

Structure Change
Presentation to Membership
Feb 23/20

- Over the past 1 ½ years, this has involved much discussion and teaching with the Elders and Deacons.
- And therein is the difficulty – I have to condense all of that into about 1 hour with you and try to give you a good understanding of what we are proposing. I say that to encourage you to make sure that if something isn't clear, ask the questions.
- Also I want to clarify, whatever decision that is made, is your decision. You may accept what we propose, you may tweak it, you may even radically change it or you may decide to change nothing. This is your decision as a membership, not an Elder or Deacon decision.

SOME HISTORY of why we feel change needs to happen with our structure.

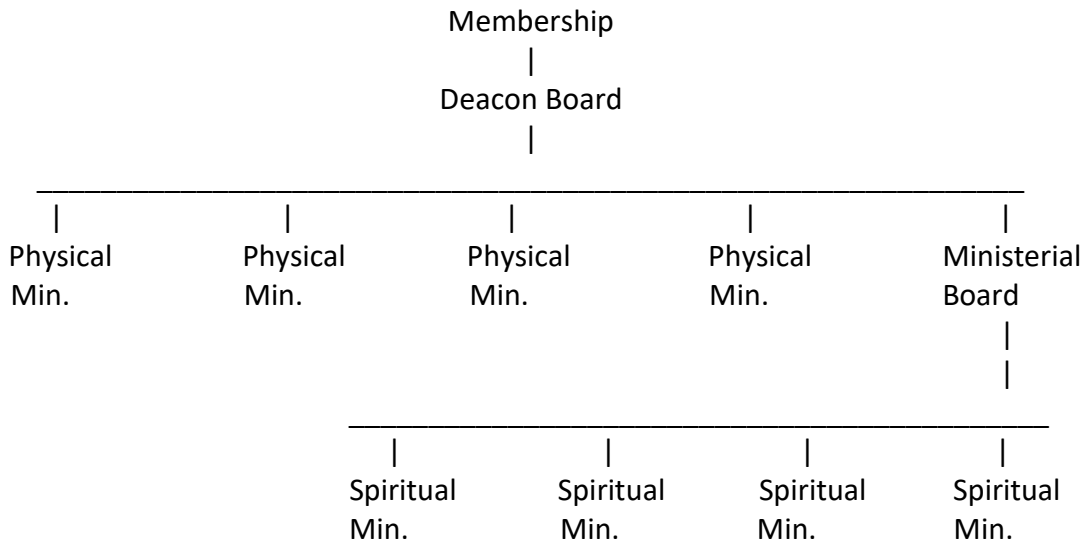
1. Planted by LaCrete Berghaler Conference
2. Skipping some history, Abe Bueckert was placed here as the Church Planting Pastor.
3. As the Church was formed, an Elder Board (Ministerial) was formed to serve with Abe.
4. Then Deacons were added to the Board to help out – Deacons to take care of the more physical things so that the Elders could focus on the spiritual things.
5. Eventually they became two Boards – Elders to focus on the spiritual / Deacons to focus on the physical
6. When the Church became incorporated, the Gov't required that there be a Board of Directors who are responsible for the finances and all legalities. The Church decided to give this to the Deacons, to keep the Elders free to focus on the Spiritual.
7. This then made the Deacon Board the top board legally. Yet it seems that the Elder Board was still seen as the top Board in matters of Spiritual leadership. Up to 2012, this was still the assumption, though for awhile, we only had one Elder – which necessitated a shift of power to the Deacon Board. (Actually, our constitution makes each the top board in their respective responsibilities)
8. This is where the mistake was made, although innocently, because you cannot separate the Spiritual leadership from the Financial leadership.
9. Because the top board in the practical sense of leading the Church was still the Elders, there also developed a sense that we need to have a Deacon Board who has an authority over them to hold them accountable.
10. This becomes a further problem –
 - a. The Deacon Board holds the authority but not the responsibility to lead the Church – The Elder Board has the responsibility to lead the Church, but not the authority – this has conflict written all over it.
 - b. It is also a system with a built in “mis-trust.” The message is, “We don't trust the Elders, so we will place Deacons over them to hold them accountable.” If that is really how you want to have a system of accountability, then why should you trust the Deacons – so then you should have a Board over them to hold them accountable and so on...

