

SECTION

3

**CHOOSING
YOUR
GOVERNANCE
STRUCTURE**

Choosing Your Governance Structure

THIS SECTION of “Building A Leadership Team” provides you with several basic templates that are suitable for use as a resource for local church governance. Our churches are not restricted to choosing one of the following designs. You have the freedom to “order off of the menu” and develop one that is uniquely your own. These models do reflect systems that have been used effectively by our churches or in denominations with a kindred spirit in theology and polity. In many cases you will be able to borrow and compare copies of by-laws and transitional governance ideas from other EC Churches that will inform and expedite your own efforts to fashion a governance structure. It may not be necessary to “reinvent the wheel.” You may be able to customize an existing system to fit your present or projected context for ministry.

Each of the following designs has been used to advance the gospel and glorify God. All of them possess both strengths and weaknesses. A chart has been developed to provide you with a generalized overview of some of the contrasts and comparisons between them. This analysis attempts to be neutral; but is by necessity simplified and limited in its assessment. It is not intended to favor one structure over the others or to be a critique of any, merely an objective guide as to some of their distinguishing features.

These models do reflect systems that have been used effectively by our churches or in denominations with a kindred spirit in theology and polity.

In addition to the chart there is a written summary of each of the structures offering a more complete description of the options. To be faithful to a “principle based” philosophy of governance, these definitions have been kept basic and concise. It is for the church to elaborate on the outline and put “flesh on the skeleton” so as to adapt it to your needs and situation. Like any team, your leadership group will combine different skills, experiences, and opportunities that make it unlike any other. Be sure to maximize the gifts and graces of the “players” God is bringing to you. Make the most of your “home field advantage”.

PREAMBLE to leadership model options

GOVERNANCE in a local Evangelical Congregational Church starts with the congregation. The *Discipline* requires at least one annual meeting of the congregation “to review the work of the year, consider local opportunities and needs, and elect leaders and officers required by the *Discipline* or by the by-laws of the congregation. (The congregation) shall hear reports concerning the work, present status, and future program of the Church and of its organizations and societies, shall make recommendations to the Official Board/Ministry Council, and shall transact such business as may come before it.”

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A healthy congregation will invest in their chosen leaders the authority to set the mission and govern the ministries of their church. This representative body (the leaders) can be structured in a variety of ways.

(trustees), pastoral interests (stewards), and traditional ministries. This has served our churches well as a decision-making body.

The traditional Evangelical Congregational structure is the **(1) Official Board**. This structure is weighted towards property interests

An alternative Evangelical Congregational leadership structure is the **(2) Ministry Council**. This structure is most effective when designed to accomplish the stated mission of the church. Decision making is delegated to those doing the ministry while the Ministry Council reviews policy according to mission. When using this structure, the budget becomes the means of control.

There are times when it is appropriate for the leadership of the congregation to be formed around the vision of ministry of a pastor in what is sometimes called a **(3) Pastor Led Model** of governance. Very similar to that, would be the **(4) Staff Led Model**. A core group of leaders attuned to that vision are then brought together to guide the ministry of the church.

While these options all have many features in common there are ways in which the central emphasis varies between them. Perhaps we can generally differentiate between these four possible structures by seeing the first as focused on decision, the second on mission, and the third and fourth on vision.

*Find out what a church's people can do and plan that, before planning its structure, forms and organization. Let the church's self-identity be revealed. (Attributed to George Patterson in ***Knocking Over the Leadership Ladder***, by Paul Ford.)*

