

CHURCH BOARD TRAINING MANUAL

For Churches in Transition

INTERIM PASTOR MINISTRIES

STRENGTHENING CHURCHES DURING PASTORAL TRANSITION FOR GREATER EFFECTIVENESS

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PREFACE

IPM is grateful for the creative work of Dr. Dennis Baker and Dr. John Vawter on this training manual for church boards. Dennis is a long-time friend and associate of IPM. John is a new friend of IPM. Both are seasoned and effective in the arena of transitional church ministry.

Dennis has his MDiv from Western Seminary, MA from Denver Seminary and DMin from Talbot School of Theology. In addition to pastoring in Oregon, Colorado, Massachusetts and Minnesota, he ministered as a Regional Executive Director and the National Director of CBAmerica. He has consulted and coached nearly 500 churches in transition with 15 different denominations.

John has his MDiv from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and DMin from Bethel Seminary. After serving with CRU for ten years in England and the Pacific Northwest, he pastored in Minnesota and Arizona. He served as President of Western Seminary and Phoenix Seminary. He was the Intentional Interim Pastor in nine churches and consulted with many others. He is also the author of five books and a number of published articles in Christian journals.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “I will build My church.” We must never forget that it is **His** church; it is not our church. Therefore, things must be done His way if the church is to be built in a way that honors Him. His plan—after His ascension—was for the leadership of the church to move from Him to the Apostles. We see this in Acts 1:26 where the eleven cast lots to choose Judas’ replacement.

In I Timothy 3:1 the succession of leadership continues with elders in the local church. It is a “noble” task. The Apostle Paul in I Timothy 5:17 mandated a premium on excellent leadership. The book of Titus is a leadership letter for churches in transition.

So, regardless of one’s theological perspective or terminology, the character and competence of lay leadership is foundational to the building of Christ’s Church in a local church.

However, it is our experience and observation that too many board teams do not do well. They do not understand Biblical leadership. They do not understand the unity of the Spirit or following the leadership of the Spirit. They are good people; they love God; they endeavor to lead holy lives. Regardless, they are not effective leaders in helping to build Christ’s Church Christ’s way. A man for whom we have great respect said recently, “I led huge departments in a large multinational company. When I became a church board member, I assumed leadership was the same as in business. My biggest mistake was that I did not realize it is Christ’s Church...He owns it...and I needed to do things His way. This was a huge, humbling learning curve for me.”

Interim Pastoral Ministries has identified this lack of leadership. IPM is addressing, and potentially solving, the issue by asking their interim pastors to train the church boards with whom they are ministering. IPM is to be commended for their vision in tackling this issue. We applaud IPM for this decision.

- **Note:** We will use the word “board” for sake of clarity. Your governing “board” may be named the *elder board, the board of deacons, the session, the vestry, the council, the overseers, the pastor parish committee, leadership council/board/team, etc.*

It is an honor to collaborate with IPM to be part of their training process. It would be easy and a waste of time to discuss all the issues of poor leadership we have seen among church boards. Thus, we are focusing on what boardsmanship is and how to train those on boards to be solid, effective and Biblical leaders.

Section One of the Training Manual is theological and philosophical. It is theological in that we are endeavoring to give a Biblical basis for each of the Ten Core Essentials that we are discussing. It is philosophical in that we discuss proven leadership principles that are not explicitly found in the Bible. This section, including the **Practical Application** questions and recommendations, lays the framework for an Interim Pastor both individually and with board members to evaluate the effectiveness and Biblical framework for how the governing board is

functioning. An added benefit of the process is the ongoing team-building results of the board studies and interactions.

Section Two gives practical resources for implementing the theological framework laid out in Section One. We assume that the reader will peruse these practical helps and choose and use the ones that are helpful to the church you are serving.

The purpose of this work is not to discuss any one ecclesiological position or the nomenclature or structure of the governing “board.” Thus, we will not be speaking to those issues. Rather, our purpose is to create a document to help Interim Pastor Ministries and those who minister with the organization be better equipped to train the “board” to be effective Biblical leaders.

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THE TEN CORE ESSENTIALS

Which came first? The chicken or the egg? Who knows? Who cares? Today we need both for chicken dinners and egg omelets. Therefore, we salute them both.

Therefore, it is the same with wise strong leadership from both pastors and board team/governing board members. Both are vitally important. Both are needed to build and maintain strong ministries over the long haul.

Often, an intentional interim pastor inherits a situation where either the church never had a strong board or has seen its leadership dissipate over time, dissolve in disagreements, or be disrupted by personal differences. When this happens, the interim pastor faces the task of putting a training process in place to build or rebuild a healthy elder team/governing board for the future.

The purpose of this training article is to provide "Ten Core Essentials" that every intentional interim pastor can use strategically to begin to restore, build and equip a strong board. These essentials apply to churches of any size or type of leadership structure.

Later we will focus on how to choose elder team/governing board members based on core qualifications needed for healthy church governance in any polity.

1. CHRISTLIKENESS

Above all else, board team/governing board members must be born again. They must show evidence in their lives of being motivated and guided by the Biblical principles of leadership in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The absence of this core motivation will often surface with un-Christ-like conduct that will manifest itself in board meetings.

On witnessing such conduct, one interim pastor candidly told the board he was deeply troubled by the rude, aggressive, insensitive behavior at their meetings. In defense of that conduct, one member said, "Our behavior here is nothing compared to the way we deal with each other at our company." The pastor was quick to say, "Behavior that is acceptable at your company is not the standard for behavior here. The Bible is our standard and the Holy Spirit is our guide for Christ's church." With that, the pastor said boldly, "The behavior I've witnessed here must stop."

Scripture gives clear guidelines for our behavior toward one another. James 1 tells us, "Be quick to listen and slow to speak." This obedient response creates space for the Spirit of God to move freely in the midst of any meeting. The litmus test for such behavior is to ask if the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) is reflected in interaction, deliberation and discussions of the elder team/governing board members.

Sadly, many boards give lip service to such principles but do not follow them. Such boards often are controlled by one dominant personality who always has to be heard and always has to be right. In a humble, Christ-like atmosphere, the Holy Spirit does lead a church board to

wise decisions and Godly conclusions. However, there are times the Holy Spirit does not have the latitude to move because He has been quenched or grieved. Dominant, controlling personalities can push Him out. As Carl George says, "The issue is never the issue." For these people control is the issue, not ministry effectiveness. As a wise and experienced church consultant says, "What you see happening is almost never what is happening." This is why Christlikeness cannot be assumed; we must desire, crave and prayerfully pursue it together. Remember the wisdom from Bill Gray, a long-term intentional interim and coach, "Personal transformation precedes leadership transformation which precedes church transformation."

A pastor who clearly saw the need of his church to expand the facilities received a lot of opposition from people in the neighborhood. Suddenly, a piece of property next to the church's campus became available. A board meeting was held to discuss this opportunity and the option it presented. One elder said he thought the parcel was perfect for the church's expansion needs. Using it for the church's purposes would simply require reaching an agreement with the city to vacate part of a useless, dead-end street. This option, he said, would be far easier than trying to overcome the opposition from neighborhood groups.

This elder had barely finished his comments when a highly vocal, agenda-driven board member harshly attacked the idea. In a disrespectful tone of voice, he scorned the idea as foolish, without merit, and too expensive. A shocked silence filled the room when his tirade was over. The vehemence of his attack left no one willing to oppose him and face the same insults. The idea was dropped without further discussion or research. James' wisdom on the tongue in chapter 3 never happened.

The pastor's memory of that meeting is such a painful memory that he had emotional difficulty in retelling it years later. When he collected himself, he said, "In retrospect, I am ashamed of myself and the other board members. We prided ourselves on being good listeners who discussed things rationally. But in this case, the brutal negativity of one person overwhelmed us. All of us seemed to lose our bearings. None of us even suggested we at least study the idea's potential merits. Soon it was too late to buy the property. The opportunity passed us by. That's when it became clear the parcel would have perfectly met our needs. We failed because we violated a basic principle of listening to everyone and doing careful research. We capitulated to a bully and our church paid the price."

As the pastor paused, we could all feel the depths of his lingering pain. In a quiet voice he added, "I'd grown so accustomed to his abrasive behavior and so accommodating to his intimidating manner that I let it happen right in front of me. I was in charge. I should have known better and I should have done something."

A state director for the Assemblies of God told of visiting a church board meeting where the members voted to approve spending money on a ministry project. But the board's treasurer said, in effect, "You can vote all you want, but I'm not writing the check!" The state director told him on the spot the board would accept his immediate resignation. The man slammed down the check book and left. The next day the pastor thanked the director, saying the man had been getting away with that negative and controlling behavior for years.

Compare and contrast these behaviors with the church elder team where members seldom took any vote. That's because they listened to one another, they took the time to understand one another, and they honored one another.

In those cases where they could not reach a consensus, they would put the issue aside until the next month's meeting purposely to give each member time to reflect and pray privately, which the members committed themselves to do. They agreed the issue was not to be talked about outside of the meetings. Each member was faithful to reflect and pray privately before the Lord. Almost always, when they reconvened a month later, God's decision was clear to all. Why? Because each member had humbly and faithfully sought God's wisdom on the matter.

At one church, it was the pastor who was strong and dominating. Board members had told him he was like a runaway freight train barreling dangerously down the tracks. When he demonstrated that behavior, one board member learned to head it off wisely by saying, "Here comes the Choo-Choo again." Everyone would laugh, and the pastor, to his credit, would humbly accept the message and ease back on the throttle. The board had found a soft, safe, kind way to tell the leader they respected that he needed to let Christ control the moment.

Scott Ridout, the President of Converge, says, "The relationship between the pastor and the board is a beautiful mix of wisdom, support and encouragement in good times as well as accountability and stability in crisis. Yet, I have seen too much of two things: board members who do not have clearly defined roles and pastors that fail out, walk out and burn out. Healthy churches are led by healthy leaders. Healthy churches also have healthy systems of communication, evaluation, accountability and intervention."

The father of a man we know gave him some advice when he was 17 and struggling with a less than respectful boss at a part-time job. The advice: "Always see whose name is on the sign in front of the store...and learn the behavior the owner demands from his employees. If you cannot abide by the owner's rules do not take the job." It is the same with Christ's Church. It is His Church; it is not our church. He makes this abundantly clear in Matthew 16:18. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:29 that we have been "predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ." Since it is Christ's church, leaders in particular must be asking themselves these poignant questions: "Does my behavior reflect Who Jesus Christ is?" "Does our behavior as a board team reflect Jesus Christ?" Everyone serving on a board team should be growing in Christ and becoming more like Christ because of that special shepherding and leadership responsibility. If growth is not occurring, then it is possible the person was not called by God to be on the board or the board is not motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Practical Application

- 1. It is important to spell out clear standards of behaviors and procedures in the board team/governing board in the board covenant. They cannot be assumed. Be sure the board candidates understand them and agree to them. Do you have such a form? Should you have one if you do not have one? We believe every church should have one. We advise every church to have such a form. Three sample covenant forms are in the**

Important Training Resources section.

- 2. A longtime volunteer minister and friend recommends, “The board application form includes references to John 17:23 and Micah 6:8 along with the statement, ‘I commit to see the unity for which Jesus prayed. I will refrain from gossip. When I leave a board meeting I will support fully the decisions made by the Team.’” Is this your reality?**
- 3. The goal of Christ-likeness requires a board to engage in constant self-evaluation. Establish a clear procedure as to how this self-evaluation will be done. Make sure everyone agrees to cooperate with this procedure. Emphasize that these evaluations will require humble and contrite hearts and a teachable spirit by every member.**
- 4. Be clear in advance of placing anyone on the board team whose behavior is considered to be out of bounds or not in keeping with the desired spirit for conducting the ministry’s business. Any person who violates the covenant will be confronted with a view toward loving correction and spiritual growth for all involved.**
- 5. As an important exercise, when there is no pressing issue currently at stake, have the board members discuss openly how they should respond when an un-Christlike spirit manifests itself. Agree in advance on “soft, safe, kind ways” to tell fellow members when they need to improve their conduct, without giving undue offense. Put it in writing. Give each member a copy.**

2. FAITH IN GOD

We are not opposed to strong leaders. In fact, we have a strong bias to healthy leadership and the use of leadership gifts. However, strong leaders without a practical working faith in Christ do not build strong churches nor do they see the Holy Spirit powerfully at work in their midst. The very nature of faith means we rely on God’s wisdom, direction, and power as opposed to:

- How things are done elsewhere or...
- What one person thinks or...
- The abilities of one strong person or...
- Because we are doing simply what is convenient rather than what is needed. Doing things those ways are almost never doing things God’s way.

The ministry that honors Christ is not based on fear: fear of the past or fear of the future. Fear of the past includes retrenching and making certain a group does not make the mistakes it made in the past. Speaker Les Brown says it well: “Too many of us are not living our dreams because we are living our fears.” A life of faith for the future is not controlled by past mistakes—although we should learn from them. The Apostle Paul summarizes his journey and God’s framework in Philippians 3:12-16.

Fear of the future means we are looking ahead with a sense of dread, depression, and negativity about what is still uncertain, rather than with confidence and anticipation of what God wants to do, is doing, and will do in our midst

Moving forward in faith does not mean being unrealistic. Just the opposite. True faith faces the facts clearly and honestly. However, we cannot demonstrate Biblical faith unless we, like Peter, look to Christ, ignore the storm, get out of the safety of the boat, and go boldly toward Him.

It is so easy just to “do church” and “going on doing what’s always been done” instead of thinking creatively and acting boldly in genuine faith. Just doing good things is not faith. We are not against excellence. But, doing good things with excellence is not necessarily faith. Excellence by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the issue.

The message of Hebrews 11:6 is bluntly clear: “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Without such faith, too many churches are exactly like the village Matthew 13:58 described where Jesus did not and could not do many miracles in their midst because of their “lack of faith.”

True faith requires us to move beyond the point where we now find ourselves. It requires a deep, soul-searching, realistic appraisal of ourselves as individuals and as a group. Such an appraisal is hard work that requires both unsparing honesty and deep humility.

A high school classmate urgently needed open heart surgery to correct a genetic defect. Physically, she was in great shape. She was a Pilates instructor with boundless energy who walked many miles every day. After the operation, her surgeon gave her a special award as the patient who had worked hardest and most faithfully in her rehabilitation program. Sadly, most of his patients, he said, do no rehab work at all. Or, if they find it difficult or painful, they quickly give up. Instead, they passively expect the doctor somehow to do what needs to be done for them. A cardiologist friend agreed, saying: “At least 50% of my patients do none of the rehabilitation work I prescribe.”

So, in church as in surgery, the human tendency is to try to take the easy way out. Acting on faith is seldom easy. On the board level, moving forward in faith can easily be crowded out by talking too long and praying too little. Instead, board members too often rely on their own abilities to think and act instead of trusting the Lord in all of their ways, leaning not on their own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

CRU President Steve Douglass says, “If something can be done in our own power and with our own abilities, it isn’t faith.”

Therefore, key questions a board or pastor must ask are: “What are our expectations? What do we want God to accomplish through our church? Are we being serious about Jesus’ command in Acts 1:8 to be His witnesses to ‘the uttermost parts of the world.’?”

Another foundational expression of this responsibility is for the board leadership team to hold the pastor accountable (who in turn holds the staff team accountable) to guarantee the commitment to the spiritual health and growth of the church through regular, systematic, candid and Christ-honoring evaluations. The lay leaders cannot know every aspect of the

ministry, but it is their imperative responsibility to know that the pastor knows how to evaluate and grow the spiritual depth of the church's ministry. The evaluation of the ministry is absolutely essential and cannot be avoided, forgotten or downplayed.

One easy substitute for faith in God is to put our faith in others. For example, one church board considered offering their pastor a \$1,000,000 bonus---\$100,000 per year above his salary---if he would stay for ten years. They considered making this extravagant offer because they feared the church would decline without him. Thankfully, a consultant friend helped them see their lack of faith in God in considering the offer. They did not succumb to that temptation.

Sadly, the dean of an evangelical seminary privately told John he tolerated a mean-spirited, egotistical, divisive professor because he thought the professor drew students to the seminary.

It is hard to see any semblance of faith in such situations.

