

Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23

Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine

Why are we gifting you this volume? Because the mission statement of our primary publication—*The Parish Paper: New Ideas for Active Congregations*—is to help the largest possible number of congregations achieve maximum effectiveness in their various ministries. *The Parish Paper* is a monthly newsletter whose subscribers receive copyright permission to distribute to their constituents—more than two million readers in 28 denominations. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com for subscription information.

Purpose of this Volume: Provides in-depth answers to questions that readers of *The Parish Paper* ask regarding principles and procedures that help leaders in small, midsize, and large congregations to fine-tune their organizational structures and communication systems in ways that (1) enlarge the percentage of members/attendees involved in various ministries, (2) motivate creativity in a spirit of participatory democracy, and (3) protect against two major causes of congregational dysfunction.

Possible Uses of this Volume: (a) individual study by clergy, staff, governing board members, committee chairpersons, and ministry team leaders and/or (b) five-week study/discussion by a governing-board appointed task force.

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How to Use this Resource

Fact #1: Information on paper does not equal transformation in congregations. Knowing does not equal doing.

Fact #2: Positive change in organizational structure and communication systems more often results from group discussions with respected people than one person's solitary reading of a document.

Therefore, this resource provides a study/discussion process through which clergy and lay leaders can develop new awareness, insights, and action-directions.

Biblical Basis for this Study/Discussion Process

“Without counsel plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed (Proverbs 15:22).”
“The ear of the wise seeks knowledge (Proverbs 18:15).” “Behold, I make all things new (Revelation 21:5).”

Unfolding this Study/Discussion Process

Step #1: If used as a group study/discussion process, decide the context in which to use this resource. The best approach is a governing-board-appointed special task force whose purpose is to engage in a five-week study/discussion and may result in fine-tuning recommendations regarding “our congregation’s organization and communication systems.”

Warning: Is your church experiencing some dysfunction in its organizational and communication systems? Do *not* use any approach other than a governing-board appointed special task force. For example, do *not* ask an ad hoc, self-appointed or pastor-recruited group to engage in a study and make recommendations to the governing board. Such an approach derails when a governing-board member who resists any kind of change questions “the process.” Instead of examining the validity of the fine-tuning ideas, such individuals stifle the examination of new ideas by raising questions such as, “Who gave this group authority to make these suggestions?”

Step #2: If the governing board appoints a special “Organization and Communication Task Force,” schedule five, one-hour discussions of “Fine-tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine.” Make copies and distribute one to every task force member. Ask participants to prepare for each discussion by reading that section.

Study/Discussion/Planning Session #1

Organization and Communication Task Force Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you recall instances where this paragraph or section was true in your personal experience and/or in a congregation?
2. What would you like to add or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways does the idea in this section or paragraph seem true of our congregation?
4. What suggested methods from this section or paragraph should we consider using in our congregation?

Task Force Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions.

Introduction

Between 1970 and 2000, Americans not only think they got busier, they *are* busier! Corporate downsizing increased the workweek. Men now average forty-seven hours a week. Overtime and moonlighting are at record levels. Two-thirds of married women average sixty-five to eighty-five hours per week in employed and domestic duties. (Leith Anderson, *Leadership That Works* [Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers], p. 149)

A. During 1970-2000, Americans dramatically changed the way they use their time:

- *People join fewer organizations.* In 1970, nearly two-thirds of Americans attended a variety of club, community, church, and professional meetings. Now, nearly two-thirds of Americans *never* attend such meetings. Forty percent fewer people joined PTAs, lodges, and community service clubs.
- *People volunteer more.* The percentage of Americans involved in service activities such as helping the poor, the sick, or the elderly almost doubled since 1970. Volunteer time and money for Habitat for Humanity projects surged. Yet, people decreasingly join organizations.
- *People use their volunteer hours differently.* Participation in community projects and organizations such as unions and the PTA dropped like a statistical rock. Yet volunteers increased the number of hours they give to help improve others' lives.
- *More people define their volunteer service as an individualized, specialized task.* Forty percent fewer people define service as something they do in and through a club, institution, or congregation. Prior to 1970, many people believed in *generalized* volunteering through institutions. Today, more people believe in *specialized* volunteering for a specific cause. (Source of above data: Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone* [New York: Simon & Schuster])

