



Introduction to Church Council/Board Leadership – Traditional Structure

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Administrative Council Structure (*Discipline paragraph 247.2*)

- Administrative Council is the executive leadership for the church. Nominated members of the Administrative Council are the only ones with vote and they are the ones who participate in Charge Conference.
- Designated roles include: Chair, Lay Leader, PPR Chair, Trustee Chair, Finance Chair, Treasurer, Lay Member(s) to Annual Conference, UMM, UMW/UWF, youth adult, UMY, Pastor(s).
- The charge conference can elect other ministry group representatives to serve on the Administrative Council with voice and vote.
- Nominations (chaired by the pastor) nominates members to the Charge Conference. The Charge Conference approves all nominations.
- Council meetings are open meetings, but nonelected members are not necessarily entitled to voice or vote. This becomes especially challenging when discussing sensitive or controversial issues.
- All groups or committees in the church are ultimately accountable to the board.

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 other board members, ministry leaders, and pastor(s) through policies and goal setting.
- Provide intentional and transparent communication. Making sure to communicate with a unified voice.

Governance Policy and Covenant:

- While the United Methodist Book of Discipline (BOD) establishes governance, a local church may provide additional clarity (if it does not contradict the BOD). Governance policy helps to provide clarity of authority and boundary setting.
- Administrative Council Covenant can be a tool to provide mutual accountability and team work for council members. This might include expectations around attendance, communication, conflict resolution, and expectations for members regarding church membership commitments.

Governance Boundary Questions:

- Who supervises, evaluates, hires, fires, and establishes compensation for staff? *Note, pastors are not considered church staff, they are clergy which have BOD expectations for these questions.*
- Who is authorized to spend money, enter contracts, and approve vendors? Are there limits?
- Who establishes, and what are the spending limits, budget, and financial management controls?
- What policies do you have/need?
 - o *Only have what you will follow.*
 - o *What you need is often where there is conflict (except fiduciary policies and Safe Gatherings).*
- What expectations do you have for and from board members?

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 Report – articulate votes/decision items. Financial decisions need to also include what fund the money is coming from.
- Trustee Report – 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.
- S/PPR – only share factual information. This is not the place to discuss staffing issues or pastoral issues. Those are to be addressed in private to the S/PPR chairperson and discussed in S/PPR meetings.
- Ministry Reports and other Committees – use this as a chance to coordinate communication if ministry teams are present
- What do we communicate?

Note: Printed Council reports from all committees are a best practice.

Note: Often notice is required for items to be discussed in a Council Agenda.

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, We are thinking of remodeling the lobby, 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.*
- 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.