Leadership Model Options

General Comparisons and Contrasts

Model	Advantages	Challenges	Pastoral Role	Comments
OFFICIAL BOARD	Traditional Decision Oriented Democratic Brings all key leaders to the table	Property/Finance Focus Administrative/ Maintenance Orientation Emphasizes checks & balances	Pastor serves on governing body	Most adaptable to small & medium size churches
MINISTRY COUNCIL	Contextual Ministry Oriented Representational Allows for broader balance and emphasis on the mission	Requires better communication and more trust Raises the bar on leadership competency and responsibility	Pastor shepherds the governing body	Most adaptable to medium and larger churches with clear PMVV statement
PASTOR LED	Intentional Vision Oriented Authoritative Provides necessary direction and decision-making while leadership team is being built	Until leadership team is expanded it may limit ministry to pastor's ability Could become authoritarian	Pastor chairs the governing body	Most suitable for church plants and restarts
STAFF LED (Team Approach)	Relational Vision Oriented Cooperative Broadens the leadership base, brings the capacity to address complex and large-scale ministry, allows for specialization	Greater challenges for communication and coordination Large degree of separation from congregation as a whole Requires higher levels of proficiency	Pastor(s) serve as leadership group (coaches)	Adaptable to any size church, allows for expansion over time and formation of separate visioning and administrative boards (councils)

Official Board Model of Governance

FOR EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

THE OFFICIAL BOARD MODEL represents the traditional, historical format for local church governance in the EC Church. In that capacity it has served well for churches of varying sizes and in many different settings. In addition to familiarity, the Official Board has the advantages of simplicity and intimacy, bringing most of the key leaders “to the table” for every leadership meeting. It has the potential disadvantage of being weighted towards a focus on matters of property and finance if organized along customary lines with a preponderance of Trustees and Stewards. For the Official Board Model of governance to be most effective it is highly recommended that the various groups represented (i.e. Stewards, Trustees, Missions, etc.) meet separately and do their work prior to all Official Board meetings and report actions and recommendations to the group. When this happens, the Official Board is then free to spend its time considering the greater vision and mission of the church. This requires strong leadership on the part of the pastor and the Official Board president and discipline on the part of the president of the Trustees and Stewards.

Much of the following is adapted from the **2004** Edition of the *Discipline of the EC Church*, Section 312.

Purpose

The Official Board shall serve as the administrative body of a particular congregation, conducting the spiritual and temporal affairs of the congregation subject, however, to the right of the review vested hereby in the Local Conference. Under no circumstances shall the Official Board usurp or infringe upon the duties and powers, as well as the right of administrative review, vested by the *Discipline* in the Local Conference or others.

Membership and Organization

The membership of the Official Board shall consist of the pastor(s), the lay delegate to the National Conference, the class leaders, the trustees, the stewards, the general superintendent of the Sunday school, the president of the senior Christian Endeavor Society, the youth ministries representative, the president of the adult Missionary Fellowship or the chairperson of the local Missionary Committee, the church treasurer, and the chairman of the local board of Christian Education, all of whom shall be members of the congregation in good standing. Should any of the above persons be under legal age (18), they shall be advisory members. The congregation at the annual meeting may authorize the election of additional members to the Official Board. When authorized, such additional members shall be elected annually by the Official Board at the meeting following the annual congregational meeting, unless the congregation at the annual meeting has already elected such members. The number of additional members shall not exceed the number of trustees.

The Official Board will elect its officers (president, vice president, secretary and any others deemed necessary) annually at a meeting convened as soon as possible after the annual congregational meeting. The Board will also elect or appoint a church treasurer from among its members or the congregation. The treasurer will present a financial report to the Board at each of its meetings and complete the monthly and annual fiscal report forms required by the National Conference. The Board Secretary will maintain an accurate record of the minutes of all its proceedings. These minutes shall be open to the members of the congregation for inspection. The overall duties of the Board Officers shall be those customarily expected of their office, unless otherwise specified.

Meetings

The Official Board shall meet regularly, usually on a monthly basis. Due notice of each meeting shall be provided to all Board members. Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Board President or Pastor or at the request of four members of the Board. The Official Board shall also provide for and call the regular and special meetings of the Congregation.