- c. Furthermore, it is a false system of accountability
 - i. Elders are to be chosen according to spiritual qualifications
 - ii. We elect deacons to hold them accountable – biblically, they are to be chosen according to the same qualifications, but we don’t – any male who is a member and who is still breathing can be elected to hold the Elders accountable.
 - iii. As an accountability system, it is useless because the Deacons, if they are the top board must delegate the responsibilities to the Elders (what they will be measured against) and the authority and resources to accomplish those responsibilities. But this isn’t even expected of the Deacons. So what are they to be holding them accountable for.
- d. It is a system designed to create silos – two boards with it own values, goals and vision – which is designed to create conflict
- e. Eventually one Board has to rise to hold the authority – which has been our Deacon Board – which would have worked if they had the responsibility to lead the Church Spiritually, but they didn’t. So we have a Leadership team, called the Elders who have the responsibility to lead, but not the authority to lead – the result is discouragement and frustration – it kills their leadership potential

11. End Result:

- a. Constitutionally, we have two top boards – Elders as the top board in all matters spiritual. Deacons as the top board in all things physical and financial.
- b. Legally the Deacons are the top board
- c. Practically/spiritually in regards to leadership, the Elders are to be the top board.
- d. So we had two charts – one for the gov’t, one for us.

FIRST CHART



SECOND CHART



As time has gone on, the Deacon board has come to see themselves as the top board period, to the point of arguing that there isn't two Boards, only one Board.

And legally they are right.

And practically they are right – because you can't in practice have two top boards each with authority.

Therein is the problem, the system has evolved from the Elders being the top Board with the authority and responsibility to lead to the Deacons as the top board, but not with the responsibility to lead. They have simply stayed with their original responsibilities but have taken up the authority and power.

But that leaves the Elders with the responsibility to lead, but without the authority to do so. So it becomes a power/authority struggle.

- e. The result: a lot of confusion
 - i. Some see there being only one board – deacons – which demotes the Elders to a committee
 - ii. Some see it as it is stated in the constitution – Two Boards
 - iii. Some see the Elders as being the top board in leading the church
 - iv. And some just don't know
- f. The result: several years of conflict as the Elders tried to exercise the authority they felt they had to lead and the Deacons feeling that the Elders were challenging their authority.
- g. The result: it kills vision and creativity

Some points:

- Our system is not Biblical
- Our system in any other organization or business would not be seen as a healthy system.
- Our system is built on mistrust – designed around mistrust
- Our system has conflict of interest built within it. The results are what it was designed to create
- Please, Please, however you do it, go to a one board system – we cannot have two boards with competing authority and expect it to go well.

Review of Biblical

1. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church – we are to uncover his will and obey it as a church.
2. Congregation is under Jesus Christ
 - a. There is evidence that they were involved in some decision making – how much?
 - b. Were the final authority in matters of discipline
 - c. Were involved in the choosing of their leaders

There is a lot of silence in Scripture on the role of the Congregation in leadership of the Church and that is why there are so many variations in the Christian world of how the Congregation is involved in leadership.

With that said, we are a Congregational System where the Membership is the final say and authority in the Church. We are not changing that.

Congregations however do not lead themselves, therefore we need leaders. And so all Congregations delegate responsibilities and authority to leaders to keep the Church functioning well. Again, we are not changing that aspect.

3. A Top Leadership Team – The Church Board (In the Bible they were called Elders/Overseers/Pastors/Shepherds). Because those terms have come to mean different things in different church settings, I am going to call this team, the Church Board to stay away from the baggage. You can call it what you want – Ministerial / Elders / Deacons...
 - a. Chosen according to Biblical Qualifications**
 - b. Chosen for Biblical Responsibilities**
4. Ministry Teams – in the bible they were called Deacons
 - a. Chosen according to the same Biblical Qualifications as the Church Board**
 - b. Chosen to fulfill responsibilities which the Church assigns them.**

THE KEY QUESTION: ARE WE GOING TO BE BIBLICAL OR NOT?

Within that Biblical framework, you can design the Church Structure.

But the Biblical frame work does limit us?

1. No where do you find two competing boards – Biblically a top spiritual leadership team chosen according to biblical qualifications for biblically defined responsibilities.
2. You can go several ways.
 - a. Make the Elders the Church Board
 - b. Make the Deacons the Church Board
 - c. Choose a new Board

It makes no difference – what you call them, if they are the top spiritual leadership team chosen according to biblical qualifications for biblically defined responsibilities.

Our suggestion: Start new: the membership elect the one board according to Biblical qualifications. It would likely involve some members from both boards and perhaps some new people.

As the leadership of the Church – both Boards, we have decided to ask the Membership to go biblical with our Church Structure.

With that in mind, we want to present to a proposal of what this could look like.

At this stage, this is a proposal only.

