

A One Board System in the Church

Some terminology:

CHURCH BOARD. I shall refer in this paper to the one-board as the “Church Board.” It could be called the Deacon Board, Diaconate, or go by another name. In a one-board system, only one board is given Board status. Others would be committees or ministry teams.

MINISTRY TEAM. The closest thing in the present organization would be a committee.

A major need in today’s churches is to have a streamlined organizational structure that is easily understood by the congregation, especially by the part of the congregation that does not serve in leadership positions. One Board clarifies the flow chart and describes who is in charge. While not confusing to leaders who serve on boards, multiple board systems are confusing to most others in the congregation.

The three major advantages, as I see it are:

1. It allows for maximum communication between the leadership, chairs, and groups.
2. It maximizes the people resources to actually do ministry to meet the outreach goals of the church, because less time has to be spent in meetings, freeing time to actually do ministry, i.e. do the goals and objectives of the church.
3. It maximizes the giftedness of people in the congregation and especially those who ordinarily do not have or take on leadership roles.

In simplest terms, this would mean recognizing that one board is the major board, has superior status, and all other committees, task forces or ministry teams will come under the Church Board on the flow chart. The One Board system is actually not unlike the way most churches now work. It is helpful to keep in mind at the beginning that a One Board system is more similar to what we are used to than it is different.

While it is somewhat rare that the Board of Trustees, for example, competes with the Board of Deacons for power, or for the Board of Christian Education to do so, it is not rare for there to be significant communication problems about “turf” issues or misunderstanding about carrying out goals or dreaming about new ideas.

With one board, the Church Board, it is clear that there is one Board and not several. The “flow chart” will be more easily understood and therefore, people will be more apt to know where to take their suggestion. It is user friendly rather than complex.

As I indicated earlier, a big advantage is the One Board model is ministry oriented rather than meeting oriented. The Ministry Teams, I like the terminology better than committee because it seems ministry centered, are set up to perform ministry. They have rather specific tasks which center on carrying out the goals and objectives of the congregation. People who are not officially “on” a ministry team can be asked to carry out specific functions based on their giftedness or desire to learn. This allows for more people to be involved. Studies show a significant number of gifted people turn down leadership

positions because they do not like to go to meetings. They will be “doers” if the task is clear, precise, and manageable.

The Church Board is made up of the Moderator, the Clerk, the Treasurer, the Pastor, and a representative (notice, I did not say chair) of the major Ministry Teams. The Church Board should not be larger than nine persons. The function of the Church Board is administrative, to do the administration of the church: among other things, keeping track of the budget, being the nominating committee, keeping track of membership, baptism, special services, calendar, stewardship training, pastoral relations issues. Some of these can be “farmed out” to subcommittees, but the responsibilities belong to the Church Board.

- The Ministry Teams, depending on size and present structure might be the following:
 - Worship Team
 - Education Team (also Leadership Development, Discipleship, Small Groups)
 - Building and Grounds
 - Pastoral Care (calling on members with special needs)
 - Evangelism Team (calling on persons who are not members)
 - Mission Team (local outreach, denominational mission, mission trips)

The above need to be designed to fit the ministry and size of the specific local church. In some cases the load could be split, for instance, if a church were to start small groups, this could become a special task force so the Ministry Team does not become bogged down. In other cases two tasks could be under the same team.

ADVANTAGES of the Single Board with Ministry Teams:

- It is centered on “doing” ministry.
- It makes use of more people.
- The church structure is more easily understood.
- Accountability is more easily identified. The chain of command is clear and boards are not competing.
- Planning is more apt to be done and carried out.
- The administration of the Church lies with the Church Board.
- The doing of ministry lies with the Ministry Team and is more apt to be carried out, as it is easier to see what is being done.
- The very naming of the Ministry Team is descriptive and promises team work and doing ministry.

DISADVANTAGES

- It means change and getting adjusted to new ways.
- It must be clear that the spiritual life aspect, previously carried out by the Deacons, will continue under the Church Board.
- The system is dependent on the Ministry Team members being self-starters.
- A good bit of trust must be given to the Church Board and Ministry Team by the Congregation.
- It is not driven by the Pastor. This has good and bad points. The point is good communication must be given to the pastor because the pastor is not at “every” meeting.

While the Congregation is still in charge through congregational business meeting via budget and goal approval, this system may appear to give too much authority to the Church Board and Ministry Team. This is offset by clearer communication and more people involved in doing ministry. Because the congregation is more aware of the ministry goals and action, almost never is there a charge that a “few people run the church.”

The “flow chart” of the organization is circular rather than hierarchical. It is important to keep in mind that the congregational form of church government is still very much at work. Congregational meetings will give approval of budget, officers, goals, and major business. The congregation will be permission-giving and expectant that the Church Board and Ministry Teams will carry out the approved goals and objectives.

