

CHURCH STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Introduction

One of the most important topics for churches serious about being effective in their mission, is church structure and leadership. In most churches, as the church grows the organization of the church actually begins to hinder further growth. The dynamics of growth (such as needing to accommodate more people, reacting to the increased number of problems, making decisions on the run, stretching budget dollars, and scheduling more events, meetings, etc.) demand a streamlined organization and leadership empowered to dream, strategize, decide and move ahead.

Stories are often told of staff (either paid or unpaid) wanting to maximize opportunities by being creative but being stymied by needing numerous committee approvals. The youth pastor wants to paint the youth room after hearing negative comments about the existing decor from parents new to the church. Painting the ceiling black and buying a couple black lights (once a trend in youth ministry) would be a nice touch and relatively inexpensive; plus letting the kids do it would be a good character building project. But a member of the youth committee is out of town, the church decorating committee has a different idea, and the budget committee wants to wait until the next fiscal year. So nothing happens. Families eventually leave.

Leadership of a church must always be asking themselves, how can we:

- Be ahead of the growth curve of the church;
- Simplify structure to enhance growth rather than hinder it
- Avoid duplication of responsibility and authority;
- Avoid bottlenecks;
- Quicken the decision making process;
- Trust staff to act without prior approval;
- Delegate responsibility to the "front lines";
- Empower ministry yet maintain appropriate accountability.

Various Models

When it comes to actual organizational structure, there are various models along several spectrums:

POLITY

Congregational -----Presbyterian -----Episcopalian-----Authoritative

BOARD

Managing (Controlling) ----- Policy (Governing)-----Advisory (Recommending)
Representative ----- Leadership

PASTORAL AUTHORITY

Approval & Act-----Inform & Act-----Act & Inform-----Act

What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of the different forms of polity, board governance, and pastoral authority?

Draw out the existing organizational structure (chart) of your church. You may need to do so on a separate piece of paper. Compare your drawing to that of other leaders in your church.

Is the organizational structure of your church understood well by its leaders? Members? If not, why not?

It may be important at this place in our discussion to point out that within scripture, the qualifications for and the functions of leadership are prescribed, but the form of leadership is only described. In many respects, we don't know much about the actual governance of the early church. In his book *High Impact Church Boards*, T. J. (Tim) Addington after discussing why structure of the church should be subservient to its mission writes, "There is nothing sacred per se about the structures that most churches have in place for leadership. Governance structures, apart from what is clearly spelled out in the New Testament as prescriptive, are simply tools that should be designed to empower people and facilitate ministry."

Do you agree that governance structures are only descriptive in scripture?

If so, what is the implication of that for us in our churches today?

Addington goes on to write about how the American government system of checks and balances, which is based on a general mistrust of those in authority or responsibility, has affected the church. The American system implies that we should question and limit one another. He writes, "The New Testament (Hebrews 13:17) clearly vests the senior leadership of the church with authority and responsibility in the context of a leadership for which they are ultimately accountable to God. Ironically, when church governance is established as a checks-and-balance system, mistrust is not only built-in, but is also actively fostered.... The church needs to see a renaissance of trust among its people. Trust between paid staff members and boards, between boards and congregations, and between congregations and staff teams. We need to teach our people that trust is a biblical concept unless it has been violated. When violated, we need to work hard to restore it. A mistrust of each other may reflect our society, but it does not reflect our theology."

Healthy Governance Structures

Addington writes, "Any writing or revision of leadership structures should be based on a set of principles that define healthy governance structures. The following principles are consistent with good governance and biblical teaching where Scripture speaks to the issue:"

1. "Create only one Board." Condensing authority to one board removes ambiguity as to who is responsible and who is to be held accountable.
2. "Be crystal clear on roles, responsibilities, authority, and accountability." This is especially important as to the relationship between board and multiple staff teams.
3. "Agree that the structure must serve your mission rather than having your mission serve the structure." All structures that don't empower biblical and effective leadership should be modified or eliminated.
4. "Keep your bylaws as simple and as brief as possible." Your formal documents should allow as much flexibility as possible in the actual organization of ministry.
5. "Elect as few people as possible beyond your leadership board." In most situations it is more practical and effective to have leadership select individuals to serve as needed. Also, you want to free up people to do ministry.
6. "Multiply ministry teams to accomplish ministry tasks." Ministry teams can be created as needs arise and are more flexible regarding focus, methods, and duration of service. If given the appropriate authority, gifted and passionate team members can be very creative and effective.
7. "Your governance should reflect your church size." As the church grows, flexibility allows for adjustments and restructuring. One size does not fit all.