Furthermore, we know of a pastor (now retired) who did not like to confront. So, he failed to conduct any kind of performance reviews of the staff. The ministry staff essentially did what they wanted, without accountability. We understand the ministry draws many different personality styles—both as clergy and volunteers. But, the amiable personality pastor must practice faith and do the work of the leader. In the situation above, the pastor did not live by faith by asking God's strength and power in the midst of a difficult responsibility and require accountability from the ministry staff who reported to him.

Consequently, the interim faced significant resistance when he started doing reviews, asking for details and clarification about how church time and money were spent, etc. When unhealthy situations are allowed to go uncorrected under one pastor, an interim pastor is likely to face great resistance and deep resentment when he attempts to impose necessary accountability standards of ministry work effort. Nevertheless, the interim pastor must do what is right and Godly even if it is not easy.

Practical Application

- 1. Discuss how following your church ministry traditions and merely doing good things can be different from moving forward in genuine faith.**
- 2. Discuss Steve Douglass' statement about anything we can do in our own strength is not true faith. Does this principle apply to your current ministry?**
- 3. What are areas in your ministry where you do not demonstrate Biblical God-centered faith?**
- 4. What practical steps can you take to exercise more faith in your board meetings and in leadership of your church?**
- 5. Far too many board meetings have been dominated by bullies. Have your experienced**

and tolerated such behavior in your board meetings? How will you address this issue?

3. HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Honesty and integrity are cardinal elements of pastoral and board leadership. Christlike leadership is impossible to live out unless both virtues are present among the church's leaders. These are bedrock characteristics on which trust is built.

Both virtues begin and end with submission to Christ's Lordship over our lives. Paul assures us in Romans 8:29 "that we have been predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ." Therefore, we should regularly be asking the Father and asking ourselves if we are reflecting the image of Christ as individuals and as a board, since we are under His authority.

In Matthew 5:37 Jesus boiled down those qualities of honesty and integrity to the simple authenticity of the words we speak: "Let your yes be yes, and let your no be no." In John 1:14 we are told Jesus was "full of grace and truth." He always spoke the truth even when He knew the receiver would not listen or would react negatively. Grace and truth are close partners to honesty and integrity, and a person exhibiting all of these will stand out in any crowd.

The fact is we all walk around in bodies that are "earth suits of imperfection." We tacitly understand that, but do we accept it? If we are not making positive progress in honestly acknowledging our imperfections and asking God to change us, we need to do so. While not for beginners, service as pastors and leaders can be an excellent setting to grow in our lives by allowing fellow board members to help spur us on in Christ-like growth and behavior.

Too many board members carry their egos and their personal insecurities into board ministry. They are oblivious to their lack of Christ-likeness. The result is behavior that is the antithesis of the fruit of the Spirit. Even in the secular boardroom their behavior would be scorned. The list of non-direct, less than candid, divisive and destructive behavior is long:

- Domination of others rather than service to others
- Tearing each other down rather than building each member of the team
- A cowardly unwillingness to confront rather than a holy boldness to hold others lovingly accountable
- Lack of respect for different personality types and varied leadership styles
- Holding "private meetings after the board meetings" to grumble about grievances and disagreements, instead of forthrightly speaking one's mind in the meeting itself
- Talking negatively about people who are not present at the meetings.

As previously noted, without the basic bedrock of personal honesty and integrity, the ministry at stake will never have a firm foundation upon which to build something that truly honors Christ and advances the Kingdom of God.

The late Christian counselor, Dr. Ray Burwick, once said: "Some of the smartest people who come to see me are also the best liars. They pay money to sit for 60 minutes and then lie

because they do not want to truly face their own weaknesses.” He sadly added, “I’ve seen Christian leaders with all the characteristics of an alcoholic. They fervently deny they have any problems, but they have no idea how damaging their actions are to those around them. What is their addiction? It is power and control. For them, the Bible is merely a sourcebook for their sermons, not a guidebook for their lives.”

A Scriptural truth often neglected by leaders and congregations alike is that of grieving the Holy Spirit, as noted in Ephesians 4:30. Any behavior that is disrespectful of others and does not honor Jesus is as deeply saddening to the Holy Spirit as any overt sin we might commit. Actions and attitudes that grieve the Holy Spirit are telltale signals that we are not following His lead. It is highly unlikely He will bless such ministries in the ways the Lord truly wants to empower.

A consultant was hired by a church to evaluate the interaction among its board members. After observing the board’s behavior for a few hours, the consultant looked directly at one member and said bluntly, “Sir, you are the problem here. You should resign.”

When the member fully expressed his indignation, the consultant did not flinch. He allowed no room for misunderstanding. “You are a bully. You show no respect for your fellow board members. And worst of all, you are blocking the moving of the Holy Spirit at the leadership level of this church.” The other members gasped at the unequivocal bluntness of this confrontation, but then quietly admitted the consultant was correct. They had all harbored the same opinion but had been too afraid to say so openly.

Here again, we see the destructive results of a failure to deal with un-Christlike conduct by just one board member. The fact is, “we all have blind spots and most everyone sees them but us.” We all have flaws of character and negative quirks of personality that everyone else can see, yet we usually choose to ignore them or rationalize them away, always giving ourselves the benefit of every doubt. We so easily fool ourselves. Nevertheless, others can so easily see what we are hiding from ourselves. That means we need others to be honest with us. We need them to candidly and kindly tell us how they see us and how we are perceived by others.

It is incumbent, then, that fellow board members be truthful with other board members. Being a truth teller is seldom easy. Telling the truth in a healing not hurtful way is even harder. Yet, we need to get beyond fearing that the very truth we need to speak might hurt feelings or create a backlash against us. But Scripture always has the best advice for all our personal interactions. Its instructions about what to say and how to say it always produce maximum positive results. That advice in Ephesians 4:15 is simply this: “Speak the truth to one another in love---and so grow up into Christ.”

We all recognize it is not always easy to tell the truth...if we think our opinions are going to hurt someone else’s feelings. As we seek to walk in the light with our fellow board members, we come to a point of mutual trust that each member is not seeking their own agenda, but God’s agenda for the church. We think of a national ministry where an outside consultant discovered there were “private meetings after the meetings” because some disagreed with the direction in which the president was taking the ministry. Unethically, these members refused to fulfill their

responsibility to express their true opinions in the very setting in which such disagreements were meant to be raised and resolved. Sadly, they would not tell the president in board meetings. The result was the Spirit's displeasure with such behavior and the subsequent demise of the ministry.

In another situation, a board member would not tell the interim pastor in board meetings that he disagreed with the assessments of the interim pastor...yet he openly told board and staff members outside the board meetings. It is our contention that his lack of candor is the same as dishonesty. It certainly is a lack of integrity. It also shows great disrespect not only for the one with whom he disagrees but also for the entire board.

We recall a situation where a veteran pastor said, "Silence is perceived as assent." In the case of the board member above who remained silent with his disagreements with the interim pastor's assessments, he did not lie. Though the member disagreed, he kept his sentiments to himself in the meetings. In doing so, he did not manifest integrity. By refusing to tell the interim pastor he disagreed with him, the board never got the opportunity to hear the two good men discuss the interim pastor's assessments and decide whether or not the assessments were correct. Such discussions refine the thinking and the decision-making ability of the board. This is why we contend that honesty and integrity go hand in hand.

These are just a few examples of why honesty and integrity are so essential to the maximum health of a church. These two qualities cannot be on an altar of expediency or compromised. "Truth and love cannot be separated," writes John Stott, who calls such a combination "truthing." **The Message of Ephesians in The Bible Speaks Today, pages 171-172.** In this age of deception and lying at every level, it is more critically important than ever to always follow the Biblical mandate to "speak the truth in love." Someone said, "Both what we say and how we say it are equally and vitally important."

Practical Application

- 1. Have an honest discussion about what honesty and integrity mean to you as a group. You may need to examine if you know and like each other. Otherwise, you won't be honest and tell the truth to one another.**
- 2. Do an honest evaluation, both personally and as a group, of your board interactions to see if you are conducting yourselves as people of honesty and integrity who honor and reflect Christ in your board meetings. Do this in the context of looking at Micah 6:8, Matthew 23:23 and 1 Peter 5:6. This is not the time to be "polite but not honest." Be honest and polite. Only truth in this assessment will help the group grow.**

- 3. Ask the entire group to share candidly how they see you as a person of honesty and integrity---both the strong points and the points of needed improvement. The key word here is “listen.” Without interruption. Without defending. Without explaining. Without internally resisting or reacting. Humble your heart and just listen. When you do, you will grow.**
- 4. Recall situations where you have remained quiet and let someone think your silence was assent or agreement when in fact you disagreed and should have said so.**
- 5. Name specific areas where you know you could grow in the personal areas of honesty and integrity.**

4. HUMILITY

What is Jesus really like?

“I am gentle and humble in heart” Jesus says in Matthew 11:29.

The Apostle Paul uses these descriptive truths in Philippians 2:5 to tell us what kind of people we should be, writing, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset and the same attitude as Christ Jesus.”

This type of Christ-like humility, then, should mark the character and make the difference in the life and work of church leaders.

As the two writers of this training manual, we have been going to grocery stores all our lives. Obviously, that does not mean we know how to organize a grocery store or how to run one. Yet some think because they have been going to church for years, they know how to run and lead a church.

That superficial level of knowledge can be helpful, but it’s rarely enough to qualify anyone for leadership. The leadership of a church, regardless of size, is complex, demanding and not easy.

Genuinely humble leaders willingly admit they don’t know everything and are open to learn from others. When such humility is absent, trouble always awaits not far ahead.

C.S. Lewis wisely said, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”

Genuine humility is not refusing to put one’s thoughts forward. Rather, genuine humility helps the leader to know that his strength and wisdom come from the Lord. It is in that spirit that wisdom, suggestions, questions and experience are presented. The person who does not speak “because of his humility” is not actually humble but is degrading the Holy Spirit Who created him as he is—with the wisdom and insights he has to share.

Genuine humility frees us to acknowledge that leading a church as God desires is much more than we can handle on our own. We freely confess we don't have all the answers and we need help from others. For those who are successful in other areas of their lives outside the church, this is often difficult to do.

A man on a church committee was clearly trying to be the "controlling boss." When challenged in private by his pastor, he said, "I'm the president at work and people listen to me; I expect the same response at church." The pastor quickly responded, "You are not the president here. Jesus is. And, I am the senior vice-president." Point made. Hopefully, point taken.

Humility frees us to ask others for help because we admit we do not know everything. At one church, for example, where the pastor had stumbled morally, the leadership was adrift, not knowing what to think or what to do. They desperately needed help. But in this case, they were too proud to accept it.

An elder board of a church over 1000 miles away had recently dealt with the same painful problem. That board graciously offered to send an elder to share with the church's board how they had successfully handled their terrible problem. In addition, a member of the church was editing a book on the restoration of fallen believers. With the author's permission, the editor offered to give the book to the bewildered board. Both gestures of help were rejected. The result? Within 18 months, the floundering church with the board apparently too proud to accept help had closed its doors. Whatever the term you choose...pride, arrogance, stubbornness, ignorance or lack of humility...it will lead to a fall in any area of life—and it will devastate many lives when the board chooses to act in that manner.

Practical Application

- 1. Do a study on the Biblical meaning of humility. Do a study on the humility of Christ. Start with Philippians 2.**
- 2. Conduct an honest appraisal of your board and its members. Are you humble? Do you conduct your meetings in humility? Do you treat one another with humility?**
- 3. Discuss the fact that humility does not mean we let others walk on us and denigrate us. How will you practice this Biblical mandate?**
- 4. Is it hard to acknowledge that in spite of how many years you have been in church that leading the ministry is much more complex than you ever imagined?**
- 5. Do you acknowledge that your church cannot influence your community as it should without the Spirit of God leading, directing, and empowering the effort?**

5. UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Unity of the Spirit is essential in board team/governing board leadership. Again, we are not talking about being a board of directors. We are talking about Christian people charged to discern the will of God for the church they are serving. It is our conviction that “the mind of Christ” cannot be discerned without genuine unity of the Spirit among the church’s leadership.

Lack of genuine biblical togetherness kills the unity of the Spirit. It is inconceivable that the Spirit is going to reveal His mind to a group of leaders who defy the Biblical principle of Philippians 2:3-4, where Paul writes, “in humility value others as above yourselves...and looking out for the interests of others.” In being united among ourselves, we are mirroring the mystery and the power of the unity that exists among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Many historical forces have shaped the modern hierarchical leadership culture that the world uses and that many churches have adopted wholesale. Also, strong leaders of the past in local churches have shaped a leadership culture that mimics worldly rather than Godly values of leadership. Boards will continue practicing a familiar and comfortable leadership culture, even though it is not a servant-leadership style that honors Christ. They refuse to step back and critically evaluate the leadership culture they have chosen, rather than do the hard work necessary to choose and change to a radically different culture. Thus, many church boards function as “boards of directors” rather than as Christ-like leaders working together in a Christ-like manner. This is a painful reality.

Unity in Christ cannot be achieved if we don’t take the time to know each other. A new pastor and his staff, for example, held an “appreciation luncheon” for two elders who were leaving the board after serving together for three years. The pastor was shocked to overhear the two men asking each other what their occupations were among a host of other personal questions. Think of it! Three years together on the same board and they were just making surface-level discoveries. Both of them were good men, always superficially cordial to each other, but there had been little, if any, true unity of the Spirit between them because basic team building was never practiced.

Another example of lack of unity of spirit occurred after one member was appointed chair of the newly formed future ministry team. Another board member openly questioned the discernment and leadership capabilities of his fellow elder. His question was a fair one...but it was raised at a meeting when the newly appointed chair was not present. This was a clear violation of the principles of unity.

That bit of ugliness, it turns out, was only the tip of that board’s disunity problems. An outside study of the board revealed more than half of the elders had been talking negatively about other elders when they were not present. One church consultant pointedly compares backbiting within a board to infidelity within a marriage. Such behavior cancels and crushes any possibility of the unity of the Spirit, which is a board’s true source of authority.

Possibly the most egregious example of a board lacking the unity of the Spirit was when an interim was meeting the board after the search committee had selected him. In a discussion, the chair said to the interim, in front of the entire board, “You will be accountable to me.” The

interim was experienced and honest. He answered, “No, I am not accountable to you or any other board member. I am accountable to the entire board.” Sadly, not only was the chair able to get away with such behavior before the arrival of the interim but the board allowed such behavior. This destructive dysfunction was the antithesis of the unity of the Spirit.

Compare these examples of dysfunction and disunity to the members of one exceptional church board who never forced issues and made sure everyone’s opinion was heard and understood. There was no interrupting. Difficult issues were tabled for a season of private prayer. Moreover, there were no private side meetings to discuss the issue prior to the next meeting. They intentionally instituted this procedure in order for each member to discern, without pressure or influence, what the Spirit wanted to say to each one in private. This is an example of the kind of trust it takes for a team to walk together in true unity.

The board is to work as a cohesive team, and cohesion is not natural among humans. It is impossible for a board to attain the unity of the Spirit in ways not consistent with the spirit of unity above. Only as board members individually submit themselves to the Spirit can they achieve oneness that will glorify God and lead the church down the paths He has set for it.

Personal Application

- 1. Think seriously, both as individuals and as a group, about these questions: “What is the unity of the Spirit?” “Do we have the unity of the Spirit among our board members?” “Is the unity of the Spirit present in our meetings?” “Are we a unified team?” If not, why not? If so, how can it be strengthened?**
- 2. Honestly assess if you have experienced and tolerated divisive behavior in your board meetings and among your board members. If so, what are the solutions to such behavior? What procedure needs to be put in place to hold each other accountable to your board covenant?**
- 3. Consultant John Purcell (www.transform-coach.com) asks these questions of boards who truly want to be led by the Spirit:**
 - A. Are you serving together in deep relationships or are you holding “business meetings”?**
 - B. Does your pastor come out of your board meetings feeling loved, supported, and energized or does he feel frustration, discouragement, and a debilitating spirit of conflict?**
- 4. Earlier we described a rancorous board meeting in which one member said to a shocked interim pastor, “This is nothing compared to how we treat each other at our company.” Does this story in any way resemble how your board treats each other? If so, what needs to be done about it?**

5. **One church leader says it this way, “Without unity on mission and vision there is no hope for effective ministry success.” Do you agree with him? How can you grow in unity on your board team? Have you differentiated between unity, unanimity and uniformity?**

6. SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness requires a courageous willingness to take a candid look at yourselves individually and at your board collectively to see where improvements need to be made and where mid-course corrections need to be taken.