B. How do those 1970-2000 time-use changes impact churches? Life has speed limits. Stress results from exceeding those limits. Stressed people change their church-relationship behaviors:

- *Fewer people attend governing board and committee meetings.* Younger adults stay away in droves, saying, "It is not a good way to use my time." Many small churches continue to print a committee-member list, but chairpersons make 90 percent of the decisions.
- *Burnout is more evident.* Alban Institute research indicates that 21 percent of Protestant lay leaders suffer from burnout. Another 23 percent border on it. Leaders telephone twenty or thirty people to get the number of volunteers they used to get with two or three calls.

- *Attendees still want to help hurting and needy people.* Yet, a decreasing percentage of people, especially those born subsequent to 1945, define service on boards and committees and in church organizations as valid time use.
- *The preference for “service individuation” exhibits itself in many ways.* Examples: (a) Increasing popularity of spiritual gifts inventories that identify a person’s special gifts for ministry, (b) More ministries conducted by specialized ministry teams and fewer ministries done by committees. (c) In the 1950s, a high percentage of churchgoers joined the women’s organization, which engaged in a variety of charitable endeavors. Now, more women prefer a group that concentrates on one purpose or ministry.

C. Yet, many churches continue to use organizational procedures that successfully involved large numbers of members in various congregational ministries during 1946-1960.

Those organizational models stem from two primary sources: the corporation structures that had begun to blossom by the 1890s and the 1940s military structures from World War II. Between 1941 and 1945, one out of ten Americans wore a uniform. Most Americans therefore felt familiar with and comfortable in that type of organizational system—as did the 75 percent of Americans who moved from farms to work in corporations and factories between 1945 and 1960.

Some key elements in that 1946-1960 organizational system:

1. Control by a central command (the large governing board), whose mission in the eyes of some of its members was to prevent procedural variations that might endanger congregational unity and stability
2. Multiple reporting “up the chain of command” to ensure that everyone followed appropriate procedures
3. Equal representation in all decisions by various groups in the congregation such as the women’s group, the men’s group, the Sunday school leaders, the various committees etc.
4. Numerous committees, whose mission in the eyes of some members focused on preserving traditions and preventing changes, led by “division commanders” called committee chairpersons
5. A “portfolio approach” to ministries in which, if someone surfaced a new idea, the governing board decided which committee to assign the duty of discussing that matter (which division to deploy)
6. Availability of a large female, volunteer labor force, since only 25 percent of women worked outside the home during those years
7. More volunteer time available from men, who worked an average of sixteen fewer hours per week than they did after 1970
8. The ability to “draft” church members for church duties, due to the same strong institutional loyalty ethic that the 1946-1960 generation brought to winning World War II

D. Results of using effective 1946-1960 organizational structures during the 2000s era.

Continued use of those tradition-bronzed structures—after the conditions under which they worked quite well had changed dramatically—tends to create the following results in congregations:

- A short list of hard-working lay leaders who feel increasingly burned out
- A large number of members who “sit in the bleachers and watch”
- The feeling that “a small clique runs our church”

At least 85 percent of current church-attending adults do not deem service on a large governing board or a committee as meaningful and satisfying experiences. Nor do they view saying yes to such service as “their duty.” Today’s adults do not view an organizational structure

that focuses on “representation” of all groups in the church as important; rather, they view “effectiveness” in the congregation’s ministries as the key objective.

Today’s adults prefer an organizational structure that emphasizes ministries instead of meetings. They prefer to give volunteer time and energy to church activities about which they feel passionate, in which they feel they can use their personal spiritual gifts, and which they feel they can “make a difference in the lives of other people” through service to God’s causes.