Responsibilities

Subject to the rights and powers reserved to the Local Conference, the Official Board is charged with administering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation, receiving members into the congregation, approving and disapproving requests for letters of transfer, concerting the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation, supervising the administration of the various societies or officials of the congregation. The Board shall have authority over the uses made of the church building and other property. It may also appoint standing or special committees as needed. Standing Committees traditionally included an executive, property, and membership committee. When not a regular member of a committee, the pastor shall serve as an ex-officio member.

Historically, the duties of the specific office holders included on the Official Board can be summarized as follows:

CLASS LEADER(S) Originally local church members were organized into several classes (small groups) each of which was overseen by a class leader. The class leader was a lay person who assisted the pastor in shepherding a segment of the “flock” and in disciple making. Class leaders also served as prayer meeting and Bible study leaders.

STEWARDS Traditionally Stewards were elected at a session of the Local Conference from a ballot of nominees provided by the pastor. Stewards are tasked with meeting the pastor annually to negotiate his compensation package starting from the guidelines set by National Conference. They also are charged with seeing that adequate housing is provided for the pastor and for the provision of the communion emblems for the Lord’s Supper.

TRUSTEES Traditionally Trustees have been given responsibility for the maintenance and purchase of the church facility and property. Where the congregation is not yet incorporated, the Trustees hold and receive title to the property for the use of the congregation. They may be authorized by the Official Board or at a congregational meeting to represent the church in negotiations to buy, sell, or lease church property.

The most recent description of these traditional offices appears in the **2004** edition of *The Discipline of the EC Church* in paragraphs 312 - 315, and 322. The **2004 Discipline** is archived on the website www.eccenter.com (SEARCH – 2004 Discipline)

Every church using the Official Board Model should develop a companion set of By-laws consistent with the principles of this Governance Manual and the requirements of the current “Discipline” of the EC Church. The by-laws should clearly define the offices and duties of all office holder included on the Board. They should also specify how Board members are appointed or elected, their terms of office, and procedure for filling vacancies in office. Finished by-laws will provide a practical definition and explanation of the unique variant of the Official Board Model developed and used by your congregation.

Links

TO THE CONGREGATION – The Official Board should be in constant and regular communication with the congregation at large. It is required to hold at least one annual congregational meeting at which it reports on its actions and conducts the business and elections that may be required by the by-laws or *Discipline*.

TO THE LOCAL CONFERENCE – At least once a year the Official Board will convene in Local Conference. This means that it may be joined by the District Field Director and any holders of EC ministerial credentials assigned (located) at that congregation by National Conference. This reconfiguration provides for a point of connection between the local congregation and National Conference where matters of joint concern defined by the governance manual and *Discipline* are addressed.

TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE – The most significant linkage is through the annual election of a Lay Delegate and Alternate Lay Delegate to represent each church at National Conference. Together with the pastor these delegates provide every congregation with a voice at National Conference and ownership in its decisions. The delegates serve as the liaisons between the denomination and individual congregation.

Ministry Council Model of Governance

FOR EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

THE MINISTRY COUNCIL Model traces its roots to permission given to churches in the 1990's to explore "alternative organizations". The intent was to provide freedom to design and test governance structures enabling local churches to become more missional in the context of their community. As a result of this successful experiment, authorization for churches to adopt a Ministry Council Structure was approved for inclusion in the 2004 edition of the *Discipline*.

The Council structure benefits from being built around leaders who represent key ministry areas of the church which reflect the purpose, mission, visions, and value of the congregation as a whole. This more balanced and holistic approach to governance tends to result in a more outreach, growth-oriented congregation. Since in most council designs each major ministry is represented by a single person, there is a greater need to communicate discussions and decisions to other members of the wider ministry team. Council members may be required to wear multiple leadership "hats", serving on the council as well as a ministry commission or committee. This structure works best when it is trust-oriented and permission-giving in nature, empowering individuals and groups to do the ministry, while the Council focuses on the "big picture" of vision, goals, and overall mission of discipling.