The Apostle Paul gives clear instructions to guide us in this matter in Romans 12:3 when he writes, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”

Pride and arrogance are the enemies of the soul...and the soul of a church board. Jesus also spoke about rigorous self-examination when He said we are to take the log out of our own eye before we take the speck out of our brother’s eye in Matthew 7:5.

Another church board had a long history of tolerating members who were perpetually dishonest with each other. Of course, they would not think of themselves or describe themselves as being deceitful and dishonest. Nevertheless, they would consistently fail to admit when they disagreed with others on the board. Instead, they would talk behind one another’s backs. This meant they would never reach hard decisions that required brutal mutual honesty. Any rigorous self-evaluation by this board would have revealed this dysfunctional practice. Now, years later, this board still shows no sign of willingness to engage in critical self-examination or to take any action to correct the problems that are hindering the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst and in their church. This is why we adamantly recommend the principle and practice of “peer review.” We believe an annual review by “outside eyes” working with the board and board members is as important to the life of the church as the annual review of the senior pastor.

A prominent cardiologist once described his exasperation with a patient who never listened and always did all the talking. “This patient seems to think he knows more about the human heart than his doctor does.” The patient was completely unwilling to listen or learn.

How often do dysfunctional church boards refuse to listen to the diagnosis and prognosis of The Great Physician?

It is true for both persons and boards; no one can accurately judge oneself. This is why boards will benefit greatly if they are willing to invite “outside eyes” to evaluate the way they work. Such an evaluation will focus on the type and level of interaction within and between the church’s board and staff members. Again, this underlines the value of peer reviews whether self-directed or outside consultant directed.

These evaluations are seldom easy and are rarely comfortable for those involved. Even so, it is imperative for boards to avoid acting like the cardiologist's patient who would not listen to what the cardiologist needed to say about his heart. Understand that "outside eyes" can only diagnose clearly if board members are open and honest about the way things truly are. And when they are honest, true breakthroughs in that church's life can occur quickly.

Self-awareness necessarily involves not only knowing our strengths but also facing our limitations. This is why one elder deserves great respect for going directly to his pastor and announcing his resignation. This reason? The church was growing rapidly in both numbers and finances. The elder explained that the church was simply getting too big for his ability to be helpful. His gift was dealing with people one-on-one in a smaller context. Though the pastor was saddened to lose the elder, he also recognized that the elder was correct in his self-assessment. He was most effective for the Kingdom of God in a smaller, more personal setting.

The Bible is silent about term limits for board members. But any church leader at any level who truly puts the best interests of the ministry above self will not want to remain in that role for too long. Any responsible and Godly leader would not want to become a negative, neutral, or ineffective contributor who is not helping achieve the church's ministry mission and vision.

Dr. Kevin Meyer has wise insights into how boards get to a place where they do not do any self-examination and are unwilling to do so. His insights are forged from extensive pastoral ministry. He said, "We develop patterns of caring for ourselves and protecting ourselves. These patterns later become self-centered prisons that keep us from intimacy with Christ and others."

These perceptive insights help us understand how good people on boards **can** move away from the Christ-like behavior of honoring one another, listening to one another, and acknowledging what others say when even when disagreeing with what is said. A veteran interim pastor writes of his observations of this happening: "This group of good men who loved Christ subtly began to dishonor one another. There was a strong voice, and an accomplice, in the group. If someone made an informed insightful comment with which they disagreed, that person's comment was ignored or belittled. Others seemed not to want to disagree with the strong voices, so they remained quiet." It was a self-deception and denial of the truth...it was a blatant disregard for Paul's principle to "consider others as more important than yourself" in Philippians 2:3. In actuality, the men were avoiding the truth both personally and corporately.

In highly conflicted churches, a board is consistently at odds. Therefore, the intentional interim pastor might require the liberty and granted authority to reshape the board, including the removal of board members. Some churches add "borrowed board members" from healthy churches for better perspective and to accelerate the healing/learning curve.

An alternate term for self-awareness might be the less intimidating concept "refreshing one's self as individuals and as a board." We all need to "refresh" ourselves. Boards, too, need a regular refreshing. We suggest boards do this by scheduling regular retreats. The purpose, beyond some essential fun, is to evaluate relationships by assessing and monitoring the level of honesty and integrity within the team. Of course, in these meetings it is helpful to invite an

outside resource person who is skilled in challenging groups to take a hard look at who they are and how they act. Once again, this is part of the peer review process.

Consider what the Apostle Paul admitted about himself in Romans 7:21-22---namely, that he had not yet attained what he needed to attain, he had not reached the point of perfection that he needed to reach, he still did things he should not do and did not do things he should do. In fact, in Romans 7:24 Paul flatly confessed, "I am a wretched man." Even so, Paul boldly exclaimed that he had an overriding positive goal in his life, which was forgetting the past, straining forward toward the future and pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God had called him as expressed in Philippians 3:14.

If the Apostle Paul was not satisfied with his spiritual growth, yet he was determined to press forward toward better things, it follows that boards should keep looking at themselves to guarantee they do not fall into passive satisfaction. They need to evaluate regularly where they are and with the way they function. Lethargic ruts and lazy routines do not glorify Christ. Toleration of dysfunctional interactions and hypocritical relationships will never move a church forward in the work of God's Kingdom ministry. Thus, there is value in "refreshing" one's self and the board on a regular basis.

Practical Application

- 1. In your leadership culture, is self-examination easy or is it non-existent? If non-existent, why? Is there fear? How much ego is involved?**
- 2. We recommend the board chair ask each board member to write down one thought as to where the board can improve. Then share and discuss what each person wrote down. The mature response is to listen, understand, and discuss each person's recommendation. If the response is defensive, it is generally a symptom of spiritual immaturity. The board should then consider adopting a new willingness to grow in Christ and in the conduct of their leadership roles.**
- 3. Discuss Dr. Kevin Meyer's thoughts about lapsing into self-satisfied protection of the *status quo*. Do his insights apply, in any way, to your board and church's ministry?**
- 4. Where do you find "outside eyes" to evaluate the functioning of your board and your church ministries? Are you willing to have "outside eyes" look at what you are doing?**
- 5. John Purcell www.transform-coach.com asks these questions:**
 - A. Is the board responsible for program or policy? What exactly are the definitions of program and policy?**
 - B. How much detail on programs and policies should the board get into?**
 - C. Is there a difference between the role of the board as a whole and the roles of the individuals on the board as they serve in roles within the organization?**
 - D. Are your meetings too long?**

7. KINGDOM VISION PEOPLE...SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

Godly and effective big picture leaders understand that Christ has a big vision for His Church. They discern and grasp how the Lord's global vision applies to their local situation. And, they have the awesome and holy responsibility to make sure the pastor and the staff clearly understand, articulate and communicate the church's Vision, Values, Mission, and Strategy. Moreover, they can evaluate how well the local vision is being fulfilled and what mid-course corrections need to be made when the church falls short of fulfilling its mission.

Jesus told the twelve in Acts 1:8 they would "receive power" when the Holy Spirit came and be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in surrounding Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. In Matthew 28: 19-20 He specifically commanded them to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Therefore, with this "outward focus" Jesus has already established the vision. It is explicitly clear, involving evangelizing, baptizing, and instructing. For this holy purpose, God establishes local churches and spiritual communities of believers throughout the earth.

Sadly, some church boards rarely, if ever, treat Jesus' commands as the highest priorities in their discussions, debates, deliberations, and decisions. The downward pull of institutional thinking is deadly to Christ's mission and vision for His Church. One experienced interim pastor explicitly told the board, "In all the time I've been with you, I've never heard you discuss your 'Jerusalem.' I've never heard you ask how many people are coming to Christ and or even if anyone came to Christ on Easter." Rather, that group of elders, like so many, seemed more concerned about such things as the forms for staff reviews, the details of the search team's work, the names of potential candidates, etc. These were all issues and responsibilities that had been delegated and yet some elders wanted to keep being involved in them.

A sign taped to the inside of a window of a business that did go bankrupt read, "We went out of business, because we forgot what our business was." Unfortunately, many churches, have also forgotten what Christ's mandate for *their business* is.

The reality is such boards are simply not concerned about Christ's directives. One church leader said, "If Christian businessmen were no more concerned about the bottom line of their businesses as they are about how their church is fulfilling Christ's objectives, their businesses would quickly go bankrupt."

When 'big picture' people are absent from a board, the board's typical fallback position is to busy itself with *ad nauseum* discussions of issues that should have been delegated to staff. Rather than recognizing and admitting its failures in matters that count, the board focuses on secondary issues that divert their energy from fulfilling, much less finding, their true purpose as a board. One board member actually took pride in not being a 'big picture' person. "I'm on this board to represent the church's seniors," he said---even though the board had no such specified representation.

The principles of Kingdom vision and 'big picture' people cannot be emphasized enough. The Bible is clear: "For God so loved the world...you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world." (John 3:16 and Acts 1:8) God sent His Son for the entire world. Jesus died for the entire world. Thus, we must be making certain that our vision is what He wants it to be. We cannot be content with any less. We do not honor God with an unfocused, limited or parochial vision.

Practical Application

- 1. What are the Biblical principles and the Biblical vision on which your church was founded?**
- 2. Do those founding principles and that vision still guide what you are doing? How so? How not so? Do all current board members agree with the principles and vision?**
- 3. Are there specific areas in the church where these Biblical principles have become secondary? Is the current leadership consumed with discussions about details and trivia that are not board issues or that are diverting attention from larger issues?**
- 4. If those principles are no longer the church's guiding light, how do you propose to get back on track with God's purpose for your church?**
- 5. How do we make sure these visionary ideas are not from a headstrong or dynamic person but from the Spirit of God? Are we asking God for audacious directions? Is it wrong to evaluate, measure, and recalibrate if necessary? How will we take the first step to move forward in faith?**

8. SHEPHERD LEADERS NOT JUST DIRECTORS

In this section, we are not concerned about the form of a church's leadership---that is, what boards are named, the length of terms, lifetime vs. rotating membership, etc. Rather, what is most important here is what the leadership *does*. For convenience, we will sometimes use the terms elder and deacon.

The account of the first days of the church given to us in Acts 6:1-4, offer excellent guidelines for defining the roles of church leaders. "In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic 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 and sisters, 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.'"

The principles guiding the proper division of tasks, duties, and responsibilities for a church's leadership are very simple: The elders are to focus their time and energy on prayer and the Word of God. The elders are to leave the daily practical operations of the ministry to the people gifted specifically by the Holy Spirit for those important tasks. These gifted people are to be selected from capable, conscientious people whom the Spirit of God has gifted for their down-to-earth roles. Elders are to focus on direct ministry in the lives of the church body. The special servants (deacons) are to focus on supporting the elders and the church through practical service, wise administration and the handling of important ministry details.

It is important that administrative, fiduciary, legal, governance and ministry responsibilities be met. They cannot be neglected. To repeat: it is the responsibility of the board to guarantee they are met...by recruiting and placing gifted people in these areas. (See the **Important Training Resources** section entitled "Board Members and Board of Director Responsibilities" for specifics.) It is the responsibility of the board team/governing board to make sure those responsibilities are met. However, the precedent established in Acts 6 was to find people "full of the Spirit and wisdom" who can assume and fulfill these responsibilities. If the church has an executive pastor, the board team must trust him with these duties. We cannot emphasize this strongly enough—board activities and meetings, which include the pastor, are about prayer, the Word, reaching the community for Christ and expanding the ministry. They should not focus on minutia, details, staff review forms, paint color on the walls, etc. The board team must trust others to focus on the serving of the church through service, administration and important details with appropriate patterns of authority and accountability.

Far too many church boards are not fulfilling their sacred duty of shepherding their flock---making sure each sheep is well nourished and safe, using their gifts, and not being lost in the brambles of life. "After all, that's what we are paying the pastors to do!" some say or think. In fact, some board members do not intend to minister spiritually to the members of their church, nor do they have a "big picture" mindset needed to lead the church. Yet, they are allowed to join the board team and remain passive and impotent their entire term of office. This failure leads inevitably to a board that is derelict and ineffective in their most important responsibility. Members of the board must keep reminding themselves and one another of the Biblical mandate for the church leaders on the board.

When a church board is caught up in the minutia of church administration, it takes its eye off the ball and thus robs the church of spiritual nurture and leadership. Such a board is neither thinking nor praying about the "Big Picture" or the individual sheep in their care. Such members take up space on the board and prevent effective people from serving the church according to their unique giftedness.

A board team/governing board unconcerned about its church's fulfillment of the Great Commission will produce a congregation of people which is equally uninvolved in the task. The church will become ingrown and self-absorbed. The community and the outside world suffer due to the lack of effective ministry because Christ-followers are not being taught, disciplined, equipped, encouraged, and sent/deployed to use their giftedness for God's primary purposes.

In quick summary, Biblical local church leaders are to lead the church to think evangelistically, have compassion for those who do not know Christ in their community, develop disciples who reproduce other disciples and empower members of the flock for ministry service according to their unique giftedness. They are to delegate purposely the administrative details of the church to persons gifted in those areas.

Practical Application

- 1. Think through your church structures and systems. Are they designed so your board can focus on shepherding the flock with prayer and the Word? Are they designed for others to minister to the practical needs of the church by performing specific ministry and administrative tasks?**
- 2. Can each one of your board members describe to the other members how they are devoting themselves to prayer and to the Word and, thus, regularly shepherding, discipling, equipping and helping the people of the church to grow spiritually?**
- 3. Does your board have the discipline and love to correct one another when someone starts to steer the rest of the board away from the primary mission of reaching the lost, growing in Christ and guarding the spiritual welfare of the flock?**
- 4. We recommend that someone record what percentage of time of each board meeting is spent on the tasks and responsibilities of prayer, study in the Word, and the duty of shepherding/discipling/protecting your flock and evangelizing your Jerusalem. That record will reveal where the board's true priorities are and what corrections need to be made. If more time is spent on minutia than on ministry, the board team is out of focus. An agenda assists in maintaining focus on what really matters.**
- 5. Have you as board members taken the time to study Acts 6, I Timothy 3 & 5, and Titus 1 together? It would be wise to do so, even if it is a review.**

9. CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES

The late Dr. Howard Hendricks, distinguished professor at Dallas Seminary, taught about what he called "Roles, Rules, and Relationships." Dr. Hendricks said we church leaders falsely assume we will have good relationships simply because we are believers. The truth, however, is that it is mutual agreement on roles and rules that establishes and protects good relationships. It is clearly defined roles and rules within any board, among board members, and within the church organization that will help guarantee that good will and good relationships prevail. The Trinity is the model for this.

Boards and pastors have many practices and principles on which they need to mutually agree. To reach such agreement requires honest discussions and careful deliberation. Policies and practices must never be imposed by strong-willed members with loud voices but by respectful consensus among all voices. It is a great mistake for individual board members to come to a church ministry and attempt to project their past ministry experiences or relationships onto the present ministry. Boards function best when all members understand the roles and rules...how decisions are made; how business is conducted; how God's mind is discerned; and how changes are suggested, discussed, agreed upon or discarded so that no one thinks their input is minor or unimportant.

Some suggestions for understanding clear roles, rules and relationships are:

- Staff reports go to the senior pastor or executive pastor, not to the board or to any one board member.
- There must be no "meetings after the meetings" and corrective measures must be in place if this rule is violated.
- Board members must deliberately work at being "**quick to listen and slow to speak**" in board meetings. The chair facilitates these conversations and maintains the climate.
- Board members must not allow staff members to come to them to talk privately about the senior/lead pastor or executive pastor.
- Interruptions and unkind behavior must not be allowed in board meetings and should quickly be discouraged if such behavior occurs.
- Board members must agree to speak up candidly but gently when someone says something with which they disagree. They must commit themselves to openly acknowledging and expressing their different perspectives.
- Board members must agree not to let parishioners speak negatively about a staff member when the staff member is not present. The board member should arrange a structured meeting. The parishioner will share directly and personally communicate his/her concerns to the staff member in a context controlled by the elder. A "Processing our Differences" policy is essential for this to be accomplished effectively.
- The board chair facilitates and maintains this climate for open, honest, wise, appropriate and loving conversation and substantive interaction. All board members are responsible for maintaining these principles.