E. How do volunteer-rich churches do it? They recognize that members give time to personal-passion causes in which they feel their skills genuinely make a difference:

- *Volunteer-rich churches moved away from the combination 1890s corporate organizational model and 1940s military organizational model.* Thus, they attempt to accomplish far fewer of their congregational ministries through boards, committees, subcommittees, departments, or task forces.
- *Volunteer-rich churches shrink governing boards.* Many churches that average 3,000 worship attendees have seven-to-twelve-member boards that meet quarterly. The structure is more like a school board. The old system was a New England town-meeting model.
- *Volunteer-rich churches shrink the number and size of committees.* Many churches that formerly had eighteen committees now have seven. Some megachurches only have three committees: Administration, Nurture, and Outreach.
- *Volunteer-rich churches add “ministry teams.”* Each team focuses on a specialized area. Team leaders recruit and/or ask for volunteers that have personal passions for these ministries. The ministry teams operate under the auspices of or in addition to the various standing committees. The total number of ministry teams depends on congregational size: a small church might have four or six ministry teams; a megachurch with 4,000 in average worship attendance might have more than 200 ministry teams.

F. Results of using appropriate participation structures. Organizational and communication systems that fit a congregation’s size and are appropriate to this stage in Christian history increase its mission and ministry effectiveness by

1. Enlarging the percentage of members/attendees involved in its ministries
2. Increasing the spirit of congregational unity
3. Encouraging the free flow of new ideas and creativity
4. Providing efficient, rapid decision-making in a spirit of participatory democracy
5. Holding conflict to a minimum
6. Protecting against the two primary kinds of dysfunctional leadership:
 - Micro-management by over-controlling pastors and/or laypersons
 - Do-nothing, laissez faire leadership by pastors and passive laypersons

Organizational structures and communication systems that are *not* appropriate to a church’s size and this stage in Christian history create the opposite of those congregational personality characteristics.

G. Why do congregations *not* use organizational structures that work? Despite the fact that many of a church’s members and leaders think their organizational structure is dysfunctional, the pastors and governing-board members are often so addicted to a familiar pattern that they keep doing it “the way we have always done it” instead of discussing the adoption of a system that works better but with which they are unfamiliar.

An effective organizational system that connects with today’s adults has the ten components in the ten sections of this *Nuggets Volume*. These procedures help move a congregation from a focus

on having committee meetings to a focus on accomplishing ministry. (The total number of meeting nights for most leaders reduces from eighteen to twenty-four per year to eight per year.) The procedures also help move a church from focusing primarily on finances and facilities to an expanded focus that also includes strategic planning for outreach, mission, and ministries.

H. Transition possibilities. Some governing boards vote to set aside their present structure for two years while they implement these procedures on an experimental basis. Then, the governing board

- Evaluates “how we feel about the experience.”
- Decides whether the methods accomplished intended objectives.
- Decides whether to return to the original structure or continue the fine-tuning based on that two-year experience.

I. Policy-Setting and Oversight Board

As with other nonprofit groups, a poorly functioning governing board can wreck a church's effectiveness. Results: dysfunctional organizational systems that produce mission and ministry defectiveness. For example, governing boards whose meetings last two or three hours have jumped outside the boundaries of their oversight and policy-setting function. They have slipped into the role of micromanaging or *redoing* the various committees' functions. Results: people stop attending the committee meetings, creativity dries up, and volunteer-participation diminishes throughout the congregation.

A. What do we call the policy-setting and oversight board? Different denominations assign different names to congregational boards. Examples: council, vestry, session, administrative board, official board, administrative council, church council, and board of directors. The name is not the key issue; the way the group functions determines its effectiveness.

B. What size governing board is most effective? The ideal governing board is a policy-setting and oversight body of twelve people, plus the senior pastor. The governing board's goal is not representation, as was the case when many congregations had thirty-to-ninety people on their boards; the goal of effective governing boards is congregational *effectiveness* in mission and ministry through wise decision-making, which is far more likely to occur in a smaller governing board where (like local school boards) almost 100 percent of members are present at every meeting.