Purpose

The Ministry Council shall serve as the administrative body of a particular congregation conducting the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation subject, however, to the right of the review vested hereby in the Local Conference. Under no circumstance shall the Official Board usurp or infringe upon the duties and powers, as well as the right of administrative review, vested by the *Discipline* in the Local Conference or others.

Membership and Organization

The membership configuration of each Ministry Council may vary greatly from church to church because its structure should reflect the purpose, mission, vision, and values of the local congregation and facilitate the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Every Ministry Council must include the pastor(s), the lay delegate to the National Conference and church treasurer. They will be joined by a leader (chairperson) representing each of the major ministry areas (commissions/teams) designated by the congregation as necessary to be directly represented on the council as the governing body of the church. Churches with council governance have usually established "commissions" to oversee the following essential areas of ministry: Evangelism, Discipleship, Property, Worship, Missions, and Finance. These groups may be re-combined and renamed as deemed best in the local context. The aim is the development of a system that promotes church health in terms of missionality, spirituality, and functionality.

Additional ministry representatives or at-large members may be added as the church determines, but their number should not exceed those of the core ministries identified by the congregation. Council members shall be members of the congregation in good standing. Should any of the above persons be under legal age (18), they shall be advisory members. It is up to the local church to determine how Council members are selected and by whom. In some current Ministry Council configurations individuals selected to chair a ministry commission are given a seat on the council by virtue of that position. In others, leaders are selected to the Council and then appointed to serve on or lead a particular commission.

At the next regular Council meeting after the annual congregational meeting, officers should be selected. Typically, they will include a Chairperson (president), Vice Chairperson (vice president), Secretary, Treasurer, and others deemed necessary. The treasurer will present a financial report to the council at each of its meetings and complete the monthly and annual fiscal report forms required by the National Conference. The Secretary will maintain an accurate record of the minutes of all its proceedings. These minutes shall be open to the members of the congregation for inspection. The overall duties of the Council officers shall be those customarily expected of their office, unless otherwise specified.

Meetings

The church may determine the frequency and scheduling of Ministry Council meetings. It is recommended that the governing body convene at least on a bimonthly basis. Due notice of each meeting shall be provided to all Council members. Special meetings of the Council may be called by the Chairperson or Pastor or at the request of four members of the Council. The Council shall also provide for and call the regular and special meetings of the congregation.

Responsibilities

Subject to the rights and powers reserved to the Local Conference, the Ministry Council is charged with administering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation, receiving members into the congregation, approving and disapproving requests of letters of transfer, concerting the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation, supervising the administration of the various societies or officials of the congregation. The Council shall have authority over the uses made of the church building and other property. It may also appoint standing or special committees as needed. Standing Committees traditionally include an executive and membership committee. When not a regular member of a committee the pastor shall serve as an ex-officio member with vote.

Every church using the Ministry Council Model should develop a companion set of By-laws consistent with the principles of this Governance Manual and the requirements of the current "Discipline" of the EC Church. The by-laws should clearly define the offices and duties of all office holders included on the Council. They should also specify how Council members are appointed or elected, their terms of office, and procedure for filling vacancies in office. Finished by-laws will provide a practical definition and explanation of the unique variant of the Ministry Council Model developed and used by your congregation.

Links

TO THE CONGREGATION – The Ministry Council should be in constant and regular communication with the congregation at large. It is required to hold at least one annual congregational meeting to which it reports on its actions and conducts the business and elections that may be required by the by-laws or *Discipline*.

TO THE LOCAL CONFERENCE – At least once a year the Ministry Council will convene in Local Conference. This means that it may be joined by the District Field Director and any holders of EC ministerial credentials assigned (located) at that congregation by National Conference. This reconfiguration provides for a point of connection between the local congregation and National Conference where matters of joint concern defined by the governance manual and *Discipline* are addressed.

TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE – The most significant linkage is through the annual election of a Lay Delegate and Alternate Lay Delegate at Local Conference to represent

each church at National Conference. Together with the pastor these delegates provide every congregation with a voice at National Conference and ownership in its decisions. The delegates serve as the liaisons between the denomination and individual congregation.