Practical Application

- 1. Discuss how your board and your church could benefit from thinking through "Roles, Rules and Relationships."**
- 2. Are there ways you are projecting your past ministry experiences onto the present ministry? Have you ever done so, even with the best of intentions, without discussing what you have done with the board? Do you need to reach a fresh agreement on how things will be done?**

3. **Have board members improperly involved themselves in the operation, direction and oversight of the church staff? If so, what corrections will be made to foster governance that is more effective?**
4. **John Purcell www.transform-coach.com asks these questions:**
 - A. **Is there any lack of clarity of the roles of your board and staff?**
 - B. **Is the pastor responsible for results, is the board, or are both?**

Note: Consult the “Who Leads?” instrument in Important Training Resources.
5. **One church leader says, “Preachers preach and singers sing...and the two should not try to do the ministry of the other.” Can this little phrase help you know how to set roles and rules in your church in order to protect the relationships?**

10. COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION

We live in the age of instant global communication. Yet breakdowns in communication among boards, staffs and congregations happen too often. And, the reality is nobody ever gets it right enough... but it must be done.

Simply put, there is no such thing as a board or staff giving “too much communication” to the church body. At a minimum, a church’s leadership should be sending email news (or USPS mail to those members who do not have access to the internet) to their people every week.

Further, it is important for the pastor and board chair to communicate regularly with the congregation. This action reemphasizes and refocuses on the church’s vision and mission.

Here are a few principles church leaders have shared about their email and digital blasts.

- Communication cannot be more effective than its source.
- Communication should communicate a good heart.
- Communication should live out the Golden Rule.
- Communication should inform and enlighten.
- Communication should build friendly relationships.
- Communication should be done in the context of your own church family.
- Communication using social media (Instagram, You Tube, Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.) is important. Its use depends on the leadership style of the staff and church sociographics and demographics.

It is important to recognize that the website is the #1 picture window into the life and fabric of a church by those who want to learn about your church. It is the first impression to a generation that connects visually and aurally. You have one chance to make a good first impression. Therefore, it is important to stay current with colors, themes, fonts, formats, and even background music.

Please notice in this section entitled “Communication, Communication, Communication” that we did not have to use too many words, take up very much space or spend very much time to communicate, communicate, communicate. It does not take long to communicate to one’s flock...and every minute invested in communications will be well worth it.

Practical Application

- 1. How would you evaluate the communication of your church leadership to your church body? How much do you avail yourselves of the communication abilities of social media and a church website?**
- 2. How much work would it take your church to send an email blast once a week?**
- 3. How often do you as board members communicate to your congregation? Are you telling stories of God’s grace and His work in and through your local church?**
- 4. How does good communication relate to the Golden Rule?**
- 5. A long-time volunteer leader told us, “Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8 should be understood by all staff and volunteer leaders. These truths whether communicated as such or as Vision, Mission and Values should be communicated regularly so the church body understands them, embraces them and communicates them...as well as knowing how the church is doing in the fulfillment of the mission as set down by Christ.”**

FINAL WORDS

Board membership is a complex and sacred responsibility. The scope is far deeper than the discussions and resources in this document. However, there are six vital ingredients that board team members need to verify are present both individually and corporately. These six are:

Growing in holiness and Christlikeness... anyone in leadership in the church of Jesus Christ must have Him as their first priority. We are not talking about longevity in the church, success outside of the church or ability to quote the Bible. We are referring to acknowledging one's humanity, one's need for the Savior and a growing relationship with Him. Without this, there is no room for the Holy Spirit to be moving to grow the church deeper and wider.

Prayer... church leaders are not seeking their wisdom and relying on their experience...they are seeking the mind of Christ as they follow His leadership in building His church. We are not talking about a perfunctory prayer to begin a leadership meeting and then the meeting is filled with non-Christlike behavior and strong voices. We are talking about humbly relying on the Holy Spirit to speak the will of God for the immediate spiritual growth in the church and the future vision. "Be still and know that I am God" applies here. One veteran interim pastor told of being with a church for a period of six-months and never having heard the elders pray—except for a traditional and perfunctory prayer at the beginning of each meeting.

Communication... that reflects the values, teachings and character of Jesus Christ is absolutely essential. This communication includes letting our "yes be yes", being "full of grace and truth", "being quick to listen and slow to speak" and having words that are "helpful for building up" others.

Confidentiality... is an imperative. One experienced church deacon wisely says, "Everyone has a confidant." However, if words and discussions are supposed to stay in the boardroom, then they must stay there. One man said, "My wife is my best counselor" meaning he told her what went on in meetings and asked her advice. Someone responded, "The church chose you to be on this board team, not your wife." Thus, part of the responsibility of being on a board is to be able to let one's "yes be yes" when the commitment is made that things are not discussed outside of the board meetings.

Unity... part of walking with God. Jesus prayed in John 17 that we would be one as He is one with the Father. Paul admonishes us to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Such unity does not "just" happen. We have to make the effort to keep it and protect it. Without it, the Spirit of God is grieved and does not have the freedom to flow and work in us as He desires.

Accountability... produces and protects the essentials of holiness, prayer, communication, confidentiality and unity. Accountability suggests that we do not take things for granted but have Jesus Christ as our standard of evaluation. We are constantly evaluating, challenging and correcting our behavior as individuals and as a team. We think all the way back to Genesis 1 and creation. God evaluated what He had created and saw that it "was good." Thus, we must evaluate what we are doing and hold one another accountable as we do it.

APPRECIATION AND AFFIRMATION

We are great believers in the mission of Interim Pastor Ministries. Wil Regier, a lay leader and church consultant says, “IPM is a great organization with a wonderful purpose, training pastors to be effective as Intentional Interim Pastors. I have helped train at three of the IPM training sessions. Tom Harris has done a great job of leading the ministry.” We underscore and affirm Wil’s comments.

We trust this tool kit will help you in your ministry as a Strategic Transitional Pastor. We have seen first-hand the importance of such ministries in the Kingdom of God...and the building of the church of Christ. It is not always an easy task but it is a necessary and rewarding assignment.

In our consulting and coaching, we have seen churches damaged, derailed and unprepared for the next chapter of effective ministry because they have not chosen to partner with an Intentional Interim Pastor or a ministry like IPM. It is painful to observe.

We believe the office of church leadership is sacred and a sacred trust. There is simply no room for church ministry leaders who do not know who they are, do not know their weaknesses and where they need to grow and do not care to be part of a unified board team seeking the mind of Christ as they help lead one part of His church. Thus, the analogy of the grocery store (we all have been going to the grocery store our entire lives but that does not necessarily qualify us to lead and develop a grocery store) is most valid in our minds.

Church leaders, regardless of how long they have been in the church in general and in their current church specifically, need training like every other leader—both in the church and in society. If the Lord “grew in wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:52) then board members today must grow, too. No one has arrived.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for values, mission and vision for churches in a culture as spiritually corrupt as ours is. Vision is not automatic; it does not just happen. It is explained, nurtured and protected...it is a life of faith.

We reiterate the value of coaching, mentoring, consulting, evaluating and sharing of experiences with other seasoned Intentional Interims as IPM requires. Dr. Dennis Beatty and Dr. David Fisher, both with 40 years of full-time and very successful pastoral experience, are interim pastors with IPM. They declare that intentional interim pastoring is far too important to go it alone. The ministry requires consultation and collaborations with colleagues of wisdom and experience. Both attest to the value of talking regularly with a coach provided by IPM.

We give major thanks to Don Clark, a special friend since college, Greg Melendes, and Dr. Bob Andringa, www.theandringagroup.com, for editing the document. Tami Johnson and Carol Stewart were our grammarians and producers. In addition, over 20 ministry colleagues read and commented on the project for us. The errors and omissions that remain are solely ours.

It was an honor and privilege to create this training resource for IPM. We hope you will put it to work in the great calling of intentional transitional ministry.

Dr. Dennis Baker

Dr. John Vawter

IMPORTANT TRAINING RESOURCES

This section contains articles, examples and discussions of board life, responsibilities, obligations, and behaviors. The purpose of these proven models is to add context for the application of the 10 Core Essentials outlined and discussed in the first section.

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ASSIGNMENT GOAL BASED APPROACH

The following document is the self-graded evaluation an Intentional Interim Pastor gave to the Board as he finished his time with them and the church. There are a number of items you will find helpful in his report and apply in your context. They included:

- His candor was remarkable. He did not excuse the non-fulfillment of assignments he did not achieve.
- The self-awareness of the Board relative to what was needed to move the church forward during a challenging transition season was quite high and perceptive.
- The healthy discussions between the Interim and the Board provided foundations so that the assignments would be pursued into PastorNext's ministry.

However, and this is very important, the same Intentional Interim engaged another interim ministry where such an assignment could not have happened. Why? The Board was not healthy, not unified, and almost devoid of honest communication. As "layers of the onion were peeled back," he found deeper issues, which the Board would not admit or refused to face directly with openness and humility. His only recourse was to talk candidly with the search consultant who could inform potential candidates of issues that would need to be resolved in the future.

This helps us understand that the ministry of the Intentional Interim Pastor is more than just preaching. It is assessing, evaluating and making judgments on how best to move the church into the future and help it prepare for its next chapter. It is not always easy but it is fulfilling and thrilling ministry.

AN ASSIGNMENT GOAL BASED APPROACH TO TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY

We share with you, and with his permission, the memo an experienced STP (Strategic Transitional Pastor) shared with the board as he completed his assignment.

Transitional Senior Pastor ministry is a huge landscape. One approach that I have used is the “Assignment Based Approach.” Some would call this an “Outcome Based Approach.” The purpose is to identify and agree upon—before or in the initial stages of the intentional interim ministry-- what is really needed for the long-term health of a local church. It is designed to accelerate the process of refocusing a church before the calling of PastorNext. The ongoing positive feedback from churches that embraced this approach is very affirming,

Here is an example of this approach that I called “**The Big Six**” for one local church following the retirement of the Senior Pastor. This was an eight-month assignment.

To: The Board of First Church

Here is how I grade my work on the Assignment Projects you asked me to do:

1. Implement an accountability model of church governance

I believe we got this done with flying colors... an “A.” You are evidence of that. I have been extremely pleased with the number of men coming to the elder training. That has been an impressive sight to see.

2. Clarify the purpose and vision of our church toward making disciples

I must give myself a grade of “C” here. I think our discussions and evaluations of the lack of evangelism, nurture of the saints, heart-felt worship and reliance on the Spirit clarify what your church needs to be doing in the future. However, based on the feet dragging I do not think we are any further along than we were when I arrived. The redeeming factor for me is that you, the Board of Elders, realize where the church is, are not happy about it, and will oversee these important ministries being put in place.

3. Acknowledge the need for a new life cycle and prepare for it.

I give myself the grade of “C” here as well. I thought I was a good persuasive communicator when I showed up...but I do not believe I have gotten the entire ministry staff on board with this. I do not think the ministry staff as a whole understand or admit the need for a new life cycle. I do not think the ministry staff helped prepare for it. I think one or two strong voices continue to pat themselves and the church on the back...talk about how long they have been here...talk about the good health of the church and do not realize or admit the changes that need to be made. (One told me he did not “buy-in” to the consultants’ report.) I simply was not able to bust through that barrier/blockade. Again, the good news is that you, the Board of Elders, realize what must be accomplished. You will insist on accountability. That is so encouraging.

4. Assist the in-coming Senior Pastor in the alignment of staff with our purpose and vision, including the establishment of a system of accountability

Obviously, a key assistant pastor leaving was a huge setback in this area because he “got it.” He understood. So, we are not as far along as I would have liked to be at this point. Nevertheless, I give myself a grade of “A” because of your interim executive pastor. I told the Transition Task Force that I would not come unless you kept him here. He “gets it.” He will keep pushing. You have affirmed his leadership to the entire staff. Keep doing so...or, the “snap back factor” of old habit patterns will rise to the top again. I think an analogy to dandelions is helpful...if you cut them off at ground level they come back. If you dig out the root, they are gone. At this point, I think the old habits have not yet been taken out at the roots.

5. Evaluate and implement the processes for building the body

I get a split grade here. On evaluation, I get an “A.” On implementation, I get a “D” for the above stated reasons. Simply stated, I did not get this done. Nevertheless, I think the tracks are there on which to place the train to get this ministry done.

6. Develop and adopt a plan to enhance communication in and through the church

I get the grade of “A” here...because I have not done anything. Your interim executive pastor has done this...and made tremendous strides.

Final words

It has been my privilege to be here with you. I am very hopeful for the future expanded ministry of the church because of you, the Board of Elders. I believe you “get it.” I believe you know what needs to be done to thrust the church forward for its next chapter of ministry. You are good and Godly men.

BOARD MEMBERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose of this section is to give a framework for the responsibilities and duties of a board team/governing board. In addition to a short introduction, an excellent thought-provoking presentation by Dr. Paul Borden is included, and an essential resource checklist with links to resources for responsibilities of the governing board.

INTRODUCTION AND PERCEPTION

It is important that administrative, fiduciary, governance, compliance, charter, legal, budget, insurance, salary structure, church discipline, sexual abuse policy, women in ministry practice, LGBT, Bylaws, Human Resources, etc. responsibilities be met. There can be no compromise on this. In this sense, the board team is the board of directors.

It is not our purpose here to discuss each of these responsibilities in detail. Rather, we encourage board teams to take a comprehensive look at Acts 6:1-6. We believe every church has people gifted by the Spirit of God who can research, define, refine and establish these responsibilities while the board team continues to devote itself to prayer, the Word and the ministry of evangelism and discipleship as seen in Matthew 28 and Acts 1:8. Jesus is crystal clear on the Mission of His Church.

We have observed church board meetings where “ignorance has been shared” and time has been wasted instead of finding people “full of the Spirit and wisdom” to handle and resolve these responsibilities and report back to the board.

Many healthy churches have already answered, resolved, and codified these responsibilities. These churches love to help other churches. Rather than reinventing the wheel, it is wisdom to ask them for copies of their work and permission to adapt them for your church. The available resources are astonishing and readily accessible.

GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

GOVERNANCE: The Organizing of the Congregation for Mission

FUNDING: The Resourcing of the Congregation for Mission

THE NEED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS FACING IN THE U.S.

1. While the Church is growing around the world, it is declining in our nation.
2. The number one reason is congregations in the U.S. have stopped doing the mission.
3. The mission is the evangelizing of people through sharing the Gospel...the Good News that the one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.
4. Few congregations are growing by implementing the mission.
5. However, once congregations obey their Lord and adopt His mission, they grow.
6. Several key factors enhance such growth:
 - A clear sense of mission
 - A compelling vision
 - Alignment of congregational behaviors around the mission and vision
 - Acting in faith (A willingness to risk everything but the message)
 - Thinking like missionaries (Thinking both large and small)
 - Valuing leaders and the concept of leadership (Letting leaders lead)
 - Structuring for growth and accountability (a Ministry Action Plan...MAP)
 - Committed discipleship in terms of resources

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS BOTH AN ORGANISM (BODY) AND AN ORGANIZATION

Healthy **organisms** are **organized**

All organizations are organized (From Chaotic to Rigid) to accomplish a purpose

The form of the organization either assists or detracts from the organization's purpose

A good example is the human skeleton:

- If the skeleton can be seen, the body is in trouble
- If there is no skeleton, the body is in trouble
- If the skeleton does not grow and develop, the body is in trouble

A healthy organization marries (keeps in balance) three key terms:

- Authority: Who is in charge and who is responsible for major decisions?
In a word, "Who Leads?"
- Responsibility: What in the organization are people to be doing?
- Accountability: How well are the responsibilities carried out? Are those fulfilling the responsibilities evaluated?

THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENDS NO SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

1. It describes roles and gifts that reflect some sense of a hierarchy:
Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers

Elders, deacons, perhaps “apostle” and the role of widows

2. Various organizational elements are seen in how the early Church behaved:
 - On occasion the Apostles dictate
 - On one occasion, the congregation votes, after the apostles establish the criteria
 - Paul tells Titus (his delegate) to appoint elders
 - Acts 15, after debate, James (not the apostle) dictates direction and decisions
 - Judas is replaced by creating a criteria and then casting lots
 - Elders are to be paid
3. What is not mentioned in Scripture are:
 - Rule by congregations (Congregational polity)
 - Rule by elder boards (Presbyterian polity)
 - Rule by bishops who direct personnel and resources (Bishop polity)
4. The New Testament commends no specific organizational structure for congregations, but patterns of authority are normative.
5. The current three main polities came about to create and maintain organizations as institutions, often to correct the abuses of previous polities. They were not created to organize for mission with the focus of mission being more for those outside the Church, than those inside the Church.