C. How is the governing board elected? Use election procedures appropriate to the denomination and the congregation's bylaws. Of crucial importance: three-year rotating terms of office, sequenced so that four of the twelve board members go off each year and four new people come on (board members cannot be reelected until they have been off the board for one year). Effective principles:

- Choose board members for (1) their faithfulness in worship attendance, (2) their consistency in financial giving, and (3) their wisdom.
- Ideally, about one-third of the twelve board members are long-term, highly respected, experienced leaders. Another one-third became members during the last five years. Another one-third of the board is younger than age forty-five.
- To ensure a healthy balance on the governing board, the congregation's nominating committee nominates new board members. See nominating committee guidelines below, in VIII. The Nominating Committee, for additional details regarding the board-member nominating process.

Older methods in which board members "run for office" as do politicians or are "nominated from the floor" in a congregational meeting guarantee that (1) the wisest people do not always become board members and (2) some people whose feelings are hurt when respected leaders coerce them to "run for office" but they are not elected, withdraw from active congregational participation.

D. How often does the governing board meet? The ideal policy-setting and oversight body meets four times a year *for one hour* and in special called meetings, if needed. A twelve-person governing board and quarterly meetings give church members more time to serve on the various ministry teams noted below, in IV. Ministry Teams, and is a much more meaningful use of time in the opinion of most people.

E. What do effective governing boards do? The governing board's role is oversight and policy-setting. The board accomplishes those functions in five primary ways:

1. Setting annual budgets upon recommendation of the finance committee
2. Approving or disapproving any committee-recommended expenditures that exceed or are unrelated to line items in its section of the annual budget
3. Purchasing or selling property upon recommendation of the trustees or property committee
4. Hiring or discharging staff—which categories of employed staff and by what procedures varies among denominations
5. Approving, disapproving, or requesting revisions in committees' reports and recommendations.

Governing boards whose chairpersons are determined to keep meetings within these fences can accomplish their business in one hour. Chairpersons with fuzzy mental boundaries cannot complete a meeting in three hours.

F. How do effective governing boards handle the committee reports? When effective boards receive a committee report, they act on it in one of three ways:

1. Approve the report.
2. Disapprove the report.
3. Send part or all of the report back to the committee for further consideration.

To make sure the board functions appropriately, chairpersons informally appoint one or two board members as “process observers.” When these process-monitors see the board beginning to function out of bounds (usurp a committee's job), they ask, “Isn't that the province of the . . . committee? Shouldn't we send this back to the committee for more study?”

Governing boards in congregations of every size benefit from

1. Receiving only *written* reports from committees—oral reports tend to lengthen meetings uncontrollably
2. Making certain that all their board decisions have first been studied and recommended by a committee—instead of allowing ideas that require board decisions to spontaneously combust from within the board meeting or from one highly vocal board member
3. Limiting meeting length to one hour
4. Scheduling board meetings quarterly—special called meetings are always an option
5. During the week prior to the governing board meeting, the church secretary mails each board member a copy of all the committees' minutes and recommendations from their most recent meeting. The board *only receives reports and considers recommendations* that are *on paper* and *meet the mailing deadline*.
6. Voting on all BIG decisions, such as a new building, at a board meeting subsequent to the first meeting in which the decision was discussed (even if time pressures of making that BIG decision require a special “called meeting”)
7. Reducing the board size to twelve (a thirty-person or fifty-person board can do two things effectively—conduct a pep rally or have a fight).

G. What is the meeting agenda in effective governing boards? Major agenda categories for the board meeting include

1. *Action Items* (decisions at this meeting)
2. *Information Items* (reports from task forces, committees, and work areas)
3. *Discussion Items* (no decisions at this meeting)

Board meeting guidelines: “We conduct meetings in an informal manner. On matters in which discussion is contentious, we employ regular modes of parliamentary procedure. The board

attempts to reach decisions by using a consensus model that does not require unanimity, but we expect all board members, regardless of their viewpoints, to respect the board's decision and commit themselves to support and implement the decision. On any matter where a consensus decision is not possible, we vote, using the majority rules proscribed by the board's parliamentary authority: the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

H. Effective governing board structure protects against a variety of local circumstances that can create dysfunctional behaviors. With the classic 1946-1960 governing board structure, unusual congregational and community circumstances such as the following often block congregational health and effectiveness:

Dysfunction Behavior Example #1: Measuring church success by the treasurer's report and bank balances. This is natural in a church that has experienced lean financial years. But an effective board balances its natural inclination toward "building a bank account for a rainy day" with the recognition that when congregations gradually wither away in size and go out of business, they usually die with a sizeable bank balance. That money then goes to the denomination—money that might have been spent at the right time in the right way to (a) prevent the congregation's ministry from disappearing in that community and (b) prevent the permanent discontinuation of denominational support.