The bottom line. It's true that a healthy Church can operate with a poor governance model. It's also true that a church can follow a great model and still be unhealthy. However, if the goal is to remove roadblocks to effective ministry, empower leaders to lead as they have been charged by the Scriptures, and unleash the greatest number of people in meaningful ministry, then structure matters — a great deal.

Accountable Leadership

John Kaiser in his book *Winning on Purpose* outlines a model of church organization that clearly delineates responsibilities, authority, and lines of accountability. It answers the questions, *Who is responsible* for accomplishing the mission of the church? *What authority do they have* in determining the means for accomplishing the mission? And *Who are they accountable to* for the actual results?

Throughout the book he uses a sports metaphor to explain the positions, responsibilities and results. See the below chart:

Position	Role	Metaphor
Board	Governs	Rule Making Body
Senior Pastor	Leads & Teaches	Head Coach
Staff	Equips & Manages	Assistant Coaches (usually specialized)
Members	Ministry (Ministry teams)	Players (specialized per gifts & passions) Offense or Defense

The Board, as guided by the Senior Pastor, establishes the mission and vision of the church, further sets the standards for the Pastor's authority and accountability, and provides support for the Pastor. The Board is therefore part commissioner (sets rules), part umpire (enforces the rules), part score-keeper (evaluates), and part cheerleader (supports). The Board is accountable to Christ and members of the church.

A healthy board in this model:

- governs the organization
- governs through guiding principles that
 - define the responsibility of the Sr. Pastor
 - delegate authority to the Sr. Pastor
 - require accountability from the Sr. Pastor
- does not
 - lead the organization (the Sr. Pastor does)
 - manage the organization (the staff does)
- rather than approve activities, the board
 - formulates guiding principles
 - monitors the performance of the Sr. Pastor

The Senior Pastor is the head coach. The Pastor is the primary leader that is necessary to effectively fulfill the mission of the church. It is assumed that he is the primary leader due to his character (meeting biblically required standards), education, training, experience, giftedness, availability, and commitment. He will also provides vision, direction and teaching regarding the mission. The pastor leads the board primarily by inspiring, leads the staff by directing, and leads the members through teaching. The Pastor is accountable to the board according to the guiding principles established by the board.

A healthy Pastor accepts responsibility which means that the pastor and the board agree together on what the mission is and who is charged with leading the church to fulfill it.

A healthy Pastor accepts authority which means that the Pastor and the board agree together on where the boundaries lie that create freedom of movement for the Pastor and staff.

A healthy Pastor accepts accountability which means that the Pastor and the board agree together on what will happen when the Pastor proves fruitful (or unfruitful) in fulfillment of the mission and faithful (or unfaithful) in respecting the boundaries.

The staff is all about people — they are trusted people who equip gifted people and manage their work of serving the needs of members and those who need to know the Lord. Staff is a team that usually includes full-time and part-time paid employees and in some situations unpaid volunteers that lead ministry teams. Staff are hired by, directed by, and accountable to the Sr. Pastor.

A healthy staff:

- manages the operations for all ministries of the church
- works for the Sr. Pastor, not for the board or the congregation
- is both linked to and separated from the board by the Sr. Pastor
- is an investment, not an expense

A healthy congregation is characterized by these significant and noticeable traits:

- every member is an active minister
- the first priority of each active member/minister is reaching out to newcomers and the community
- the second priority of each active member/minister is caring for one another within the body
- the active members/minister approve a few broad decisions for the church and entrust the leadership of the church to the Sr. Pastor, working with board and staff.