THE BIBLE (O.T. and N.T.) IS CLEAR ABOUT KEY ISSUES SURROUNDING GOVERNANCE

1. God implements His Mission through leaders (individuals) not groups.
2. The Biblical model of leaders working with groups of leaders is to free up the leader(s):
 - Exodus 18
 - Acts 6
3. In the Ephesians 4 passage, those with the five gifts (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) are to equip the saints to minister to the body. This seems to imply that these gifts carry with them some degree of authority. By the way, at least two of the gifts (a case can be made for all five) are to build the body both in quantity and in quality.
4. In I Peter 5, the elders are to function as under-shepherds for the Chief Shepherd, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - The Church is God’s Flock – Elders are Stewards
 - Elders work for the Chief Shepherd not the Sheep
 - Shepherds do Three Main Things with Sheep:
 - Protect the Sheep
 - Feed and Water the Sheep
 - Expect the Sheep to Produce Wool, Meat and Reproduce. These are the outcomes of discipling and equipping

IF NO ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL IS COMMENDED IN SCRIPTURE, THE QUESTION IS, WHAT MODEL DO WE IMPLEMENT IN OUR CONGREGATIONS?

My response: The model that best helps the congregation implement the mission in the historical, social and cultural context in which the congregation finds itself is the answer. In other words, the Bible provides flexibility in implementing different organizational models, at different times and in different settings. Our responsibility is to think like missionaries and determine the model that best fits both the Scriptures and the context of the congregation.

The Accountable Leadership Model as described in Dr. John Kaiser's book, Winning on Purpose is the best model I know. The reasons this is so are as follows:

- It produces accountability for determining the achievement of the mission
- It allows leaders to lead without becoming dictators
- It balances authority, responsibility and accountability
- Its fits a culture that has been dominated by capitalism (Capitalism is the Context)

CREATING THE ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP MODEL

ONE: The creation of the model begins with the mission of the congregation, which is, in essence, the Great Commission. The current elders (the board, session, vestry, overseers, leadership council...), under the guidance of the Pastor, determine the 3-5 major behaviors the congregation must conduct each year to achieve the mission. An example might be:

- Evangelism must become the priority that drives the congregation.
- Converts, both new and old, are to be developing as reproducing disciples.
- Leadership development is demanded to produce leaders for key ministry systems.
- The congregation will create an individual and collective effort to serve the community.
- The resources of the congregation will be stewarded to achieve these behaviors

Once these behaviors are articulated, the leaders have determined the major responsibilities of the congregation.

TWO: The "Leadership Community" (elders, pastor, and staff leaders) will agree on the ultimate annual goal for each one of the 3-5 areas that are selected. These goals are now the goals for which the pastor will be held accountable.

The pastor will then help individual ministry staff members set goals that are designed to meet the annual congregational goals. The concept is that as each staff member meets goals then the annual goals will also be met.

Ideally, the budget should not be set until the goals are in place. This then allows the leaders to create a budget that allocates financial resources toward the fulfillment of goals.

Once the goals are established, the criteria for accountability in fulfilling the mission have also been established. The elders will hold the pastor accountable for the annual goals and the

pastor will hold the staff accountable for the second tier of goals, which if accomplished, means the annual goals will be met.

At this point, the annual goals are laid out for the congregation at the Annual Meeting. All understand that, if the goals are not met well (hopefully some goals exceed expectations, while others may not, since they include a faith element), it is ultimately the elders' responsibility. All must understand that the elders are expected to evaluate the pastor on the accomplishment or lack thereof, of goals. In addition, the pastor will hold ministry staff accountable. The accountability report on how this has been handled also needs to occur at an Annual Church Meeting, regardless of polity.

This is how authority, accountability and responsibility is carried out in the life of the congregation.

THREE: The elders develop the boundary principles that cover all people of influence in the congregation (elders, pastor, staff – paid and unpaid, and volunteers in key areas of ministry). These boundary principles cover the five “worry” areas about which many in all congregations are concerned:

- Orthodoxy – Theological and Denominational
- Morality – In every area of life
- Finances – Both congregational and personal
- Human Resources – How people are treated
- Legal – Not putting the church at risk without clear forethought

Once established, these principles are reviewed every year to see if changes are required.

IMPLEMENTING THE ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP MODEL

General Practices

1. The board demonstrates, individually and corporately, in word and behavior their commitment to the mission and vision.
2. The board creates, revises and maintains explicit governing policies.
3. The board holds the pastor accountable for missional goals and ascertains that all are living in accordance with the boundary policies.
4. The board speaks with one voice and only in relation to the policies.
5. The pastor is the link between the board and the staff, interpreting policy implementation.
6. The board gives more generously than others do in the congregation.
7. The board members are prayer warriors for the congregation's mission and vision.

Board Practices

1. Consistently implement the policies.
2. Fulfill fiduciary responsibilities.
3. Allocate resources for the mission and protect the pastor and the pastor's staff.
4. Function as a “dream team” for planning future congregational initiatives.

5. Develop a “farm team” of future leadership.
6. Assist in casting vision.
7. Raise financial resources for the mission and vision.
8. Help with congregational issues that might derail the mission and vision

Board “No No’s”

1. Are not congregational representatives.
2. Do not bring personal dissatisfactions to meetings.
3. Do not manage staff.
4. Do not promote, empower or indulge gossip.
5. Do not focus on means (issue is the ends).
6. Do not hire and/or fire the pastor’s staff
7. However, the board does follow the clear principles of Matthew 18:15-20 in dealing with problems and issues.

Author: Dr. Paul D. Borden, Director
Church Health Initiative
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With Dennis N. Baker Edits
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ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF A LOCAL CHURCH

The Essential Checklist

Church boards are responsible for more than the spiritual life, vitality, and mission of a congregation. Increased government audits, litigation, misuse of funds, and inappropriate behavior of church personnel requires due diligence for every church board to oversee the policies, resources, and practices of their church. The following is an essential, but not comprehensive, checklist of basic board responsibilities.

1. The board must review their Articles of Incorporation, Constitution and Bylaws because of new government and IRS regulations required for legal compliance.
2. The board must design, create and adopt processes to monitor the legal, ethical, safety, and financial responsibilities of the church.
3. The board must review the budget and financial plan regularly to make certain they are consistent with the organization's mission, vision, values, and policies.
4. The board must report the church's activities and financial condition routinely to all donors.
5. The board must require clear and up-to-date information from staff members on the church's internal operations, programs, and finances.
6. The board must have a Children's Protection and Safety Policy.
Note: Contact your Church Insurance carrier to secure their recommended policy.
7. The board must review its own effectiveness and provide ongoing boardmanship education and training to improve performance.
8. The board must evaluate the effectiveness and fruitfulness of the church's programs, ministries and services.
9. The board must develop a written policy outlining the respective responsibilities of the board, senior pastor, and staff.
Note: We advocate the creation of a Board Covenant. Samples are included in the "How Board Members Are Chosen" resources.
10. The board must clearly describe the working relationships, lines of authority, and proper communication among pastors, staff, volunteers, and board members.
11. The board must create and design written procedures and processes for handling misunderstandings, conflicts, and grievances between the board, pastors, and staff.
Note: A wise board will create and adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy, including relatives on the governing board and staff of a church.
12. The board must keep a written record of all proceedings, decisions, and meetings.

Sources:

Dr. Gary McIntosh of www.churchgrowthnetwork.com

Rev. Van Elliott of Financial Foundations

Dr. Dennis Baker of www.churchassistanceministry.org

Dr. Richard R. Hammar of www.churchlawandtax.com for comprehensive resources for the board

HOW BOARD MEMBERS ARE CHOSEN

Three sample covenant forms are included to show how different churches expressed their commitments. Church boards are encouraged to use these forms as a basis for creating their own selection and covenant process.

ELDER COVENANT

Covenant: A Solemn Agreement

We believe the aspiration to serve as an Elder is a covenant to serve the Lord in a role of spiritual leadership of the local body of Christ. It is a commitment to seek to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, to seek to grow in your relationship with Jesus; to help others choose to receive and know Him; to follow Him; and then to grow and flourish together so that we may participate in the fulfillment of the Great Commission given to us as our marching orders by our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Bible teaches that when you placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you became a part of the Body of Christ. We believe that God has plans for our church, as part of His worldwide body of believers, plans He wants to accomplish uniquely through us. We believe He reveals these plans through the inspiration of His Word, the influence of His Spirit and the leadership and effort of our Pastors, Elders and members.

Our Vision: We use our Church's Vision Statement

Our Mission: We use our stated Church Mission Statement

Culture, Character, Commitment: We developed a document expressing our "Three Cs"

Guiding Principles: We adapted a proven template from our denominational consultant

This is Expected of me as an Elder

1. I acknowledge that I have placed my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior and want to develop a growing personal relationship with Him.
2. I will be a functioning church member. Because I am a member of the body of Christ, (1 Cor. 12:27) I have been given a spiritual gift(s) to utilize for the building of His Kingdom. I will give my time and financial resources. I will serve, minister, study Scripture and share the gospel with others. I will seek to be a messenger of God's love and truth to others. I will remember that, if one member suffers, all members suffer along with him or her. If one member is honored, all members rejoice with him or her. (1 Cor. 12:26)
3. I will be a unifying church member. I will seek to be a source of unity in my church. I know there are no perfect pastors, staff, elders or other church members. No one is perfect and neither am I. I will not be a source of gossip or dissention. I will seek to forgive. One of the greatest contributions I can make is to do all I can in God's power to help keep the church in unity for the sake of the gospel. (John 17:23, Ephesians 4:1-3, Colossians 3:12-14, Matthew 6:14-15)

4. I will not let service as an Elder be all about my personal preferences or desires. Personal preferences can be self-serving. I will focus my energy to serve Christ and to serve others. I will be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. (James 1:19, Mark 9:35, Phil. 2:5-11)
5. I will pray for my fellow church leaders. I will pray for our pastor(s), fellow elders, members and attenders regularly. I will ask God to lead us clearly as He wants us to go and to give us strength and wisdom to accomplish His work. (1 Tim. 3:2-5)
6. I will lead my family to honor the Lord. We will pray together, worship together and serve the Lord together in our church. We will ask Christ to help us fall deeper in love with Him because He gave His life for us. (Eph. 6:1-4)
7. The opportunity to serve as an Elder is a gift. When I received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, I became a part of the Body of Christ. I am now humbled and honored to serve and to love others. I will endeavor to respect the office of an Elder as a gift and an opportunity to serve the Lord, to serve others and be a part of something much greater than myself. (Eph. 2:8-9, 1 Cor. 12:27-28)

I enter into this Elder Covenant understanding that these expectations require much more than human effort alone. I will ask God's Spirit to be my counselor and guide and I will look to Him every day for His leadership and wisdom in my life. When I become aware of sin in my life, I will confess my sin to God and thank Him that Jesus died on the cross so that I am forgiven. Where appropriate, I will go to the person I have wronged and ask forgiveness. I will look to others for guidance and friendship to help me on my journey with the Lord and I will seek to offer the same to those who come after me.

Counting on God for His wisdom and guidance, I enter into this Elder Covenant.

Printed Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Source: Tom Hagen

THE CHURCH BOARD COVENANT

As Board members (Acts 20:28-10; I Peter 5:1-4) we pledge ourselves to:

1. Watch our relationships with God carefully, knowing that we are only as useful to each other and our church as we are close to God. Acts 20:28
2. Make sure our relationships with our spouses and children are kept as our next priority. God does not want us to sacrifice our families on the altar of our ministries.
Ephesians 5:25-6:4
3. Love each other, endeavor to know each other well, pray for each other, defend each other – giving each other the benefit of the doubt (as we would desire for ourselves) when anyone criticizes a fellow elder. I Timothy 5:17-22; I Thessalonians 5:12-15
4. Tell each other the truth, in love, knowing that withholding the truth from each other is not loving; it is selfish. It is our calling to grind with love and grace the rough edges off each other. Church leaders who do not challenge each other remain spiritually stunted and unable to lead their congregations to godliness.
Ephesians 4
5. Never gossip about each other. Gossip is saying negative things about a person, which the hearer does not need to hear. We will “speak to, not about.” We will gladly serve as “conflict coaches,” who counsel and guide church members to do the right thing, speaking directly and respectfully to elders with whom they have disagreements. Philippians 4
6. Settle issues with each other as quickly as possible, knowing that relational, doctrinal and philosophical unity at the level of the elders is vital for church health and effectiveness. Ephesians 4:1-6; Matthew 5:23-26; Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-5
7. Begin our meetings on time and end our meetings at a reasonable time, occasionally scheduling a special meeting if necessary to resolve an issue or complete a task.
8. Not procrastinate on difficult issues, but deal with them openly and honestly. We will always speak the truth in our meetings, knowing that true unity and godly leadership require our honesty with each other.
9. Disagree graciously in private and agree to speak as one voice in public. It is vital for our church that we discern the will of God and lead the congregation with one, united voice.
10. Not betray the confidence of our fellow elders. We will agree together on which decisions and discussions will be shared with the church and what information will be kept confidential.
11. Always seek to honor the only True Owner and Lord of the church (Acts 20:28-20; Ephesians 1:22-23) with our decisions. We will not shirk from difficult decisions because of the “fear of persons... male or female.”
12. Pause for serious prayer, asking for God’s promised guidance (James 1), when, in our meetings, we encounter especially difficult matters.
13. Always seek to lead our church so that it fulfills its purpose (glorifying God, as in Ephesians 1), accomplishes its mission (making disciples, as in Matthew 28:18-20) and achieves its God-given vision (Romans 12:1-2; Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 15:5-6; Philippians 1:27-2:4).
14. Stay on task in our meetings, (normally) following the agenda prepared by the Senior Pastor and Board Chairman. Any elder may request subjects for discussion but these items will be scheduled for discussion by the Pastor and Chair (I Corinthians 14:33, 40).
15. Deal with decision items once and decisively, if at all possible. Many decisions will be turned into policies (e.g., use of the building, wedding policies) so that matters do not need to be revisited.
16. Focus on the “Big Picture... the Big Rocks” ... the items of purpose, mission, values, vision, and policy.
17. Meet at unusual times and places, if necessary, in times of crisis. We will handle crises with faith, unity, humility and godliness. II Timothy 4:5
18. Refer potential Board meeting guests to the Senior Pastor or Board Chairman.
19. Review, discuss, and potentially update this document annually.

Source: Brian Thorstad

www.churchwhisperers.org

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF YOUR TOWN

ELDER BOARD MISSION AND MINISTRY COVENANT

Document Purpose

This document is intended to clearly articulate, to both current and future elders, the mission and ministry of Community Church's Elder Board. It will serve as a reference, and as our Board Covenant, to help us accomplish all responsibilities, obligations, and duties of the Elder Board.

Mission Statement

We, the elders, remember we serve the God and Creator of the universe for the purpose of advancing His Kingdom. We understand both God and this church have entrusted us to lead this church. Thus, we must constantly seek to advance God's agenda, not our own (Phil. 2:3). We must constantly ask ourselves: "What does God want for Community Church?" instead of "What do I want for Community Church?" Community Church is God's church. We will strive to accomplish the goals in this document not out of a sense of duty or obligation, but rather out of an overflow of love for the Lord, His Church, and His people.

Roles and Responsibilities of Elders:

1. **Guard the spiritual health of the Elder Board.** The Church is about Jesus! He is its leader (Col. 1:18). We, the elders, serve as leaders under Him. Therefore, only those with a passion for the Lord Jesus Christ are qualified to lead. Our passions will influence the congregation's passions. We are to serve together as a united team, sharing responsibility for the leadership and oversight of Community Church. We must be able to work graciously in a team setting. We will be honest with each other and hold each other accountable. When disagreements occur within the Elder Board, the minority shall defer to the majority, and support the majority decision both publicly and privately (Eph. 5:21). We will do this to avoid dissensions within the congregation. Those who cannot function as a healthy member of a team will destroy the unity necessary for the Elder Board to function effectively. We as an Elder Board are accountable to God and to the congregation as a whole, not to any individual congregant.
2. **Maintain a spiritual-accountability partner.** We elders are the spiritual leaders of the congregation (1 Peter 5:1-4). Therefore, our spiritual lives, both individually and as a group, impact the entire congregation. The congregation cannot be expected to grow spiritually if we as elders are not growing, or to live in harmony if we elders do not. Therefore, we need accountability in these areas, specifically related to our roles as elders and leaders. We must, with genuine love, ensure that each of us continually strives to grow. Therefore, each elder will have at least one other elder to serve as his accountability partner, to ensure ongoing spiritual transformation. This accountability relationship is to:
 - a. Serve as a place for elders to be privately held accountable for each responsibility in this document.

