



Introduction to Church Council/Board Leadership – Simplified Structure

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Simplified UM Church Structure (*Discipline paragraph 247.2*)

- Simplified Board which is the executive leadership for the church.
- This entire board functions and has authority as the PPR, Trustees and Finance roles for the church – although some churches assign responsibility to a person or group to focus on one of these areas.
 - o Benefit of assigning responsibilities is a group can do much more detailed work and bring a recommendation to the entire council for approval. *Examples might include insurance bids, budget, staff evaluations, etc.* Nevertheless, the entire board serves as all three administrative roles.
- Nominations (chaired by the pastor) is a separate group which reports to the board. Even designated roles on the board (men, women, youth, etc.) are to be nominated by the committee.
- All other groups or committees in the church are accountable to the board, and the board is responsible for all groups that identify themselves with the church (including using EIN).

The Purpose of a Board:

- Provide clarity, focus and direction - connected to your mission, values, and vision. Board members are to vision for the entire church, rather than only advocating for a specific group or ministry area.
- Counter missional drift - away from preference driven to purpose driven church, and this is a continual struggle. (“Not my will, but Thine be done.”)
- Expect accountability from leadership, staff, and board members through policies and goal setting.
- Provide intentional and transparent communication. Making sure to over communicate, with a unified voice. Agree on what you will communicate, and what you are not going to communicate.

Governance Policy and Covenant:

- A governance policy clarifies responsibilities between the board and the pastor. Specifically, it might address boundaries with staffing, finances, facilities, term limits and accountability structure.
- Board covenant (which might be a part of the governance policy) clarifies expectations within board members. Specifically, it might address communication, participation, conflict, and resolutions when covenant is violated.
- Board accountability is not only the role of the pastor, but healthy boards also have mutual/shared accountability.

Suggested Boundaries:

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| - Council sets Policies and Goals | - Pastor leads Programming within Policies |
| - Council evaluates Pastor | - Pastor oversees Staff |
| - Council establishes Financial Boundaries | - Pastor manages Church Finances |
| - Council shapes Facility Management | - Pastor manages Church Facilities |
| - Council gives support & wisdom | - Pastor provides leadership |
| - Council members are servant leaders | - Pastor develops leaders |

Sample Agenda:

- Teaching and Prayer
- Minutes (*making sure someone is the secretary*)
- Pastor Report – highlighting things that demonstrate the goals/vision/values. This should include both qualitative (stories) and quantitative data (numbers).
- Finance – articulate votes/decision items. Financial decisions need to also include what fund the money is coming from.
- Trustee – articulate votes/decision items. Financial decisions need to also include what fund the money is coming from. Have a financial threshold where printed copies might be presented of only recommended vendor along with reasoning of not choosing other vendors.
- What do we communicate?
- PPR – only record decisions in minutes. Everything else is confidential unless otherwise stated. This is when the council gives wisdom and feedback to the pastor about performance and staffing.

Communication Best Practices – Ask “What do we need to communicate?”

- Decision Items - votes are public information and to be listed in the minutes. Discussion is not typically included in the minutes unless otherwise stated.
 - o Examples: *Replace Furnace, Hired Cleaning Company, Established Endowments*
- Ideas – these are items you might be considering or are working on, but that you wish to get feedback from the wider congregation. Ideas should be emphasized as ideas and not decisions to minimize gossip.
 - o Examples: *We are considering adding a new worship service. Pastor asked us to pray about our children’s ministry and how best we can resource younger families.*
- Trends - should be discussed as to how to communicate the items clearly and consistently so that they reflect transparency.
 - o Bad Example: *We are 13% behind the budget.*
Good Example: *Our YTD spending exceeds giving, but that’s normal. Historically December represents 15% of our total giving. Even with increased expenses our finances are strong.*
 - o Bad Example: *Our attendance is down 40%.*
Good Example: *Our in-person attendance is down 40%, but we have more people watching online than ever before. We had 3 new people join the church from online, and our giving is up because more people are connected to the church.*
- Personal speculation, specific quotes or debates, who voted on what – DON’T SHARE!
Confidentiality is critically important for honest and critical consideration of difficult items.
- Staffing Items – RARELY share, except when decisions are made. Encourage people to talk with the person responsible for staffing decisions directly. Emphasize the entire church council was given all the information by the Pastor, and we all support the decision that was made.
- NEVER pass along ‘unnamed feedback’. The purpose of feedback is to help bring reconciliation and further the mission of the church. Unnamed feedback cannot provide clarity, reconciliation, or further clarifying questions. The only thing unnamed feedback does is to transfer anxiety which is unhelpful and unholy.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

- Train board members every year. Teach how to read financials. Get an outside perspective.
- Share expectations (covenant), job description and governance policy when asking people to serve.
- Board members should all exemplify the best of our membership commitments.