In addition to the bylaws of the church, the "guiding principles" become an important document in this model. It is a written document prepared by the board with the Sr. Pastor (not necessarily approved by the members). As stated earlier, it states what is the mission of the church, what the Pastor will be responsible for in the accomplishment of that mission, what authority (freedom) the Pastor has in determining the means he can utilize in that effort, and how (to what standard) the Pastor will be evaluated or held accountable. In describing the authority of the Pastor, negative language is usually recommended. An example of the negative language could be "the Pastor may not use any means or activities that are illegal, unethical, immoral, cause bodily or emotional harm to individuals, or put the financial resources of the church and its members at risk in pursuit of the church's mission". The document must allow for reasonable interpretations by both the Sr. Pastor and the board.

In summary of the Accountable Leadership model of church structure, see charts below:

POSITIONS	PLAYERS	FUNCTIONS	METAPHORS
Ministry	Members	Outreach first then Care for One Another	Teammates or Champions, Athletes, etc.
Management	Staff	Equipping and Coordination	Assistant Coaches and Specialists
Leadership	Pastor	Vision, Direction, and Teaching	Head Coach or Quarterback, Captain, etc.
Governance	Board	Accountability and Support	Commissioner, Umpire, Scorekeeper & Cheerleader

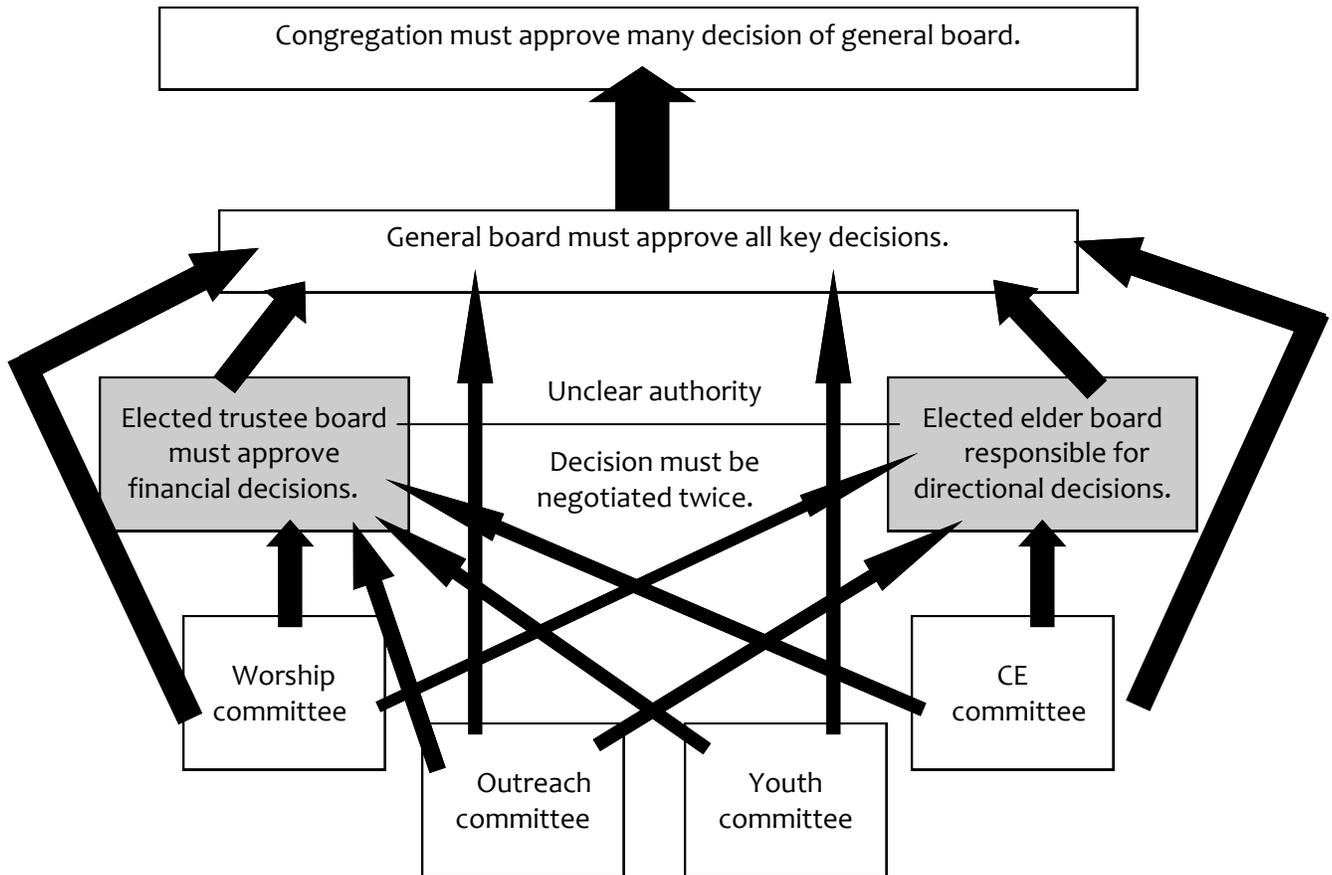
MANAGEMENT	LEADERSHIP	GOVERNANCE
Is entrusted to the staff	Is entrusted to the pastor	Is entrusted to the board
Executes with excellence	Directs with excellence	Protects with excellence
Does things right	Does the right things	Defines what is right
Contributes efficiency	Contributes effectiveness	Contributes accountability
Answers to the senior pastor	Answers to the board	Answers to the church
Translates vision to action	Translates mission to vision	Articulates mission
Links pastor to ministries	Links staff to board	Links church to Owner
Operates within boundaries	Enforces boundaries	Establishes boundaries
Runs tactical operations	Runs strategic operations	Writes and monitors policy
Meets frequently	Meets with staff and board	Meets infrequently
Solves problems of today	Solves problems of tomorrow	Prioritizes the problems