We are looking for your input.

Today, I am not looking for your discussion on the proposal, since our time is limited.

I am looking to present it and give some time for questions to make sure that it is clear to you.

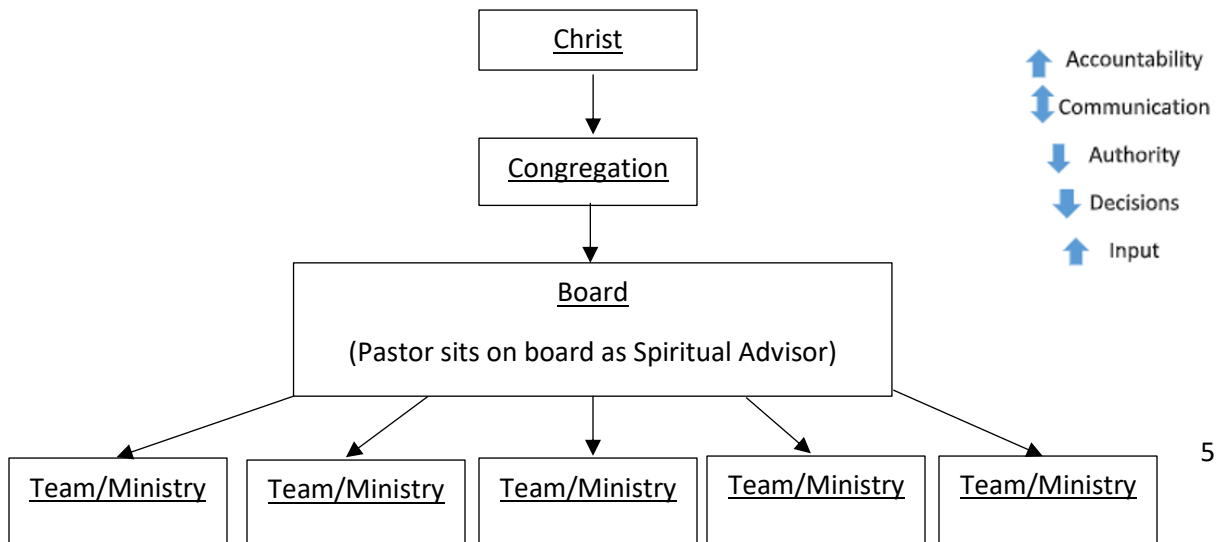
Then I am asking for you to take it home, review it further, talk to one another and then we are going to invite you back for a couple listening meetings.

In the listening meetings, we as leaders are not going to argue the proposal. We want to hear what you think, your concerns if you have any, suggestions for improvement etc.

We will be dividing you up into small groups with one Deacon or Elder going with the group to facilitate the discussion – he is not there to try to convince you, but to listen and record what you have to say.

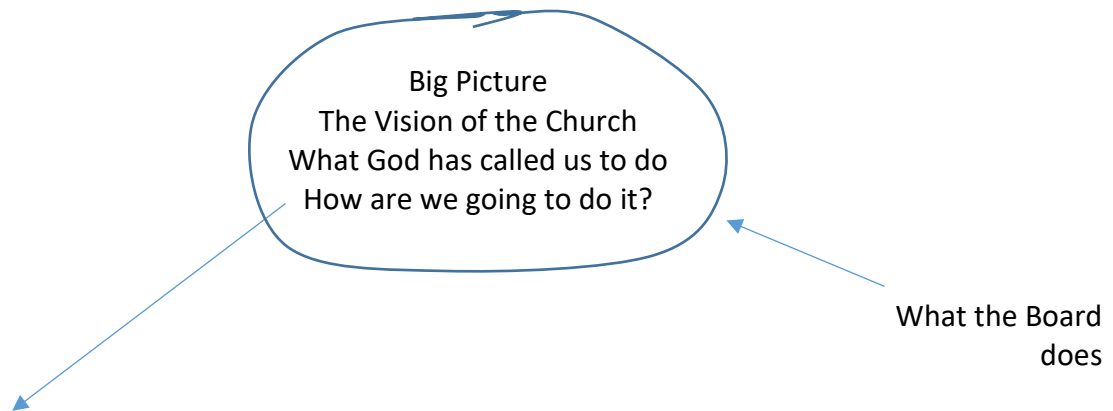
Then as leaders we will compile what you have said and take it into account.

So let's start the Proposal with a flow chart.