- b. Help each elder identify areas where he needs to grow spiritually and emotionally, and encourage him on these journeys.
- c. Help each elder identify areas of weakness, where the partner will suggest possible ways to address the weakness.
- d. Serve as a place where matters of individual, emotional and spiritual well-being are discussed, so each elder may lead from a strong and healthy place.

This relationship will not be a place where the accountability partners deal with Elder Board business, but rather a place to nurture individual spiritual growth.

3. **Guard and love the senior pastor.** We elders are to love, care for and empower the senior pastor not only as a professional, but also as “family”—treating him with kindness, patience and affection (1 Cor. 13). He has significant responsibility and oversight; and we will watch over him to ensure he is encouraged and rested, both emotionally and spiritually. We can do this practically when we:

- a. Regularly pray for the senior pastor.
- b. Regularly ask the pastor how the elders might encourage or help him make time for rest and spiritual renewal.
- c. Regularly offer clear, honest, gracious feedback, both encouraging and constructive.
- d. Regularly communicate our love and support to the pastor.
- e. Share in the work God has called the pastor to do, not by doing it, but by helping him be the minister God has called him to be.
- f. Assist and support the pastor by loving and supporting the staff he secures.

As the senior pastor is responsible to the entire Elder Board and not just an individual elder, so the entire Elder Board is responsible to love and support that pastor.

4. **Discern and guard the *vision* of Community Church.** To lead is to be out in front of others. True leadership is primarily about the future, and secondarily about the present. We elders will spend most of our time focusing on future issues, rather than present-day issues. In conjunction with the senior pastor, we are to intentionally pray and seek God’s will for the mission and vision of Community Church. We will routinely ask if Community Church is moving in a direction most pleasing to God. We will think conceptually and dream God-sized dreams, without immediately dismissing any such ideas as impractical. We will regularly seek to understand which ministries God is blessing and moving in, and will challenge all ministries to work together to achieve the church vision. We will accomplish this when we:

- a. Clearly define the goals and desired results for each ministry as it relates to the overall church vision.
- b. Delegate to, encourage, and empower staff, ministry leaders and deacons with the freedom to determine how to achieve the desired results.

- c. Hold the senior pastor, ministry leaders and deacons responsible for the desired results.
 - d. Regularly evaluate the church's ministries to ensure they are meeting not only the specific goals of the ministry, but are also converging with the overall church vision. When considering new actions or ministries, we elders will ensure the new items fall within and complement the overall church vision.
 - e. Give close attention to small-group teachings and the pulpit preaching, being sure to compare the teachings to Biblical principles and ensuring they support the church vision. Perceived inconsistencies will be discussed with the other elders.
5. **Honor the Word of God.** We elders will be examples of growth and maturity for the congregation. Each of us will constantly strive to set such an example, and thus:
- a. Read the Bible regularly. This can include private or public reading or listening.
 - b. Study the Bible regularly. This can be private study, group study, family study, memorization, discussion group, or any other approach that encourages deeper knowledge and understanding of God's Word and His truth.
6. **Pray "without ceasing"** (1 Thess. 5:17). We elders will consider prayer one of our primary responsibilities. An elder's prayer life and relationship with God are critical aspects of his ministry; we must keep these as high priorities. We are also expected to look for opportunities to pray with and for members of the congregation—especially those who are ill or confined to their homes or hospitals. We will accomplish this when we:
- a. Prioritize private prayer times, and accountability on this with our accountability partner.
 - b. Develop and maintain a rotating schedule, so all elders take turns visiting those who are ill or confined to their homes or hospitals.
 - c. Develop and maintain a method by which at least one elder personally communicates with each person who requests prayer.
 - d. Are willing to pray aloud with individual members of the congregation and in group settings.
7. **Shepherd the flock.** We elders are to lead the church as overseers, supervising and managing the church well, ensuring all things are done with integrity, and constantly striving to be the leaders God would have us be (1 Tim. 3, Titus 1). We are to shepherd (guard, guide, tend and feed) the flock of Community Church as those who are held accountable (Heb. 13:17). We are to serve the church as examples of Christ-like character. As a result, we will:
- a. Make an effort, at each church event, to greet and engage people we do not know and do our best to remember, call them by name, and introduce them to others.
 - b. Be available to listen to requests, concerns, and prayer needs, whether it is at a church event or through other communications throughout the week.

- c. Make an effort to thank and encourage staff and volunteers who serve in the church services and other ministries.
8. **Identify and develop future elders.** We elders will be on the lookout for Godly men who possess the basic Biblical qualities desired in elders. We will encourage these men to pursue being an elder and to be mentored by current elders. This way they can grow and understand what is required of an elder. In considering a man for a leadership role, we will ask questions like: Do they already have a positive influence over others? Do people look to them for leadership? Do they lead people closer to Christ and in positive ministry directions? We will encourage and disciple potential future elders when we:
- a. Pray for leaders to emerge from within the congregation.
 - b. Provide opportunities for potential leaders to serve and grow, via leading small groups or emerging ministries, taking on deacon leadership, working in existing ministries, etc.
 - c. Encourage spiritual growth through our structured leadership development ministries, individual discipleship, accountability, etc.
9. **Fulfill the requirements of the by-laws.** Elders will be familiar with and fulfill the Community Church By-laws, particularly where they address the responsibilities of the Elders. Article 4.2 of the By-laws states:

“The Elder Board, in conjunction with the Senior Pastor and guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall be responsible for establishing the overall vision and values for the church and for leading the church in its accomplishment. The Elders will constantly seek the wisdom and leading of Christ, the Head of the Church. They are to monitor and periodically evaluate the performance of the Senior Pastor. They are to model Christlike behavior (1 Pet 5:3, 1 Tim 4:12), teach and preach the Word of God (1 Tim 3:2, 2 Tim 4:2, Titus 1:9), protect the church from false teachers (Acts 20:17, 28-31), exhort and admonish the congregation in sound doctrine (1 Tim 4:13, 2 Tim 3:13-17, Titus 1:9), visit the sick and pray (James 5:14, Acts 6:4), judge doctrinal issues (Acts 15:6), watch out for the souls of the church (Heb 13:17) and exercise Biblical discipline within the membership when necessary (1 Thess 5:12). The Elder Board will be responsible for the financial integrity of the church, the protection of its assets and for setting the salaries of the Senior Pastor and ministry staff. Ultimately, the Elder Board shall be accountable to Christ for all their responsibilities.”

Wil Regier, Church Ministry Consultant with www.churchassistanceministry.org, was the coach for this process.

BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

This paper demonstrates how one elder board team took the time to formulate guidelines for their behavior, responsibilities and expectations. As the board team developed and matured, each person had to agree to these guidelines before they joined the board and as they remained on the team.

BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

BIBLICAL PICTURE

1. Elders agree that nothing is sacred but the Scriptures.
2. Acts 6:1-4 is our guide. Elders focus on the "big picture" items and choose people full of wisdom and the Spirit to resolve and manage ministerial/operational matters.
3. Ephesians 4:11-16 is our guide relative to understanding the role of how ministry is done.
4. Acts 20:28-31 is our guide concerning how we care for our own souls and shepherd the flock.
5. 1 Peter 5:2-3 is our model of motivation for serving as elders.

BEHAVIOR

1. Galatians 5:22-23 and Ephesians 4:29-32 are our guides for our speech and treatment of one another.
2. We conduct ourselves in a collegial manner. We listen well, respecting the words of others. We speak with candor but not with unkindness. When unkindness happens, the board is self-policing and suggests apologies when needed.
3. "Unwritten policies" on how things were done in the past do not govern us in the present unless agreed upon.
4. We say everything in front of one another at meetings, refraining from "meetings after the meeting."
5. We create continuity so that the direction and force of our ministry are not dependent on any one person.
6. No elder brings nor condones "personal agendas" without declaring them to be such.
7. Elders do not go to individual pastors to ask questions in a manner that would connote that the pastor works for the individual elder or the board.
8. Elders are unified in decisions. Important decisions are delayed to give additional time to work for unity, if possible. On the rare occasions when a vote is not unanimous, all elders support and own the decisions of the board as their own.
9. The elder board collectively, not any one elder, supervises the senior pastor.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The pastors work for the senior pastor and not for the elders.
2. We utilize the committee system as best we can and trust our elder/colleagues to make decisions in committee. Elder meetings are focused on prayer, Scripture and the "big picture."
3. When important details arise which are not part of the "big picture", they will not be discussed outside the board meeting.
4. Agenda items will be designated as a) decision, b) input, or c) general information.
5. The elders, in concert with the pastors, will determine the philosophy and direction of the church.
6. The elders will define strategic policy for ministry and provide overall leadership.

EXPECTATIONS

1. Elders attend elder meetings regularly, live lives of holiness and are accountable to one another.
2. Elders study and apply the qualifications for eldership found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 3.
3. Elders are positive and encouraging even when making remarks that could be perceived as "constructive criticism."
4. Elders carry out church discipline according to Biblical guidelines.
5. Elders pray for the church.
6. Elders complete assignments on time.
7. Elders involve themselves in continuing education to increase their knowledge and awareness of the church.
8. Elders communicate to the church that the primary role of the pastors is equipping lay people for ministry
9. Elders have visibility in the church so people in the congregation will know their leaders.

CARING FOR THE SHEPHERD

1. We give the senior pastor the encouragement of honest praise.
2. We treat the senior pastor with the respect and honor with which we would want to be treated, if we were he.
3. We care for our senior pastor by providing a listening ear and doing an annual review of his ministry.
4. We are open, honest, and authentic with the senior pastor, keeping short accounts.
5. We pray earnestly for the senior pastor, remembering that we are all involved in spiritual warfare.
6. We rejoice with our senior pastor in the good things that God is doing in our midst.
7. We let our senior pastor know that we love him.
8. We honor the character and integrity of the senior pastor, confronting attacks on his character or integrity.
9. We are committed to the success of our senior pastor, expecting God to do great things through him.
10. We protect the physical, mental and spiritual health of our senior pastor.

Source: John Vawter
www.johnvawter.com

COVENANT FOR BOARD AND STAFF MEETINGS

This covenant was developed by an intentional interim to help the governing board and staff members agree on how they would conduct the business of the church both in meetings and after meetings.

COVENANT FOR MEETINGS
Board & Staff of Olde First Church

WHEREAS, we as members of the Board and Staff of Olde First Church have been selected for our position of highest trust, integrity and responsibility...

WHEREAS, we as members of the Board and Staff of Olde First Church recognize the potential influence and impact of our deliberations and decisions upon the church and our future mission and ministry together, the spiritual health and fitness of its fellowship, the teaching of its children, and the maturing of its membership in relationships characterized by grace, truth, peace, and love, and...

WHEREAS, we as members of the Board and Staff of Olde First Church acknowledge and confess that the discovery of God’s will and direction can often end up being confused and complicated by human and supernatural factors that are not easily understood . . .

We solemnly enter the following Covenant together before the Lord:

A COVENANT OF PRAYER...We will uphold one another in prayer and seek, both individually and together, the clear leadership of the Holy Spirit.

A COVENANT OF HONEST COMMUNICATION...We will speak openly, directly, honestly and graciously with one another without taking offense. We will speak robustly and respectfully toward one another. We realize that we need the opportunity to think aloud in order to help sort out impressions and responses as we study our church’s needs and evaluate courses of action during this season of pastoral transition.

A COVENANT OF CONFIDENTIALITY...We will treat with confidentiality our discussions and evaluations. We will deal responsibly with privileged information. We will agree on appropriate processes and communication with the congregation. We will not publicly criticize the perspectives or decisions of any other members.

A COVENANT OF ACCOUNTABILITY...We will proceed with biblical ethics and execute our responsibilities faithfully. We recognize our accountability to our church and to God for our decisions.

A COVENANT OF UNITY...Where there are honest differences of opinion, we covenant to work these out to the best of our ability. Unanimity and uniformity are not the desired goals, but a humble and strong unity. We will publicly support all decisions of the group in unity.

Therefore, we enter into this Covenant with our Lord, led by the Holy Spirit, in order to discern faithfully His will in serving the church of Olde First Church.

Signatures:

WHO LEADS THE CHURCH?

The purpose of this exercise is for the board team, the interim pastor and staff to work through their different perceptions on leadership and how decisions are made in their respective church. Until there is essential, substantive agreement on how decisions are made, it is difficult to determine how to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Clarification is imperative for the calling of PastorNext, as alignment is foundational to effective Kingdom ministry.

“WHO LEADS THE CHURCH?”

Responsibility Grid for Your Local Church

Your Personal View <i>Check only one in this column</i>	Church's View <i>Check only one in this column</i>	Board's View <i>Check only one in this column</i>	Previous Pastor's View <i>Check only one in this column</i>	How Things Get Done
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Senior Pastor is responsible to establish the vision for the church and to lead the church in its implementation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Senior Pastor is responsible to establish the vision for the church, and with the concurrence of the Board, lead the church in its accomplishment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Senior Pastor is responsible to establish the vision for the church, and with the concurrence of the Board and the Pastoral Staff, lead the church in its accomplishment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Senior Pastor and the Pastoral Staff are responsible to establish the vision for the church, and with the concurrence of the Board and Congregation, lead the church in its accomplishment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Senior Pastor, Pastoral Staff and the Board are responsible to establish the vision for the church and to lead the church in its accomplishment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Senior Pastor, the Pastoral Staff, and the Board are responsible to establish the vision for the church, and with the concurrence of the Congregation, lead the church in its accomplishment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Board is responsible to establish the vision for the church, and the Senior Pastor (with the Pastoral Staff), under the Board's direction, leads the church in its accomplishment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Board is responsible to establish the vision for the church, with the Congregation's concurrence, and the Senior Pastor (with the Pastoral Staff), under the Board's direction, leads the church in its accomplishment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Congregation is responsible to establish the vision for the church and, with assistance by the Board and the Senior Pastor (and the Pastoral Staff), the process by which it is accomplished.

Revised Dennis Baker 9/2018
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BOARD DECISION MAKING

The purpose of this matrix is to help church boards make better decisions and, in some cases, to make decisions. Too often church boards discuss issues but never come to a decision. Alternatively, if a decision is made and no one is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the decision and reporting back to the board, it will not happen.

BOARD DECISION MAKING

Principles of Decision Making

1. Pro-action not reaction
2. Master plan
3. Ministry objectives
4. Who does what by when?

Hindrances to Decision Making

1. Fear
2. Critics
3. "Someone will leave"
4. Indecision
5. Unanimity
6. Lack of prayer
7. Lack of collegiality
8. Lack of faith
9. Uncertainty about the Spirit's leading (but cannot go on indefinitely)

Godly Guidelines for Decision Making

Word of God	Mind of Christ	Leading of the Holy Spirit	Around the Room	Time Line	Faith Walk	Report	Evaluation
Psalms 119:105	I Cor. 2:16	Acts 13:2	Acts 1:23-26	John 2:4	Romans 14:23	John 17:4	Genesis 1:3

Decisions needing to be made	The Issue	When will you decide?	How will you decide?	How will you know you have decided?	Driver of decision	Report date
1.						
2.						

Potential Decisions Discussed	The Issue	Conclusion Yes or No?	When will you decide?	No decision is a decision
1.				
2.				

Decisions you have decided and not acted on	The Issue	Why no action taken?	Decide to decide Yes or No?	When will you decide?	Driver of decision	Report date
1.						
2.						

Source: John Vawter
www.johnvawter.com

COVENANT OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND PRACTICE

One of the responsibilities of the strategic interim pastor is to help prepare the church for its next senior pastor. A Covenant of Understanding of how the board team will relate to the pastor is very important. Otherwise, each team member behaves however he chooses.

COVENANT OF UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT

Between the Board of

_____ Church and Pastor _____

Date

On _____, 20XX, the congregation of _____ voted to extend a Call to _____ for the position of Senior Pastor and Pastor _____ accepted that Call. This Covenant is a compilation of understanding and agreements made between the Church and Pastor _____. These have been adopted by the Board of the Church. The Covenant shall serve as a foundational present and future point of reference and guide for understanding. We affirm that wise, honest, open, and loving communication will our framework for all deliberations so that we honor our Lord Jesus Christ.