Pastor Led Model of Governance

FOR EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

THE PASTOR LED MODEL is most appropriate to a new church plant, or a congregation going through the process of restart or revitalization. It is assumed in all of our leadership models that the pastor functions as the primary leader of the congregation and serves as the point person casting a vision for ministry and gathering together a leadership team to pursue that vision. But where a congregation is still so “young” or small that a core group of leaders has not yet been identified and equipped, a solo lead pastor may by necessity be required to take on a wider array of leadership tasks than would be expected or desired in a more mature ministry. In most cases it is anticipated that Pastor Led governance is a temporary structure that will be outgrown and replaced by another, broader-based model as soon as is practical for the health of the church.

This model has the strengths of being vision-oriented and focused. It enables a new work to be birthed or an older one to be renewed. It facilitates unity and decisiveness. It can have the weakness of being left in place for too long, creating an unhealthy, unscriptural dependency upon the pastor. Even a richly gifted and deeply committed pastor may limit the growth of ministry if he does not multiply and release additional leaders to share the opportunities and responsibilities for outreach and discipling. Every leader, including a church planter pioneering a new work from scratch, needs to be under accountability to someone else and in healthy relationship with others.

Purpose

The Pastor Led Model allows for a solo pastor with or without a small core group of leaders to administer and establish the work of a new or recovering church by conducting the temporal and spiritual affairs of that ministry. During this interim when many of the leadership structures built into other EC Churches cannot be initiated due to a lack of qualified leaders, many of the functions of those groups will be carried by an individual pastor or a ministry launch team of just a few people. Even in this phase, however, the Pastor Led structure shall under no circumstance usurp or infringe upon the duties and powers, as well as the right of administrative review, vested by the *Discipline* in the National Conference or others. In most cases ministries using this model will also function under the guidance and guidelines of the Kingdom Extension Community.

Membership and Organization

The unique circumstances under which the Pastor Led Model is likely to be deployed make it virtually impossible to lay out even a skeletal outline describing what this nascent leadership structure should look like. In many ways it is like a child still growing in the womb from conception to birth. It is recommended that the lead pastor consult and use the start-up training and resources provided through the Kingdom Extension Community as he begins to develop a governance structure. The type of leadership team built should flow out of the purpose, mission, vision, and values God has given for the ministry.

Another important word of counsel is to begin with the end in mind. Examine the other leadership models presented in this manual. Make a tentative decision as to which option you anticipate adopting in the future. Find ways to lay a foundation in your fledgling leadership structure and selection of leaders that will position you to transition to the system you have chosen when the time comes.

Since an official “church membership roll” isn’t created until a church is chartered, membership in a traditional sense cannot be used as a criterion for leadership eligibility. An even greater emphasis than usual needs to be placed on issues of character, spirituality, giftedness, and shared vision when selecting leaders for the team. Initially the lead pastor may need to be more involved in things like minute taking and financial record keeping than is ideal. For the sake of accuracy and accountability these are responsibilities that should be shared or delegated with qualified lay leaders as soon as possible. Individuals with the potential to become leaders or officers in the developing structure should be cultivated.

Meetings

The pastor will determine the frequency and scheduling of leadership meetings. It is important to free people up to do ministry rather than tie them up attending unnecessary meetings. At the same time meeting together helps build relationship and reinforce a common vision.

Responsibilities

Subject to the rights and powers reserved to the National Conference and others, the lead pastor and leadership team are charged with administering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation, in line with the purpose, mission, vision and values developed for the ministry. The pastor and leadership team are responsible for building a strategy for disciple making and outreach. As the ministry grows, the leadership structure will need to grow with it and make decisions regarding the model of governance it will choose to implement. It must be remembered that structure is but a means to an end, not an end unto itself. The system should serve and support ministry, not exist and sustain itself at the cost of ministry. In many cases “less is more” and the simpler the system, the more likely it is to be able to reproduce itself more rapidly.