A church is not a business whose goal is to make a profit or accumulate money; a church is in business to accomplish mission and ministry that changes the lives of people Christ touches through its activities. What if the congregation is in its last years of opportunity to risk some of its bank account with prudent expenditures that could reverse the downward spiral toward extinction? If the governing board is saving money for a rainy day, the time comes to declare that, "It's raining!" and use accumulated funds in the attempt to stop a trip toward the ecclesiastical cemetery. The classically structured, large governing board tends to lose that opportunity, especially in small and midsize churches.

Dysfunction Behavior Example #2: Rural and small-town congregations in which people from a short list of family trees comprise 75 percent of governing board members. In this circumstance, effective organizational structures and decision-making procedures are even more important than in other churches. A few of the kinship relationships are usually negative, and those feelings spill over into and complicate church life. On the other hand, most of the kinship relationships are positive, blinding people to the limitations of their relatives' behaviors in church-leadership roles. New members are often puzzled by the way people in densely-kinship-related congregations behave (interaction more characteristic of a quarrelling family that can fight bitterly, yet stay together). In this circumstance, the classically structured, large governing board is often hamstrung by change-blocking inaction habits.

Dysfunction Behavior Example #3: Small towns in which church leaders find themselves overwhelmed with community responsibilities. In towns with fewer than 10,000 in population, community organizations often need about the same number of leaders as do towns with double or triple that population. In this kind of setting, church members sometimes substitute community involvement for church involvement, since many of those community activities also provide fellowship opportunities. This pattern tends to (1) reduce the vitality of church boards and committees, (2) shrink the number of adult-participation groups, and (3) reduce the number of "assimilation groups" that help new members get acquainted and involved in the congregation's ministries.

Compounding that problem is the tendency of citizens in many small communities to see their church relationship as "another civic obligation" among many. Thus, they look at church as another brick among many bricks in the wall, rather than as the cornerstone supporting all of the

bricks. If such a thinking and behavior pattern has existed in a congregation for several decades, changing that pattern requires much effort, time, and “modeling” by the core-lay-leadership group. Increasing the emphasis on Bible study, personal prayer development, and fellowship opportunities through involvement in ministry teams are good starting points. The classically structured, large governing board (1) seldom recognizes this circumstance and (2) if it does recognize it, tends to allow change-blocking majority opinions to prevent correction efforts.

Dysfunction Behavior Example #4: Churches victimized by the invisible or semi-invisible “CEO syndrome.” Researchers most often observe the CEO syndrome in churches where the secular lives of numerous members involve (or involved prior to retirement) management roles in corporations and businesses. In such congregations, many leading laypersons tend to provide numerous suggestions for programs, events, and ministries “that our church ought to do.” But these lay leaders do not personally intend to participate in accomplishing their suggestions. What causes this pattern? Many of these lay leaders, in their weekday vocations, are (or were) responsible for coming up with ideas, but they have (or had) employees to whom they delegate those ideas for accomplishment.

The CEO syndrome is most often observed in three types of churches: (1) large congregations in communities where many residents work in large corporations, (2) congregations in retirement communities, and (3) congregations near large universities, where the board members’ daily work gives them the feeling that discussing something equals doing it.

Members of classically structured, large governing boards (1) tend to applaud the opinions of CEO-type leaders and (2) block positive change.

In addition to fine-tuning their governing board structure, some such churches counteract the CEO syndrome with this rule: “When someone puts forward an idea for a new program, event, or ministry, ask that person to (1) find three other people who are willing to help make it happen, or (2) in cases where the idea is the province of a particular church committee, meet with that committee to present and discuss the idea or suggestion.”