Board/Pastor Relationship

Interpersonal Relationships

The Board and the Pastor pledge to uphold one another in mutual trust, respect, and care. Each shall support without reservation the position, authority, and ministry of the other, and shall seek to be God's instrument in the spiritual and personal development of the other. Correction and redirection shall be done gently and with loving care. The primary motivation of each shall be to encourage, equip and support the other.

Authority of the Board

The authority of the Board as identified in the Constitution and Bylaws shall never be questioned nor subverted by the Pastor.

Board authority shall be understood as vested only in the decisions of the Board and not in individual members of the Board. Hence, individual board members shall not seek to exercise organizational authority over the Senior Pastor, members of the staff, or persons in the Church congregation.

Although final authority rests with the Board, the Board shall seek to create an environment of support for the leadership of the Pastor vis-à-vis his ministry, his handling of staff, the direction and character of the ministry of the Church, and the like.

Confidentiality

The Board and the Pastor pledge themselves unreservedly to nurture and maintain the sacred confidentiality of all Board confidential discussions and confidential decisions. The role of

individuals in the making of Board decisions shall never be divulged. Violation of this principle shall be grounds for loving confrontation and, if necessary, discipline.

Board/Staff Communication

The Board pledges to engage with members of the staff in such a way as to protect the leadership of the Pastor. Hence, board members shall not allow inappropriate discussion or decision-making with members of the staff. Staff should never be allowed to approach the Pastor with the leverage of previously secured Board or board member support. (Possible exception: "Moral failure")

Board/Congregation Communication

The Board pledges to engage with members of the congregation in such a way as to protect the leadership of the Pastor. Hence, board members shall not allow or encourage inappropriate discussion or decision-making with members of the congregation. Members of the congregation should never be in a position to approach the Pastor with the leverage of previously secured Board or board member support. (Possible exception: "Moral failure")

Board Approval for Outside Ministry

Authority for approval for outside ministry by the Pastor shall be vested in the Board. The Board shall support and encourage the Pastor vis-à-vis outside ministry as this will both stimulate and refresh the Pastor for his ministry at _____. However, the Pastor shall take every care and precaution to ensure the priority of ministry at the Church, never allowing outside ministry to adversely affect the Church ministry.

Pastor _____'s outside ministry will include each year, but not be limited to, two weeks of international mission's ministry and occasional Walk Thru the Bible seminars.

Board Care of the Pastor

The Board shall exercise loving care of the Pastor and shall assist him in maintaining the proper priorities of God, family, and Church ministry. The Board and board members shall seek to protect the Pastor's time from those expectations and demands of the congregation that would harm the ministry priorities of leadership, preaching, executive administration, visionary planning, and leadership.

If the Board or individual Board members have concerns about Pastor _____'s ministry or personal life, those concerns will be lovingly brought to his attention in an appropriate, discreet manner. Pastor _____ should never be surprised by Board confrontation regarding an issue of which he has no prior knowledge.

Pastoral Ministry Review

Pastor _____ agrees that the Board, for the stated ministry objectives as agreed upon with the Board, will hold him accountable. His ministry shall be reviewed as determined by the Board. Any formal or written review shall only include information that has previously been discussed personally with Pastor _____. There should be no surprises in such a Review.

Conflict Resolution

A time may come when the Board concludes Pastor _____ is not meeting his ministry objectives, and they are considering his possible termination. Before any decisions are made, a Mediation Board will be formed to seek to resolve the matter in a fair and wise process. This Mediation Board will consist of three representatives from the Board and three representatives of Pastor _____'s choosing. This Mediation Board will meet with Pastor _____ as the relevant issues are discussed. This process shall be kept confidential and should not be divulged to the staff or congregation, either by the Board or by the Senior Pastor.

The conclusions and recommendations of the Mediation Board shall be binding if this is agreed to in writing by Pastor _____ and the Board subsequent to the selection of the Mediation Board but prior to its deliberations. If there is no such agreement, both parties agree to give the Mediation Board's conclusions and recommendations great weight in any final decisions made by Pastor _____ and/or the Board.

Pastoral Responsibilities

Preaching

It is agreed that the Pastor shall be responsible for the pulpit ministry of the Church.

Leadership

Under the authority of the Board, the Pastor shall be the Shepherd/Leader of _____ Church. His leadership shall be directed toward the established purposes of the Church: worshiping the Father, reaching the lost, teaching the believer, and serving the Savior.

Executive Administration

It is understood and agreed that the Pastor shall be the "administrator of the Church organization and executive officer of the staff" as per Church Bylaws. All staff shall be directly accountable to the Pastor through the administrative order as delegated by Pastor _____. The Board, upon the recommendation of the Senior Pastor, shall make pastoral staff hiring and retention decisions.

General Matters

Contemporary Worship Service

The Board and the Pastor both affirm that there is a pressing need to add a Contemporary Worship Service at _____ on Sunday mornings, and that this matter will be addressed immediately.

It is agreed that appropriate steps will be taken, and funding provided, to prepare for the start of the Contemporary Worship Service including refurbishing the present Chapel, and hiring/freeing up the necessary staff to coordinate and lead this service.

Blended Worship Service

The Board and the Pastor agree that the present Blended/Traditional Worship Service will continue in the present Worship Center. This service may be modified where appropriate in order to accomplish the Church's threefold purpose: to evangelize, to edify, and to exalt.

Seekers

The Board and the Pastor both affirm that _____ Church exists to help accomplish the Great Commission. Therefore, _____ will be a place where anyone can come to find out who God is and what it means to follow Him. The truth of God's Word will never be compromised, though every effort will be made to help seekers feel comfortable attending services and events at the Church.

It is agreed that any current or future Worship Services will keep Seekers in mind. Though the Contemporary Worship Service will be more Seeker sensitive (Luke 19:10), the Blended/Traditional Worship Service will also make every effort to be sensitive to Seekers who are present.

Innovative Ministry

The Board and the Pastor affirm that a purposeful and innovative approach to evangelism and the nurturing of the congregation shall characterize the ministry of the Church. Hence, we shall be willing to "do church" in new ways in order to bring people to Christ and help people become fully devoted followers of Christ. We will also be willing to risk failure, and no doubt will on occasion fail in our efforts, if such efforts have substantial spiritual potential.

Ministry Consultation

In light of the current need for significant changes in the present ministries of _____ Church, the Board and Pastor _____ agree that funds will be made available when necessary to provide for an outside Consultant/Coach. The purpose of this Consultant/Coach would be to ensure that the best possible steps are being taken to bring _____ through this time of change.

Additional Staff

The Board and the Pastor agree that in (year) _____ Church will seek to call in a new full-time Executive Pastor to oversee the Ministry Directors. He will also work directly with the College/Singles Ministry.

Vacation, Study Leave, Sabbaticals

It is agreed that Pastor _____ will receive four weeks of vacation per year. He will also receive two weeks of study leave (this will not include days spent at ministry-related conferences). A maximum of six weeks of vacation/study leave/conferences may be taken

consecutively during the summer. The remaining time may be divided throughout the rest of the year.

After each five years of ministry at _____, Pastor _____ will be entitled to a two-month sabbatical. Pastor _____ and the Board will agree jointly upon the timing and objectives of the sabbatical.

Termination Compensation

The Board and the Pastor agree that, in the event that the terms of this Covenant are not upheld, and/or Pastor _____ chooses to resign from his ministry at _____ Church, he will receive three months' severance pay (13 weeks), plus an additional week's pay for every year served at _____ Church, up to a maximum payment of six months' severance pay (26 weeks). These provisions do not apply if there is a case of moral failure.

If the Board chooses to terminate Pastor _____'s ministry at _____ Church, the same compensation shall be given.

Bylaws Changes

This Covenant is entered into with the understanding that before Pastor _____ is called, the following Bylaws will be changed, or be in the process of being changed, and meet with Pastor _____'s approval:

- 1) Calling of a Senior Pastor
- 2) Termination of a Senior Pastor
- 3) Future Bylaws changes

Annual Review

Pastor _____ and the Board agree to review annually these Covenant Commitments in a spirit of support and progress toward the stated goals and objectives as expressed in this document.

Signed and dated by:

Pastor _____ Dated _____

Board Chair _____ Dated _____

Final Agreement
Date _____

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A CHURCH

Dr. Paul Borden, Director of Church Health Initiative, www.churchhealthinitiative.com has promoted a matrix that a church board can use to build its own set of Guiding Principles. This matrix was used by Dr. Barry Campbell, Pastor of Highland Baptist Church in Redmond, Oregon to lead the Church Council in establishing guidelines for their church. What follows is the work done by Barry and the Council.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Highland Baptist Church
Redmond, Oregon
Dr. Barry Campbell, Pastor
<http://hbcredmond.org>

Mission Principles

Mission

Highland Baptist Church exists to lead people to Connect with Jesus and with others, Grow in Jesus, and Live out our faith in Jesus.

MP1.1 Connect with Jesus

Leading people to *Connect with Jesus* is essential to accomplishing our mission. It is our intent to lead people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. We will lead people to *Connect with Jesus* by involving them in Worship experiences that are intentionally open to lost and un-churched people. Our worship experiences will present biblical truth in a culturally relevant manner and seek to lead people into a transformational encounter with God.

MP1.2 Connect with Others

We will lead people to *Connect with others* by involving them in small groups. Our primary strategy for connecting people with others is Bible Fellowship Groups – groups designed with newcomers in mind. These groups are foundational and evangelistic. These open groups offer life-changing Bible Study and will have an emphasis on fellowship and building relationships.

MP 1.3 Grow in Jesus

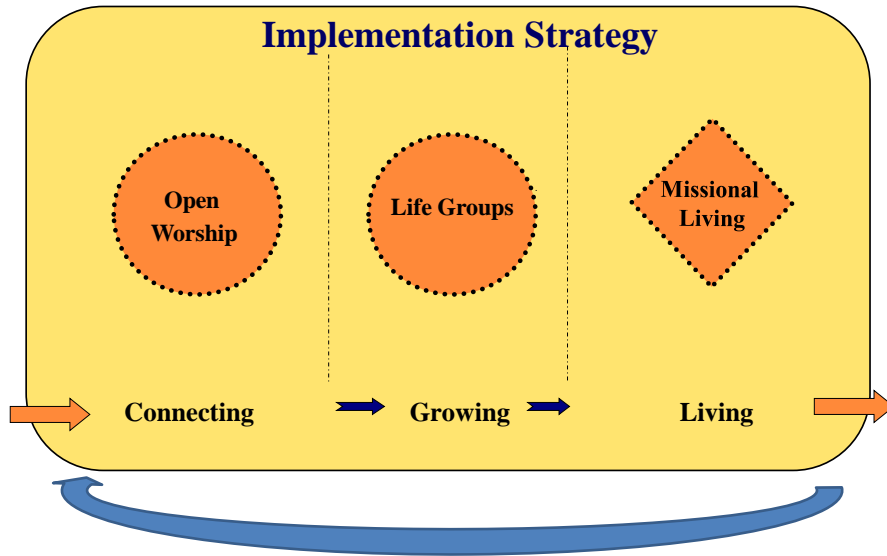
We will lead people to *Grow in Jesus* by involving them in Lifelines Groups. These small groups are designed to help believers become grounded in the Christian faith and to grow in their participation with the body of Christ. These Life Groups will originate from many ministries of HBC and will meet at various times and places.

MP 1.4 Live out our faith in Jesus

We will lead people to *Live out our faith in Jesus* by involving them in missional living, meeting needs in Jesus name, and boldly telling those we encounter of our faith in Jesus. A significant priority of HBC shall be equipping and deploying each believer for authentic mission and ministry by developing their God-given gifts, talents, and experiences. As we participate in *Living out our faith in Jesus*, church members will

Share Jesus with others, inside and outside the church. Our mission is not accomplished until believers complete the cycle by sharing their faith with others.

Mission: HBC exists to lead people to Connect with Jesus and with others, Grow in Jesus, and Live out our faith in Jesus.



BOUNDARY PRINCIPLES

BP1.0 Comprehensive Boundary Statement

The Lead Pastor shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful, imprudent, unethical, or unbiblical.

BP1.1 Component: Biblical and Moral Integrity

The Lead Pastor shall not fail to uphold high standards of biblical teaching with regard to teaching and leadership. Our accepted doctrinal statement is the Baptist Faith and Message.

BP1.2 Component: Foundational Documents

The Lead Pastor shall not fail to lead the congregation to function within the parameters set forth by articles of incorporation, constitution and Bylaws.

BP1.3 Component: Financial Planning and Budgeting

The Lead Pastor shall not allow financial planning for any fiscal year or the remaining part of any fiscal year to deviate materially from the Mission Principles, risk financial jeopardy, or fail to develop from a multi-year plan.

BP1.4 Component: Financial Condition and Activities

The Lead Pastor shall not allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or a material deviation of actual expenditures from priorities established in Mission Principles with respect to the actual, ongoing financial conditions and activities.

BP1.4.1 Component: Financial Reports

The Lead Pastor shall not fail to provide the Church Council with monthly financial reports, which shall be available to the membership on a quarterly basis.

BP1.5 Component: Treatment of Members, Potential Members and Attendees

The Lead Pastor shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are unsafe, undignified, unnecessarily intrusive, or that fail to provide appropriate confidentiality or privacy.

BP1.6 Component: Treatment of Staff

The Lead Pastor may not cause or allow conditions that are unfair or undignified, or unlawful with respect to the treatment of paid and volunteer staff.

BP1.7 Component: Compensation and Benefits

The Lead Pastor shall not cause or allow jeopardy to fiscal integrity or public image with respect to employment, compensation, and benefits to employees, consultants, contract workers, and volunteers.

BP1.8 Component: Communication and Support to the Church Council

The Lead Pastor shall not permit the Church Council to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.

ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLES

AP1.0 Comprehensive Accountability Statement

The responsibility of the Church Council before God is to see that Highland Baptist Church, through the leadership of its Lead Pastor, (1) achieves the fulfillment of its Mission, and (2) avoids violation of its Boundary Principles.

AP1.1 Component: Responsibility to Christ for those He called us to serve

The Church Council shall maintain an active connection with the needs of the community and church:

AP1.1.1 Discover the needs of the community and church

The Church Council will invest significant resources each year to enhance its understanding of the needs of people in the community and church.

AP1.1.2 Allocate resources to meet the needs identified in AP1.1.1

The Church Council will collect and review input and feedback from members, attenders, and non-returning visitors to better understand their needs.

AP1.1.3 Assess effectiveness of actions taken

The Church Council will periodically arrange a full church assessment by a competent consulting group.

AP1.2 Component: Disciplining the Process of the Church Council

The Church Council shall conduct themselves with discipline and integrity with regard to their own process of governance with devotion to prayer and the Word of God.

AP1.2.1 Devotion to Prayer and the Word of God

Under the teaching and guidance of the Lead Pastor, the Church Council will continually seek the wisdom and leading of Christ as the Lord of the church.

AP1.2.2 Church Council Style

The Church Council will govern with an emphasis on (1) outward vision, (2) encouragement of diversity in viewpoints, (3) strategic leadership, (4) clear distinction of Church Council and staff roles, (5) collective decisions, (6) emphasis on future focus, and (7) proactivity.

AP1.2.3 Church Council Job Description

The essential tasks of the Church Council are (1) connections with the people served, (2) definition of guiding principles, and (3) evaluation of Lead Pastor's performance. The Church Council shall exercise authority granted them in the Bylaws and not delegated to the Lead Pastor.

AP1.2.4 Church Council Member Code of Conduct

The Church Council members commit themselves to the following code of conduct:

- a. Avoid conflicts of interest
- b. Covenant of unity - Only decisions of the Church Council acting as a whole are binding on the Lead Pastor.
- c. Maintain confidentiality
- d. The Church Council shall not interfere with the Lead Pastor's management of the church staff.
- e. The Church Council will instruct the Lead Pastor through written principles that define the mission to be achieved and establish the boundaries to be avoided, allowing the Lead Pastor to use any reasonable interpretation of these principles.

AP1.2.5 Responsibility of the Chairperson for Integrity of Process

The chairperson enforces the integrity and fulfillment of the Church Council process including the monitoring of Lead Pastor performance. The chairperson is authorized to use any reasonable interpretation of the Accountability Principles as he acts to ensure the integrity of the Church Council process.