Every church using the Pastor Led Model should be preparing to select a more developed model as the growth of the church allows and requires. At that time By-laws and other supporting documents and structures can be developed as needed in order to facilitate healthy ministry.

Links

TO THE CONGREGATION – The lead pastor and leadership team should be in constant and regular communication with the congregation at large. For the most part business will be conducted through personal relationships and networking rather than formal meetings. As the group grows it should consider the wisdom of holding at least one annual “congregational meeting” to use in part to plan for “the next steps” in accomplishing the mission and reaching for the vision.

TO THE LOCAL CONFERENCE – Prior to chartering there is no provision or requirement for an official Local Conference to be held. Issues generally assigned to that session will be cared for by the pastor and leadership team working with the District Field Director or Kingdom Extension Community.

TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE – Prior to chartering, the church is not authorized to select a Lay Delegate but can choose representatives who will attend National Conference in an advisory/non-voting capacity. These representatives serve as the liaisons between the denomination and individual congregation.

For the Pastor Led Model to be used outside of the church plant, restart, or revitalization guidelines of the Kingdom Extension Community, prior permission must be obtained from the Bishop and Church Health Community of the National Conference. At all stages, the Pastor Led Model must operate within and under the requirements of the current *Discipline*, Rules of National Conference, and strategy and policy of the Kingdom Extension Community.

Staff Led Model of Governance

FOR EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

THE STAFF LED LEADERSHIP paradigm may most commonly be considered for use in a larger, multiple staff congregation where the scale and complexity of leadership is perceived to have outgrown the effectiveness of the Official Board or Ministry Council Model. In this setting a structure is needed which can integrate and infuse the vision of the “pastoral team” through several supportive layers of leadership. In some cases, the solution is to create an overall governing board which focuses on the development of vision, direction, and general policy for the ministry. This vision is then entrusted to another level of staff or commission leadership for actual implementation and the creation of procedures, processes, and programs that facilitate daily operations.

It is possible however, that a Staff Led or team leadership style structure could be the next step of development from a Pastor Led Model or even employed in a church plant. In this case a less hierarchical and more relational “co-pastor” approach might be pursued simultaneously with the creation of a vision-focused governing board or council. There are also team-based structures that seek to organize ministry on a more connectional, networking basis.

Purpose

The Staff Led Model intentionally broadens the leadership base so as to maximize the capacity of the structure to expand and specialize as needed. It has the advantage of embracing a team approach to ministry that finds unity in sharing a common vision. Its ability to separate supervisory tasks (visioning) from administration (management) may enable the ministry to remain more effective and efficient while continuing to grow in size and scale. At the same time, a team-based structure can also be used to facilitate the multiplication of groups and leaders on a more localized level. In this form leadership develops organically, in more of a networking style.

The challenges of the staff led approach come in the areas of communicating and coordinating the vision at all levels. In larger churches there may be a greater need to formalize job descriptions and procedures so as to clarify roles and responsibilities. The governing board and staff need to work together in a mutual partnership. The group that does the vision casting must remain connected to the groups that care for the ongoing operations of the ministry. Both leadership bodies must stay linked to the congregation as a whole. Since more leaders are needed to populate this structure, the capacity to equip and release gifted leaders becomes crucial.

Membership and Organization

This format has many different variations and can be modified in numerous ways to reflect the opportunities and history of a given congregation. Typically, an overall board or council is established and charged with the development and evaluation of the purpose, mission, vision, and values of the ministry. This main governing body usually consists of the pastoral staff and key lay leaders selected for their spiritual maturity, character, wisdom, and gifting to oversee the congregation from a “big picture” perspective. “What has God called us to be? Who has He commissioned us to reach?” Together this group clarifies the focus. Other officers or representatives may be added to the leadership core group as needed.

