

Laying Foundations- Working Together Congregational Systems/ Interim Process/ Board Roles and Responsibilities

Your Ministry as A Member Of The Board Of Directors

All too often, service on a Board of Directors for a church is seen as a necessary exercise of secular duties in a sacred setting; a distinction is made between that which is administrative and that which is spiritual. But the work of the Board of Directors should be seen, like all other service in the congregation, as a ministry whose successful efforts are essential to the mission and purpose of the church.

Strong, healthy, knowledgeable leadership in the church must begin with the biblical foundations of *charisma*, a biblical word, identified in I Corinthians, Ephesians, Romans and elsewhere. *Charisma* means literally "a gift of grace." In these epistles, numerous gifts of grace at work in the church are mentioned. Interestingly, "leadership" is identified as one of the charismatic gifts in Romans 12, where leaders are instructed to "lead with diligence." And, "administration," or what we would refer to as "management", is one of the gifts mentioned in I Corinthians 12. While all in the church are gifted with *charisma* in one or more of many gifts, some will have the specific gifts of leadership and administration, and there is no indication that these particular gifts are limited to bishops, pastors or apostles who hold offices we might normally associate with such gifts. What is crucial is that these specific gifts are vital to the health of a growing church. These are the gifts which are important in the exercise of the work of the Board of Directors. And, fortunately, individuals blessed with these gifts are often those chosen for such service.

Anderson and Jones, in their excellent book, *The Management of Ministry*, identify three tasks of church leadership: authentic spiritual direction, effective associational leadership, and efficient organizational management. I find these to be useful categories for framing some thoughts on the tasks central to a Pastor, Board of Directors and other key church leaders.

Authentic Spiritual Direction

Authentic spiritual direction is a matter of both character and competence. Paul Tillich says that church leaders "gain absolute authority because of the absolute character of what they stand for." Anderson and Jones talk of the leader as "bearer of the holy." This is the "values" dimension of leadership.

Character counts. Aristotle, in his *The Rhetoric*, saw three major sources of persuasion: *ethos* was the persuasive character of the speaker, *logos* was the logical argument of the speech and *pathos* was the emotional appeal to the listener. Of these three, *ethos* was the most important. A derivative word of today, *ethic*, is no less important to the contemporary art of communication. As the saying goes, "what you do speaks more loudly than what you say." This is what has been called the first law of leadership: "If you don't believe in the messenger, you won't believe the message."

Scott Peck in his popular book, *The Road Less Traveled*, sees a character disorder in those who refuse to accept responsibility for themselves. Peck identifies four tools of self-discipline for the process of confronting and solving life's problems: 1) Delaying gratification, a process of scheduling the pleasure and pain in life; this is the self-discipline of managing one's time. 2) Acceptance of responsibility is the willingness to confront a problem, knowing it is one's own. 3) Dedication to the truth, which is a continuous openness to stringent self-examination, and a willingness to be personally challenged; this is commitment to a life of total honesty. 4) Balancing is the discipline of discipline, the capacity for "giving up", that is rejecting, responsibility that is not truly one's own. Exercise of these disciplines is an absolute prerequisite to strong, healthy leadership.

Authentic spiritual direction is also a matter of competence. Latin American Baptist Rene Padilla says, "the church that does not feed its faith through reflective thinking easily falls victim to prevailing ideologies." Paul's repeated challenge, "I do not want you to be ignorant" is critical for us today. Church leaders, clergy and laity alike, need to function from a strong foundation of biblical and theological competence. Orlando Costas, in his definition of wholistic church growth, includes "conceptual" growth as an important indicator of the health of a church. Conceptual growth is growth in one's knowledge of the faith. Commitment to such growth is also prerequisite to effective church leadership.

Effective Associational Leadership

If authentic spiritual direction is about "values," effective associational leadership is about "vision." Bennis and Nanus in *Leaders: Strategies For Taking Charge* write, "Leaders create focus which gives the organization a sense of direction. To choose a direction a leader must first develop a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization. This image is called a vision." When such a vision is truly compelling and credible, and *when it is widely shared by individuals in an organization it carries the power of transformation.*

Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral defines leadership as: "Thinking ahead, planning for the future, exhausting all the possibilities, envisioning problems and dreaming up solutions to them, then communicating the possibilities to decision makers. This is leadership. In any institution, the leader is the one who is thinking ahead of everyone else...not living in the past, but in the future, for leadership draws its inspiration from future projection and not from past accomplishments. The leader is alert to movements, trends and evolving developments...literally thinking longer thoughts than anyone else is and expressing them effectively."

The big question is, "how do leaders learn to develop and communicate vision?" Bennis and Nanus say that "usually the vision did not originate with the leader personally but rather from others." Successful leaders are great askers and great listeners, and they are great learners. *If there is one competency that stands out to me as I observe what I believe to be highly successful church leaders it is the capacity and passion for learning.* This is where vision finds its roots.