HERE IS WHERE THE BIGGEST CHANGE COMES

1. Presently each board is really designed around a micro-management model – it is typical of all churches when they first start – the board/s is delegated to take care of all the little details which the membership does not want to do. The problem is, as the Church grows, this model becomes unhealthy, but because it is the way that it has always been done, the Board continues to micro-manage.
2. What does micro-management look like?
 - a. Deacon Board deciding how to fix coffee makers, furnaces, doors etc.
 - b. Deacon Board making financial decisions which have already been decided in the budget.
 - c. Elder Board making decisions about whether someone should be visited, encouraged etc.
 - d. Ministry Teams having to run small decisions past one of the boards for approval
 - e. Much of what both the Deacons and Elders do revolves around micro-managing.
3. All those details are important, but they do not belong to the Top Leadership Team of the Church
 - a. The Top Team should be dealing with the BIG PICTURE – the vision of the church
 - b. How the vision defines the ministry of each team – working with each team to help them define what their responsibilities are, what success looks like, what they are going to be measured against, what authority needs to be delegated to the ministry team, what resources, what training..
 - c. How accountability looks for each ministry team
 - d. Making sure that the teams are healthy and are free to be creative within the set boundaries.
 - e. Prayer
 - f. Ministry of the Word
 - g. Making sure spiritual care happens
 - h. Discerning the mind of Christ as it pertains to the Church.
4. When you micro-manage, then yes, there is too much work for one board
5. When you micro-manage, it kills creativity and volunteerism
6. The only way that this proposal works is if the “One Board” does not micro-manage but works with the BIG PICTURE.
7. Ministry teams deal with the details – e.g. Church Maintenance team – coffee makers and furnaces –/ e.g. Spiritual Care Team – visiting people – meeting needs / e.g. Financial Team – preparing budget for the Board to review before the membership.



Small Picture – Where the ministry happens
 Has to fit within the parameters of the Big Picture?
 How does the Vision work itself out in e.g. the Youth Group?
 What are the boundaries?
 What are the delegated responsibilities – the things which the team will be held accountable for – the measurement of success
 What authority needs to be given? Resources given?
 Within that context, the team is given freedom to be creative.
 Responsibility is delegated down
 Authority is delegated to match the responsibility
 Resources are given to match the responsibility
 Accountability flows upward.

Let's illustrate this in a different way.

The Sandbox

We are all familiar with a sandbox.
 Usually four sides, filled with sand, where children will play for hours.

Think of the Church as a very large sandbox, so large that it can have multiple sandboxes within it.

The top leadership team shouldn't be playing in the small sandboxes.
 They deal with the big sandbox – specifically the sides.

Here are the four sides of the sandbox which they are to help define and guard.

Side 1: **Mission** – What are we ultimately committed to accomplishing – what we do

Side 2: **Guiding Principles** – How are we committed to operating

Side 3: **Central Ministry Focus** – What do we need to be doing day in and day out to accomplish our mission?

Side 4: **Preferred Culture** – Culture (ways of thinking, of doing, history, beliefs, values...) – what culture do we have to create to accomplish the first three?

Within that sandbox are small sandboxes, which are the various ministries of the Church.

Each small sandbox is contained by the large sandbox – their mission and central ministry focus must fit the big picture, the mission and central ministry focus. Their ways of doing things must fit within the big picture of the guiding principles and preferred culture.

So, each small sandbox has its own boundaries which must fit within the larger boundaries. But within the small sandbox, each ministry team is set free to play, to be creative.

Back to the Board – it is their job to with the congregation to define the large sandbox – it is their job to make sure that the small sandboxes fit within the large one.

ACKNOWLEDGING A FEAR

Where is the accountability for this Board? That is why we had a Deacon Board over the Elders.

1. The Membership is the Accountability
 - a. It is no different than now – Where is the accountability for the Deacon Board? – in the Membership. It would be the same for the new Board.
 - b. Ultimately, in any Congregational System, the Membership is the authority over the Board and accountability flows up to them.
 - c. Memberships, however tend not to do this well – how do we improve this?
2. The Budget is also an accountability for the Board and for all levels.
 - a. Budget is to be a yearly plan of ministry – which the membership should question – they are approving a plan, not the spending of money.
 - b. No money unless:
 - i. Why you need it.
 - ii. How this reflects your ministry plan
 - iii. How this fulfills our mission and vision
3. Plurality of Elders is God's plan of accountability
4. God's qualifications are also God's plan of accountability
 - a. Chosen by the Holy Spirit and the Membership
 - b. According to God's character qualifications
 - c. According to God's ministry responsibilities

When we reject this level of accountability, we reject true accountability