realization of the church’s *vision*. They are also known as strategic benefits or strategic results.

Structure—the second element of a direct working relationship. Structure includes five components: *authority, limitations of authority, responsibility, expectations of responsibility* and *accountability*.

Tactical—describes the focus of *management responsibility*, the “how” of a church, including the development and management of programs for delivering the *services* directed by the board, the *process* of budgeting and financial management and the management of staff and volunteers.

Values—a complex set of convictions held by the members of a church. Values include many levels: core beliefs and personal values, interpersonal relationship values and organizational values. People display their values by their behavior.

Vision—a futuristic and idealistic view of what can result from realizing the *mission* of the church. A vision stays just beyond the *strategic* planning horizon, drawing, encouraging and challenging the church towards its potential. The focus is on the difference that the church will make in the world, not on the church itself.

Appendix B

THE RELATIONSHIP MODEL™ *Governance Manual Table of Contents*

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Appendix A – Introduction to the Relationship Model™

Appendix B – Definition of Terms

Appendix C Competencies

Competencies	Board Chair	Board Member	Senior Pastor	Administrator	Senior Manager
Achieving Competencies - These generally lie above the iceberg water line and are possible to improve by training.					
Commitment to God			X		
Commitment to the Church	X	X		X	X
Communication	X	X	X	X	X
Conflict Resolution	X	X	X	X	X
Development Orientation			X		
Initiative	X	X	X	X	X
Life Experience			X		
Objectivity	X	X		X	X
Process Orientation	X	X		X	X
Results Orientation				X	X
Thinking Competencies - Often below the surface, there is a limit to how much they can be changed by training. They reflect a person's cognitive ability.					
Conceptual Thinking	X	X		X	X
Effective Judgment	X	X		X	X
Independent Thinking	X	X			X
Logical Thinking	X	X	X		
Leadership Competencies - Often below the surface, these may be improved through increased knowledge and experience. They are affected by a person's attitudes and self-image.					
Accountability	X	X	X	X	X
Concern for Excellence				X	X
Delegation				X	X
Desire for Staff Fulfillment				X	
Effective Management			X		
Encouragement			X		
Interdependence	X	X	X		
Leadership			X	X	X
Stewardship	X	X	X		
Team Orientation					X
Personal Competencies - These mostly lie well below the surface and are, therefore, hard to change by training. Although all competencies are personal, these particularly reflect individual attitudes, traits, motives and self-image.					
Ambiguity Tolerance	X	X	X		
Empathy	X	X	X	X	X
Endurance				X	
Humility			X		
Open-mindedness	X	X		X	X
Personal Integrity	X	X	X	X	X
Resilience			X		
Self-awareness	X	X	X	X	X
Self-esteem	X	X	X	X	X
Transparency	X	X			

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