

GROWTH POINTS

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Boards & Teams

Throughout the history of the Church, various organizational models have emerged to help fulfill its mission.

One of the primary distinctions lies between **team ministry**, a model seen throughout Scripture, and **boards**, a structure developed in more recent times.

While Scripture provides a clear precedent for team-based ministry, boards have become a necessary element in modern churches for legal, organizational, and accountability purposes.

Precedent for Team Ministry

Team ministry is modeled in Scripture; Boards are not.

- Jesus called twelve disciples, forming a ministry team (Mark 3:13-19).
- Paul worked alongside a team of leaders like Timothy, Barnabas, and Silas (Acts 13:1-5).
- The early church operated through collaborative leadership, such as the appointment of deacons in Acts 6.

Despite the biblical emphasis on team ministry, boards have emerged as essential components of church governance. This shift has been driven by several practical and theological factors.

Emergence of Church Boards

Precedent for Group Decision-Making

- The early apostles modeled a form of group decision-making. For example, in Acts 6:1-7, the apostles gathered the disciples to address the issue of food distribution, leading to the appointment of deacons.
- Since the Holy Spirit indwells all believers, there is a theological basis for involving more people in decision-making. Boards provide a structure for broader participation in church leadership.

Shared Responsibility and Accountability

- Boards distribute the responsibilities of governance, ensuring that no single individual bears the full weight of leadership.

Orderly Church Governance

- Paul's exhortation to do everything "decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40) supports the idea of structured governance, which many churches implement through boards.

Legal Requirements

- Modern non-profit corporations, including churches, are required by law to have a board of directors to oversee their operations.

General Responsibilities

Church boards have legal and relational roles, among which are . . .

Calling and Evaluating the Lead Pastor

- A board's primary role is to call, support, and evaluate the lead pastor, who should be the board's sole employee.

Overseeing Financial Solvency

- Review the church financial plans to ensure alignment with its mission, values, and policies.
- Report the church's activities and financial condition to donors and members.

Monitoring Legal and Ethical Standards

- Design processes to ensure the church operates in a legally and ethically sound manner.

Setting Policy

- Establish broad policies and ensure that ministry activities align with these policies.

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

- Clearly describe working conditions, lines of authority, and the relationship between the board and staff.

Keeping Records

- Maintain accurate written records of all proceedings, decisions, and meetings.

Legal Responsibilities

Fiduciary Responsibility — “Duty of Care”

- Board members must act prudently and in the best interests of the church.
- This includes total oversight of the church's operations, ensuring that all activities advance the church's mission.
- While boards may hire consultants or legal experts, they cannot delegate their ultimate responsibility.

Transactional Responsibility — “Duty of Loyalty”

- Board members must prioritize the church's interests over personal gain.
- Any personal interest in church transactions must be disclosed, and board members must abstain from decisions where a conflict exists.
- The board should establish clear policies outlining fiduciary and transactional responsibilities, with annual training for all members.

The modern church board plays a vital role in ensuring the church operates effectively, legally, and ethically.

By understanding the foundations, responsibilities, and dynamics outlined above, church boards can serve as effective partners in ministry, helping the church fulfill its mission for the glory of God

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