Beneath this vision-oriented group there is usually another level of leadership organized to carry out the mission and fulfill the vision. This “layer” could consist of as many ministry commissions or teams as the church deems necessary to its healthy functioning. These commissions or teams could be led by staff members, pastoral or lay, or by chairpersons elected

or appointed from the membership at large. This group may also be augmented by the addition of other officers or leaders as deemed best. Each of these “units” could have their own sub-set of committees or teams as best suits the situation and system.

Meetings

The two-tiered (or multi-level) nature of this structure means that the schedule of meetings is more elaborate and must be worked out for each local setting. The overall governing board may meet on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis rather than month to month. Meetings of the “middle level” commissions or teams may be monthly or on an “as needed” or “as agreed upon” basis. In this structure the pastoral staff or leadership team play a vital role in cultivating the vision and coordinating the functioning of the various parts of the structure. Informal networking becomes an important piece in releasing and deploying people for ministry, instead of tying them up in meetings. Person-to-person contact is supplemented by the development of a detailed budget and procedures/policy “manual” in order to provide the necessary degree of consistency and control to the system.

Responsibilities

Subject to the rights and powers reserved to the Local Conference, the Staff Led structure is charged with administering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation, receiving members into the congregation, approving or disapproving requests for letters of transfer, concerting the best measure for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation, supervising the administration of the various commissions, societies or officials of the congregation. The governing body shall have authority over the uses made of the church building and other property. It may also appoint commissions, teams, standing or special committees as needed.

Major leadership groups should provide for the existence of their own executive committee. Adequate provision should also be made for the recording of minutes and keeping of financial records. The structure should establish a means of determining church membership. Members of the pastoral staff should be appointed to councils, commissions, or boards that represent the ministries for which they have major responsibilities. It is assumed that the senior or lead pastor will serve on an overall governing body and be at least an ex-officio member of the remaining primary leadership groups, as well as others that reflect his gifts and graces for ministry.

Every church using the Staff Led Model should develop a companion set of By-laws consistent with the principles of this Governance Manual and the requirements of the current *Discipline* of the EC Church. The by-laws should clearly define the offices and duties of all governance groups and office holders. They should also specify how leaders are appointed or elected, their terms of office, and procedure for filling vacancies in office. Finished by-laws will provide a practical definition and explanation of the unique variant of the Staff Led Model developed and used by your congregation. Larger churches may find it necessary to produce a companion manual of policies or procedures to expedite the functioning of their leadership system.

Links

TO THE CONGREGATION – The Staff Led system should be in constant and regular communication with the congregation at large. It is required to hold at least one annual congregational meeting to which the overall governing body and its major sub-groups report on their actions and conduct the business and elections that may be required by the by-laws or *Discipline*.

TO THE LOCAL CONFERENCE – At least once a year the highest governing body will convene in Local Conference. This means that it may be joined by the District Field Director and any holders of EC ministerial credentials assigned (located) at that congregation by National Conference. This reconfiguration provides for a point of connection between the local congregation and National Conference where matters of joint concern defined by the governance manual and *Discipline* are addressed.

TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE – The most significant linkage is through the annual election of a Lay Delegate and Alternate Lay Delegate at Local Conference to represent each church at National Conference. Together with the pastor these delegates provide every congregation with a voice at National Conference and ownership in its decisions. The delegates serve as the liaisons between the denomination and individual congregation.

“Essentials” Checklist for All EC Governance Structures

SEE ALSO THE 2016 EC DISCIPLINE SECTIONS 320-316

FOR THE SAKE OF UNITY to our core values and fidelity to a principle based approach to leadership, the following features must be incorporated into the governance structure of all of our churches. [In the case of a church plant, restart, or revitalization work it is understood that some of these features may not be practical at the very beginning. They should be added to the system as soon as possible and prior to chartering.]