Efficient Organizational Management

Anderson and Jones make the point, "it is often hard to distinguish where organizational management ends and association leadership begins." Bennis asserts a distinction in his more recent book, *On Becoming A Leader*. For instance, "the manager maintains; the leader develops." Or, "the manager administers, the leader innovates." And, "the manager asks how and when, the leader asks why?" It is my observation; *a strong, healthy church must have both.*

There are five traditional categories or functions of management: planning (setting goals), organizing (recruiting), staffing (training), directing (supervision), and controlling (evaluation). In my experience, these necessary functions occur in very informal ways in smaller churches. But when churches move beyond 150 in size, these functions begin to become much more important, and competency to execute them is critical. I believe that management deficiencies are a significant reason why churches do not move beyond the size of 200-300. Unfortunately, most churches don't realize how some of the most basic management tools, such as planning, can serve them.

Welcome to your work! May your ministry as a Board member

be filled with blessings, for you and for those you serve.

Five Key Skills In The Way Leaders Relate To Others:

1. The ability to accept people as they are, not as you would like them to be.
2. The capacity to approach relationships and problems in terms of the present rather than the past.
3. The ability to relate to those close to you with the same courteous attention you extend to strangers and casual acquaintances.
4. The ability to trust others, even if the risk seems great.
5. The ability to do without constant approval and recognition from others.

From Bennis and Nanus in *Leaders: Strategies For Taking Charge*

Important Issues In Understanding Your Role In The Local Church

I. The Dynamics of Church Size, Church Status and Sub-groups

Group dynamics are among the most influential factors shaping the activity, culture, expectations and relationships in your local church. Three types of group dynamics common in churches are presented here. This information can be especially useful for leaders in congregations that wish to grow. While the basic roles and responsibilities of members of the Board of Directors will be similar all Metropolitan Community Churches, the scale and complexity of board relationships and tasks will vary dramatically depending upon the size, status and sub-groups of the congregation.

Characteristics of church size at predictable plateaus

Churches usually tend to plateau in size at predictable levels. Note: The following information is based on the work of Lyle Schaller *in 44 Steps Up Off The Plateau*, and reflects studies of church life in the U.S.A.

- a. 25-40 at worship -- A single-cell group, lay owned and lay operated, usually unable to compensate a full-time pastor, often sees itself as a family. More than half of all MCC congregations are in this category.
- b. 85-100 at worship -- Sees itself as a community built on a network of one-to-one relationships with the pastor at the center, highly values the fellowship characteristics of this size, frequently has difficulty in *adequately* compensating a full-time pastor.
- c. 135-165 at worship -- the most comfortable plateau, highly self-sufficient, also retains strong fellowship characteristics, can comfortably compensate the pastor, but starting to need more staff support.
- d. 175-240 at worship -- the most uncomfortable plateau, facing the "200 Barrier", losing the fellowship characteristic of smaller churches, can't afford the staff needed to become larger, feels like a big church trying to be small or a small church trying to be big, has increasing need for sub-group structures and decreasing ability for the pastor to be the hub of one-to-one relationships.
- e. 300-450 at worship -- a more comfortable plateau, has a multiple full-time staff usually of 3-5 employees including the Senior Pastor, has the resources and size to achieve a higher level of celebration and quality in worship, sub-groups and programs provide fellowship characteristics.
- f. 500-700 at worship -- a full-service church with a staff-centered ministry usually using 6 or more full-time employees; very attractive to younger generations, much more emphasis on quality of programs and services.

Understanding the Interim Process

Over the last several years MCC has instituted an intentional interim program to help congregations through important 'in between' period of permanent pastors. We know that the period between long term

pastorates is a critical period in the life of a congregation. “The way a congregation chooses to use its interim time will shape congregational growth, identity, and health for years to come. We also know that what is done in the interim time really determines whether the new minister and congregation will form a solid ministry team.” (Neil Chafin, *Center for Congregational Health*).

The work of an intentional interim is a well outlined course of work over 18-24 months. This process and timeline will be developed in consultation with our Regional Elder, the coordinator for interim ministry, the Interim Pastor, and the Board.

The work of the interim is really two-fold: to clearly articulate the church’s history, identity, purpose and future, laying a solid groundwork for the permanent pastoral placement. This work will naturally involve relationship building, healing of broken relationships, and identifying needs and challenges.

“The basic approach is to lead this church through a series of experiences over a period of time that will increase the congregation’s awareness of its current realities and enlarge its understanding of the possibilities for the future.” (Eastman & Garner, *Pastoral Search Process and Timeline*, MCCSD).

General stages of the interim process include:

1. Celebrations and articulation of our history
2. Articulating a clear sense of identity and purpose
3. Increasing church leadership
4. Strengthening denominational relationships
5. Building commitments for our future

We will engage the history, identity, and future work as part of our strategic planning process. Once this work is well underway we will begin to assess our readiness for pastoral search.