What distinguishing features do you see in this model?

How is this model different from your existing structure?

What advantages and disadvantages do you see?

EXAMPLE OF POOR GOVERNANCE SYSTEM



Note the multiple arrows indicating where permission, funding or agreement must be obtained before decisions can be made. Decisions must be made more than once and with different groups. There is a lack of clarity as to who really has authority to make decisions. The general board is typically made up of representatives of the other boards and committees, often causing members to be more concerned about their particular ministry as a whole. At best, the system is confusing and time-consuming; at worst, it creates conflict along with its inefficiency.

EXAMPLE OF HEALTHY GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

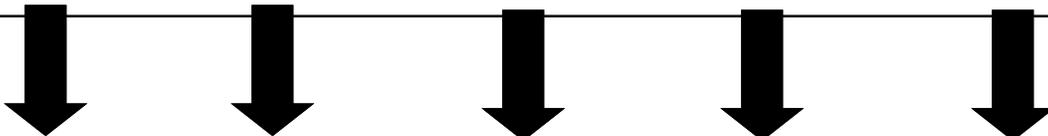
Congregation elects leadership board and delegates all decisions to leaders apart from budget approval, calling of the senior pastor, approvals of sale and purchase of property, or bylaw and constitutional changes.



Leadership board is responsible for congressional mission, directions, policy; guards the values, mission and preferred future; and approves ministry initiatives. The leadership board then delegates the details and strategy to staff members. The senior pastor serves on the leadership board. The leadership board fulfills the responsibilities of 6-D leadership.



Staff members are responsible for day-to-day management and deciding how to implement vision approved by the leadership board. Staff members equip and deploy the congregation in ministries based on passions and gifting.



Staff teams delegate day-to-day ministry details to ministry teams based on passion and gifting. Teams are empowered to lead their ministries in line with church philosophy, with oversight by staff members. Ministry teams operate within parameters laid out by the leadership board.

Ministry team

Ministry team

Ministry team

Ministry team

Ministry team