1. The lead pastor will be a member with vote of the highest governing body.
2. Provision will be made for the election of a Lay Delegate and Alternate Lay Delegate to National Conference as defined by the *Discipline*.
3. Provision will be made for the election or appointment of representatives from the church to the District Ministry team the congregation is assigned to.
4. Provision will be made for a functional Pastoral Relations Committee as established in the *Discipline* and the Rules of National Conference.
5. Provision will be made for the highest governing body to meet and fulfill the duties assigned to the Local Conference by the *Discipline* and the Rules of National Conference.
6. Provision will be made for the timely and orderly selection of all office holders, along with the means of filling vacancies that arise mid-term.
7. Provision will be made for the selection of the officers of the highest governing body of the church who will also serve as corporate officers for the ministry.
8. Provision will be made for the development of a set of by-laws governing the congregation, and that these by-laws will be stated to be amendable by a favorable vote of the majority of the church membership at a meeting duly called and announced for that purpose.
9. Provision will be made for an Annual Congregational Meeting to be held as defined by the *Discipline*.
10. The structure must be subordinate to and compatible with the requirements of the *Discipline* and Rules of National Conference. Each congregation retains the right to own its own property and disaffiliate from the denomination, but only according to the procedure established by the *Discipline*.
11. All proposals for the development and adoption of a new governance structure must be reviewed and approved by the Bishop, Executive Director, and Church Health Associate prior to its acceptance and implementation by the local church.

The Local Conference

THE LOCAL CONFERENCE refers to special sessions of the highest governing body of the local congregation, which must be held at least once a year. When convened for this purpose the Official Board, Ministry Council, Leadership Team, or Governing Body is augmented by the addition of all itinerant and licensed EC ministers who are members of the congregation. They are joined also by the District Field Director who chairs the meeting when present.

A complete listing of the duties and details of the Local Conference is found in Sections 330-334 of the *Discipline*. The essential purpose of this session is to provide for an official and guaranteed connection between an individual congregation and the larger denominational family. It is while meeting as a Local Conference that elections are held for the Lay and Alternate Delegate who represent the church to National Conference. It is in this session that a pastoral compensation package based upon National Conference requirements and guidelines receives final approval. It is Local Conference that acts upon candidates for ministerial credentials who will be referred to National Conference and its committees for processing. In cases where charges of misconduct brought against a church leader cannot be resolved at the local level through the *Discipline's* process for restoration, it is Local Conference that acts to refer the dispute to National Conference for resolution. The Local Conference also functions as a joint governing body caring for matters of common interest in a multiple church charge.

Congregational Meetings

AN INTEGRAL PART of congregationalism is the annual meeting of the leaders of the local church with their congregations. A sample agenda for this meeting could include:

- ◆ Devotions
- ◆ Review the work of the year (Pastor, Commission/Committee Reports)
- ◆ Consideration of local opportunities and needs
- ◆ Elect leaders and officers required by the *Discipline* or by-laws of the congregation
- ◆ Hear reports on special initiatives of the church regarding present and future programs
- ◆ Make recommendations to the governing body (Ministry Council/Official Board)
- ◆ Transact such business that may come before it.

Some General Recommendations for the Congregational Meeting include:

- ◆ The pastor should be responsible for the leadership of the Congregational Meeting and should preside over the meeting or appoint a Ministry Council/Official Board leader.
- ◆ As part of the meeting, the pastor should have an important role in reporting to the congregation. He may also want to give a meditation to open the meeting. It is important that the pastor set the tone for the meeting.
- ◆ If the Pastor and/or Ministry Council/Official Board know of any special issues or concerns from the congregation, these issues sometimes can be handled in smaller group situations or committees prior to the full congregation meeting.
- ◆ Also, if special issues arise at the congregational meeting, it may be helpful to refer them to special council/board committees to address the issues. It is difficult to discuss or resolve issues in a large group meeting.
- ◆ It may be helpful to get written questions and/or agenda items from the congregation prior to the meeting to allow for preparation on how to address these issues.
- ◆ The agenda for the meeting should be assembled by the pastor, with input from the Ministry Council/Official Board leadership.