The Bottom Line. The British government created a civil-service job in 1803 that stationed a man with a spyglass on the Cliffs of Dover. This sentry’s task: ring a bell if he saw the expansionist French Emperor, Napoleon, sailing toward England with an invasion force. The watchman’s job was eventually abolished, more than 125 years later.

Whether beneficial or ridiculous, organizational traditions often prove hard to alter. Does our church board use traditions that need revision?

II. Strategic-Planning Team

Every church needs a strategic planning team that functions separately from its governing board. Strategic planning team meetings provide forums in which people do what cannot happen in governing board meetings. The planning team does *not* replace the governing board's authority in policy-setting and oversight. The purpose of the planning team: *communicate, coordinate, calendar, and vision.*

A. How does the strategic planning team function in midsize and large churches?

Comprised of all the committee chairpersons, pastor(s), and program staff members, the strategic planning team meets quarterly at a 6:00 p.m. sandwich supper, *on the same night* that all the committees meet at 7:30 p.m., one month *prior to* the quarterly governing board meetings.

Requiring all committees to meet later that same night

1. Increases the flow of communication between and among committees
2. Increases the level of responsibility each committee carries
3. Eliminates the unnecessary, participation-limiting possibility that anyone serves on more than one committee
4. Provides opportunity for the pastor to suggest discussion items and/or raise scheduling questions *before* the committees meet
5. Decreases the tendency of an over-controlling-personality layperson or pastor to dominate committee decisions
6. Provides childcare for all committees on the same night, thereby allowing both husband and wife in young families to participate (the number of children that parents bring is always small, but providing childcare removes a committee-meeting attendance barrier for a short list of couples and a few single-moms)
7. Reduces the amount of time the pastor, staff, and members spend in meetings each month, thus increasing their available time for other ministries. With quarterly governing board meetings and quarterly meetings of the strategic planning team and committees, many laypersons find the number of nights devoted to church meetings each year reduces from eighteen or twenty-four to eight.

Section III. Committees, below, contains additional details on how to increase committee effectiveness.

Without a strategic-planning team or its equivalent, where do church leaders have the forum in which to introduce and discuss seed-thought ideas that may or may not have value in the overall “big picture”? The strategic-planning team also provides opportunity for the pastor to raise questions and make suggestions regarding “big picture issues” *before* the committees meet. This quarterly meeting of chairpersons also *keeps the governing board from trying to mingle policy-setting and oversight with strategic planning* (which does not work).

This strategic-planning meetings and committee meetings *must* occur on a different night from and on a date that *precedes* the governing board meeting. Having the strategic planning meeting on the same night as the governing board meeting gives the impression that both are policy-setting and oversight groups: that erroneous perception eventually leads to (1) discontinuance of the strategic-planning team and (2) escalation of complaints about “poor communication,” and (3) low participation levels in the committees and ministry teams.

A detailed agenda for accomplishing the four objectives of the strategic planning team meeting—communicate, coordinate, calendar, and vision—contains the following ingredients:

1. *Communicate and Coordinate.* During the previous week, the church secretary mails every committee chairperson the minutes of all the other committees' most recent meetings. This allows all chairpersons to know what is happening in other sections of church life. As the meeting begins, each chairperson takes turns in the “spotlight seat,” as all the other chairpersons take turns asking clarification questions regarding that committee's plans. Much communication and spontaneous coordination results from this process.

Next, all of the committee chairpersons take turns distributing a copy of the rough-draft agenda for their committee's meeting tonight at 7:30 p.m. Taking turns in the "spotlight seat," all the other chairpersons ask clarification questions about matters that committee will discuss at its meeting. This process sparks communication, creativity, and coordination in ways that do not feel highly structured.

To prepare for this section of the meeting, the pastor has established a file folder in the church office. As ideas for the various committees occur to him/her during the month, or arrive in the mail, the pastor throws those ideas into the file folder. The afternoon before this meeting, the pastor takes twenty minutes to organize in note-form on one sheet the ideas he/she wants to pass along to committee chairpersons. As the chairpersons take turns asking the chairperson in the spotlight seat agenda-related questions, the pastor participates by referring to his/her note sheet.