AP1.2.6 Responsibility of the Lead Pastor for Visionary Leadership

The Lead Pastor will provide regular communication to the Church Council on all actions. If a question of process arises with regard to the Bylaws or guiding principles of the church, the Lead Pastor will defer to the judgment of the Church Council or chairperson.

AP1.3 Component: Monitoring the Performance of the Lead Pastor

The role of the Church Council is to monitor the performance of the Lead Pastor.

AP1.3.1 The Lead Pastor will be required to write measurable goals each year that correspond to each of the Church Council mission principles.

AP 1.3.2 Periodic Goal Review of the Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor's goals will be discussed and reviewed for performance, modification and accountability at the meetings of the Church Council.

AP1.3.3 Annual Review of the Lead Pastor

Each November, the Church Council shall review the results achieved by the Lead Pastor on each of the annual goals. Options including but not limited to a salary increase, cost of living increase, corrective action, or request for resignation shall be based on these results achieved with the Church Council's boundary principles.

ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND DISTRUST

Trust is the foundational bedrock upon which effective church leadership is built. Without trust, distrust emerges and conflict quickly takes over. This one-page document on Organizational Trust is an excellent resource to review and discuss in each board and staff meeting throughout the transitional season in your church.

ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST

AN ABSOLUTE CORE VALUE & PRACTICE FOR EFFECTIVE CHURCH BOARD LEADERSHIP

Charles Handy, a prolific author and thinker, is one of Britain's leading management theorists. In his book, The Hungry Spirit, Beyond Capitalism: A Quest for Purpose in the Modern World, Handy examines the forms and structures that organizations are using to adapt to the rapidly ever-evolving modern context.

The son of a pastor, Handy moves easily from personal meaning to issues of organizations. In chapter nine, "The Citizen Company", he suggests that all businesses are communities. While Handy's illustrations are for-profit in nature, an organization of 'citizens' well describes today's workplace for church leaders within a team.

Note: Think Philippians 1:27 and 3:20 for Biblical Context.

Churches and church-related organizations, like companies and corporations, have at their core extremely gifted individuals who accomplish large parts of the work. There are also experts who are used for specialized functions on an "as needed" basis. As core staffs become smaller the need for trust rises. As Handy says, "Trust sounds like a nice motherhood term, something no one could be against, all warm and woolly. In practice, however, it is difficult and tough."

Handy lists seven principles of trust. Here they are with comments for church leaders:

1. "Trust is not blind." It is hard to trust those you do not know. Even large organizations see the need to have small, tight-knit effective working groups to carry out the work and regular times to meet those from other groups.
2. "Trust needs boundaries. Unlimited trust is, in practice, unrealistic." By trust, organizations mean confidence ~ a confidence in someone's competence and in their commitment to a goal. Work groups need enough freedom to define solutions and methods of work and just enough boundaries to keep them aligned with the organization's mission and vision.
3. "Trust requires constant learning." Individuals must keep learning, as must organizations. New arrangements and options must always be explored. We need to learn from our successes and mistakes.
4. "Trust is tough." Handy advocates a ruthless trust that holds individuals to high standards and commitments. Accountability matters. Trust is hard to regain when broken. We need targets to shoot for but no rules that stifle creativity and initiative.
5. "Trust needs bonding." Trust is based in relationship. It is not impersonal. Leaders must be willing to spend enough "hang time" with others to develop trust for the cause, the mission, the vision...
6. "Trust needs touch." The paradox of our high-tech, Facebook, Instagram, e-mail, Twitter, voice and virtual reality driven organizations is that they need highly personal gatherings to maximize results. Work and play blend here. "These are not perks for the privileged. They are the necessary lubricants of virtuality..." How good is your organization in building these types of times together?
7. "Trust has to be earned." Organizations must earn trust with their citizens and vice versa. Consistency of behavior, the matching of 'talk' and 'walk', build trust over time. It is a Sacred Trust.

Two Great "Trust" Quotes to absorb and put into practice for your church board.

1. *"When Trust is present, you will usually be able to create Teamwork. When it is missing you won't."*
John Kotter
2. *"Trust is the emotional glue that binds followers and leaders together."*
Warren Bennis

The Hungry Spirit by Charles Handy, 1998, Broadway Books--- An Annotated Review by Dennis Baker

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCHES BASED ON SIZE

These insights are taken from Lyle Schaller's "Cats, Collies and Ranches" and thoughts by Dan Reiland. The Strategic Interim Pastor needs to help the church he is serving understand its unique characteristics and how they will change as the church grows.

CHARACTERISTICS BASED ON SIZE OF CHURCH*

<u>SIZE</u>	<u>CHARACTERISTICS</u>
0-40	No leadership or plan. A lot of independence among members. Pastor is present but does not lead or think visionary thoughts for the future.
40-100	The main question is, "Pastor, do you love us?" The pastor loves the people
100-175	Organization begins. The pastor has some organizational skills
175-250	Pastor welcomes other staff. Delegation begins to happen
250-450	Pastor does not know everyone. More organization is needed. Volunteers are very important
450-700	Staff helps pastor do the ministry. Staff recruits and train volunteers. Serious management is needed
700-1200	Pastors recruit, train, deploy and manage volunteers. More people make smaller decisions. No one knows or controls all aspects of ministry. The vision is crystal clear
1200-1800	Pastor is leader. Church is organized. Staff recruits volunteers. Vision is crystal clear. Communication of vision is necessary
1800-2400	Staff must develop and empower others. Few staff can succeed at this level. Stagnation is probable. Staff is key
2400-3000	Staff are recruiters, trainers and they empower others. Excellence in every area is key. Focus, understandable ministry and constant evaluation are necessary. The senior/lead or executive pastor must keep staff and the ministry focused. Execution is key. Colossians 3:23 is vital

*Adapted and combined from "Cats, Collies & Ranches" by Lyle Schaller and "Breakthrough Catalysts" by Dan Reiland.

Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church authored an excellent update of the pioneer work of Lyle Schaller. It is "Church Leadership and Church Size Dynamics." The Link:

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/pastors-preaching-articles/tim-keller-leadership-and-church-size-dynamics-737?ref=PreachingArticleDetails>

THE STRATEGIC INTERIM PASTOR

The following article was written for and published in *REV* magazine. It has since been edited and revised. We include it here because it is a positive perspective on the hard but thrilling and fulfilling work of being a strategic interim pastor.

THE JOY AND PRIVILEGE OF THE STRATEGIC INTERIM PASTOR

Strategic Interim Pastor was a new term for me. Nevertheless, a church consultant friend called asking if I would consider accepting that role for a church that had gone through a lot of turmoil and lost its sense of vision. I had the privilege of pastoring two large churches for a total of 18 years and was directing a ministry that did not require a lot of weekend ministry. Therefore, I was intrigued. I became the Strategic Intentional Interim Senior Pastor which can be called the Transitional Senior Pastor or TSP. Bottom line, it is a ***Very Intentional Calling and Ministry Task***.

Sixteen years later, I have been privileged to help nine churches in transition. Here are some of the lessons I have learned along the way. I trust you will find them encouraging and challenging. And I hope that you will be motivated to consider being an interim pastor when you arrive at the stage of life where you can do it. Or, that you would consider a ministry vocational change and become a full-time Transitional Senior Pastor (TSP). I have met many wonderful people who have responded to such a call on their lives. They are having a significant impact for God... and they are re-energizing churches.

When the Soviet Union fell into pieces one minister who rushed in to help the church described it this way: "She is an ugly bride but she is Christ's bride and we need to help." This must be the motivation of any strategic interim pastor. Obviously, some churches should simply close their doors. However, in most cases these are Godly people who are yearning to be led and to see their church relevant and effective again... or, for the first time.

There are some underlying principles that help a TSP be effective. Probably the most important is that he must know his own gifts, skill sets, inclinations and motivations. Some churches need only preaching; others need a lot of "plumbing work" and discipline. Most churches, in my experience, need a new sense of vision rooted in Kingdom Values and Christ's mandate to His Church. It seems that in spite of how strong and competent the other staff may be, when there is no senior/lead pastor then different forces eat away at the focused vision. The church can begin a subtle slide to "do everything that everyone and anyone thinks is a good idea" and ends up without a compelling vision and direction. So, there must be careful pairing of the individual with this church.

It is my experience that there are at least four classifications of churches ~ not including the church that needs the Strategic Intentional Interim Pastor to close it. These categories are:

IN SHAPE ~ GOOD STAFF CHURCH

This is the church that lost its key preacher/leader. However, the staff members are so competent they can operate at maximum effectiveness without a lot of direction. If there is an executive pastor then the interim's role really can be confined to preaching with limited consulting. I think it extremely important for the interim to build a preaching schedule that is based on interaction with the staff and consultation with the Board. They know the needs and

issues that sermons should address. This preaching schedule must include vision, trusting in God and re-energizing the sense of mission.

NOT IN GOOD SHAPE ~ STAFF DEMORALIZED CHURCH

There are any number of reasons staffs can be demoralized but I think the four most common reasons are pastor/board conflict, board/staff conflict, staff feeling unprotected by the board... and sin and sinful people whom the board refuses to confront.

In these situations, there are a number of key issues that must be addressed.

- The interim must function as the staff's advocate to the board and vice-versa.
- The interim has to be the mediator and go-between who rebuilds the relationship between the two groups.
- Unfortunately, in this situation where sin has gone unchecked, the TSP must step into the gap. This is not easy but it is necessary (more on this later).

DECLINING IN NUMBERS ~ LOST VISION

There has to be a reason why a church loses its way and loses sight of its mission. The TSP is more than a preacher and leader here. He is a consultant/researcher/outside pair of eyes and a "spiritual MRI machine" in the flesh figuring out what went wrong, why it went wrong, who was responsible and what it will take to get the situation fixed. The phrase "What it will take?" includes confrontation of sin, disciplining people and in extreme cases asking people to leave as outlined in Titus 3:10. Confronting people who refuse to change or repent is not easy but it must be done for the health and future of the church.

Often in these situations a "church boss" acts as though he knows more than the Holy Spirit. Church bosses mean well and they control a lot, but they seldom help a church.

Also, it is my experience that every church has a certain tolerance for sinful attitudes. When that tolerance accelerates into church wide acceptance, the church is judged by God. The withdrawal of God's blessing might be slight. The church is doing good things but not with God's full blessing. Unless these sinful attitudes are confronted, the church has no chance of restoring God's blessing on the church. This can necessitate one-on-one confrontation, public "prophetic statements" or church discipline. In one case, I had to call people out of line for publicly criticizing the former pastor. As it turned out, this kind of gossip had been commonly accepted in the church for years. In another situation, one TSP I know had to force the Board to confront a deacon who was running unrestrained in his gossip of leadership (pastors and elders) without fear of discipline. He had done so for years and was not happy to be confronted over this sin. Obviously, he turned his wrath on the TSP who fortunately stood his ground. The point is that being an Intentional Transitional Senior Pastor is not for the faint-hearted.

When situations such as these are confronted and resolved, the Holy Spirit has more latitude to do His work in the church. Because some of these sinful attitudes and sinful people are

tolerated for so long, they are almost part of the fabric of the church. Excuses such as "that is the way he is" or "everyone understands him" preclude people from confronting the person's sin and helping them grow. So, the TSP must be sure he is correct in his assessment plus being prepared to be criticized for the calling out of sin.

The TSP must be strong and right in these confrontational situations. It is not easy to deal with and resolve these situations. Often, the TSP is confronting sinful patterns and sinful people that have been tolerated for years. "It ain't easy...but is necessary." And the results are worth it.

THE SMALL INEFFECTIVE CHURCH

This church has not declined... it just never grew. A TSP can be of great help to this body. He can help the people decide whether or not they are willing to pay the price to grow and be effective for Christ. And, if they are willing to conduct a prayerful search for God's mind and plan for the church, the fulfillment of the plan can commence.

KEY AREAS OF HELP

There are five key areas where the interim helps the church and gets it back on track.

1. **Board training:** It is my experience that most church board members do not understand the pressures, uniqueness and intricacies of the pastorate and pastoral ministry. By pressure, I mean the heart-felt concern of the pastor for the people of the flock. The spiritual implications of decisions and from how many directions criticism can come—sometimes legitimate but often illegitimate—are not always understood by board members. By uniqueness, I mean the spiritual nature of the ministry. The pastor is to get a word from God every week from the Scriptures while hearing God's voice for his own spiritual growth. Sanctification is a combination of our will and God's power. That combination has to be treated respectfully and humbly. By intricacies, I mean the myriad of issues that come a pastors' way. I think of a large church with many pastors and staff. One elder who had been in the church for at least forty years worked by and for himself. He knew very little about leadership or ministry. However, he had made life very difficult for the pastor... with his negative questions and suspicious nature. Part of my help to that church was to clarify for this particular elder what pastoring and ministry are... and what good board membership is. Consequently, he did not stand for re-election when his term was ended.
2. **Board-staff relationships:** Just as in a good marriage, so it is in the church. Healthy relationships between the pastoral staff and elders cannot be taken for granted. Often when the senior pastor leaves, both groups think they should give overall direction. If this is not discussed and agreed upon, a lot of mistrust and ill will can develop. The interim must address these issues and work to clarify clearly defined roles for each group. Furthermore, he must deal with any ill will that has arisen before he arrives.
3. **Conflict resolution:** Often there is some element of conflict or disagreement when a pastor leaves. From broken relationships to disagreement over philosophy or vision to poor job reviews to boards who try to involve themselves in operations instead of realizing they are

to set policy. The list is endless. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” It seems to be a dereliction of one’s duties not to dig in to try to resolve those conflicts. It is not easy. The peacemaker can get hurt, beat up and scarred. The peacemaker can be scarred in the process and peace might not be achieved. But, it is worth the effort. Let me quote from one interim who tried: “When my ministry was concluded, the conflict between the board and former pastor had not narrowed one inch. But, I felt good—even though I was sad because these are all good and Godly men—because I had tried. I did not duck the issue or ignore the obvious.”

4. Renewed vision—Vision is very fragile in that it can dissipate quickly. A strong staff and a strong board can keep it as the focus. However, we must remember that Jesus called His children “sheep.” As it is, there are always people who have a “better idea” on what the church should be doing. In the absence of a vision-caster, they can quickly bring forward good ministry ideas that are good—they just are not on target with where this particular church is headed. Therefore, the interim pastor can play a huge role in keeping the church on focus as it relates to vision. Renewing vision can include explaining vision and why it is necessary. Part of what makes a church attractive to PastorNext is the vision it has for the future. So, the TSP has the privilege of both explaining and helping the church maintain vision.
5. Renewing faith—Sometimes when pastors leave, there has been conflict. Plus, as mentioned above, Jesus’ children are “sheep.” Sheep can quickly grow discouraged and assume that the church’s best days are in the past. The interim pastor renews faith in God’s blessing on the church.

GRANDMA’S WISDOM

I remember being told by a friend about his 80-year-old grandmother who said, “The nice thing about being 80 is that I do not care what people think of me.” Although the TSP must reflect Jesus Christ and holiness, there is a certain application of what “Grandma” says. The TSP does not have to worry that someone will not like him or will turn on him. He is called to fulfill a specific ministry and get the church on track if it has lost its way. So, the limited time frame with the knowledge that he will only be there for a certain number of months does give an incredible sense of freedom the permanent pastor might not have. He can resolve and not pacify or indulge dysfunctional behavior if it is present.

WRAP-UP

Strategic: This is a key word. This connotes that the TSP's role is to confine himself to preaching and working with the pastoral and board leadership. In my case and because of my other responsibilities, I confine my time to campus from Sunday through Monday night or Tuesday morning. Sermon preparation is done at my home office.

Longevity: A TSP needs to know his limitations. For some, six months is the maximum time they are effective. For others, they are able to stay for the duration.

Fulfillment: This is one of the key words in the equation. The TSP has a great sense of fulfillment and satisfaction when he looks in retrospect and sees a church being blessed by God because of his ministry and leadership.

Final Note: Being a Strategic Interim Pastor can be a lot of fun and bring much satisfaction. The responsibility can give a great sense of fulfillment and joy. Because of the deep joy and fulfillment of doing interim pastorates, I highly recommend others to consider this ministry.

Source: John Vawter
www.johnvawter.com