Why is this process helpful? One of the best ways to lead is to ask questions. An even better way to lead is to ask questions in the presence of several peers (other committee chairs). This saves the pastor tons of time in accomplishing his/her leadership role—compared to the procedure of telephoning chairpersons throughout the month with those ideas. This procedure is also much more creative, because each chairperson instantly gets a feel for how this idea comes across to the other committee chairs. This creates a natural interaction in which the pastor participates, along with chairpersons, in asking the committee chairperson questions regarding his/her committee agenda.

2. *Calendar.* Distribute a copy of the church calendar for the next four months. Ask chairpersons whether they need to add items. Discussions that arise spotlight any pressure points and give each chairperson clues regarding when he/she needs to start planning for a particular event. Because this calendaring process happens in the presence of other chairpersons, individual chairpersons feel more accountable than when the pastor alone tries to gently motivate/prod/coordinate/pressure them one at a time via telephone or other conversations. Like a good baseball team, chairpersons begin feeling accountable to one another, not just to the coach (pastor). This produces a superior team atmosphere and moral.

3. *Vision.* Taking turns, and requiring that *everyone* speak, go around the room and require every chairperson to state one thing that he/she feels is "going quite well in our congregation right now—accomplishing excellent ministry." Too often, church-leader meetings concentrate only on "fixing what's broke" rather than "what's going right."

After everyone has spoken, go around the room again. Require every chairperson to identify one matter "to which we probably need to pay close attention—to insure maximum ministry results."

The pastor asks the chairpersons, "Which of these should we make part of our 'visioning for the future' thinking and planning agenda?"

Note the important items. Carry the BIG matters forward to the next or subsequent meetings. At that time the pastor may ask questions such as, "How are we doing on this matter? What else should we be considering in (1) the short term of coming weeks and months and (2) the long term of next year or coming years?" This process produces and plants seeds in chairpersons' subconscious minds and develops a gradual consensus regarding important visions for the future.

B. How does the strategic planning team function in extremely small congregations?

Pastor John could not get the committees to function. Averaging seventy in worship attendance, the church could barely fill the chairperson slots, much less people the committees. The result: people complained about (1) poor communication, (2) one iron-willed layperson controlling all decisions, and (3) governing board meetings that lasted until 11:00 p.m.

The congregation solved its organizational migraine by fine-tuning its organizational structure. The nominating committee appointed the usual number of committee chairpersons. But instead of holding eight separate committee meetings each month, the committee chairpersons, the pastor, and the governing board chairperson formed a planning team that met five times each year:

September—the beginning of the church programming year; November—which gave time to prepare for Christmas events; January—the start of the year; March—which gives plenty of time for final Easter preparation; and May—to prepare for summer events.

Four of the planning team meetings happened one month before each quarterly governing board meeting. The board considered and took action only on planning-team recommendations. The results: communication improved, conflict reduced, and board meetings lasted one hour instead of three.

Melissa Jones, the governing board's vice-chairperson, presided at these five planning team meetings. Committee chairpersons took turns bringing up planning topics. Because of the year's natural flow in different areas of church life, one or two committees usually became the focus of attention at each planning team meeting; thus, meetings seldom lasted more than one hour. At the September meeting, for example, the finance chairperson discussed the fall stewardship campaign. The worship committee took up a great deal of time in the November meeting, discussing plans for Christmas activities. This ensured democratic input and protected chairpersons from solo flights into ill-advised decisions.

Following each planning team meeting, committee chairpersons invited specific members of the congregation to take responsibility for each upcoming task or event or programmatic function. Thus, specific talents came into play in appropriate ways, involving the whole membership in various activities throughout the year. Many people who did not wish to serve on a committee for the entire year gladly said yes to a short-term project. Thus, rather than reducing the participation and democratic input among church members, the planning team increased those qualities.

Pastor John soon started collecting mail and ideas for each committee in a file folder. Then, as chairpersons filtered in for the planning team meeting, he distributed pertinent mail and talked briefly with any individual he wished to remind about matters that needed discussion and decision at this meeting. That procedure saved time for John and saved chairpersons the embarrassment of forgetfully leaving important mail at home, thus preventing its discussions.

With these five, annual planning team meetings, Pastor John's administrative responsibilities grew lighter and more effective, simultaneously. As a planning team participant rather than its chairperson, he could more easily raise issues and give suggestions without appearing to dominate or micromanage. John developed a memory-aid sheet listing each committee and other ministry groups such as the women's organization and youth ministry. Between meetings, John noted unfinished projects on this one-page tickler file. Thus, he could casually ask, "Where are we on that project we talked about at the September meeting?" This saved him countless reminder phone calls and allowed the group's positive peer-pressure to push projects to completion.

Someone almost blocked the testing of this system by complaining, "We'd have to change the bylaws before doing that!" The governing board voted to "suspend the rules" for two years. This (a) prevented an unnecessary hassle over bylaws-changes and (b) created the opportunity to work the bugs out of the system before concreting changes in the bylaws.

As noted above, mid-sized and large churches (above 125 average worship attendance) that create a planning team use it for an entirely different purpose. Their committees play an active role in getting things done. In the small congregation a planning team accomplishes planning, communication, coordination, and calendaring headaches by taking the place of committees that function more in the imagination than in reality. In small churches, the planning team system provides a third alternative between two bad extremes—having the governing board do all the committee business during board meetings that often run later than 11:00 p.m., or having tiny malfunctioning committees filled with more gloomy frustration than production.

C. The Bottom Line. Whatever the church's size, without a strategic planning team to coordinate, communicate, calendar, and vision, far fewer seed-thoughts grow to great trees in the congregation's soul. Is it time to test a planning team in our congregation?

Study/Discussion/Planning Session #2

Organization and Communication Task Force Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you recall instances where this paragraph or section was true in your personal experience and/or in a congregation?
2. What would you like to add or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways does the idea in this section or paragraph seem true of our congregation?
4. What suggested methods from this section or paragraph should we consider using in our congregation?

Task Force Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions.

III. Committees

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard told the story of a man who wanted to jump a ditch. To get a long run at it, he backed up, then backed up some more. But he backed up so far that when he finally got to the ditch he was too tired to jump. People who work with standing committees in congregations sometimes feel that way: they use up so much energy in running the organizational system that little remains for the ministries the committees are supposed to accomplish.

Moving beyond this energy-draining trap offers a big challenge. Leaders experience difficulty in diagnosing the causes of their church's dysfunctional system. Often, leaders think they just need to work harder at making their committee system work. More often, they need to fine-tune their church's committee system so that it consumes less energy and generates more ministries.

Church leaders who try to increase their committees' ministry-effectiveness often build on the following principles:

A. How often should our committees meet? Using the pattern described above, in II. Strategic-Planning Team, committees meet every three months at 7:30 p.m. (the same evening as the strategic-planning team, comprised of the committee chairpersons, meets for a sandwich supper at 6:00 p.m.). Some committees may occasionally need an additional called meeting for a specific project or purpose. However, the most effective committees are more likely to enlarge their ministry accomplishments through ministry teams than through additional committee meetings. (See IV. Ministry Teams, below, for detailed instructions.)

B. Few committee systems function effectively unless all the committees meet at stated times during the year. Committees that meet "only when we have something to meet about" ordinarily have most of their decisions made for them by the chairperson, or by the chairperson and one of the staff members. While this may appear to be more efficient, it frequently means that not enough people have input, which produces the following results:

1. Some bad decisions based on insufficient information
2. Low energy among committee members
3. Low creativity in each of the committees
4. The belief by some church members that "two or three people make *all the decisions* in our church"
5. An opportunity for the pastor and staff to get most of the blame for anything that goes wrong or does not get done

C. A quarterly system in which all committees meet on the same night has several beneficial results. As noted above, in II. Strategic-Planning Team, requiring all committees to meet later that same night

1. Increases the flow of communication between and among committees
2. Increases the level of responsibility each committee carries
3. Eliminates the unnecessary, participation-limiting possibility that anyone serves on more than one committee
4. Provides opportunity for the pastor to suggest discussion items and/or raise scheduling questions *before* the committees meet
5. Decreases the tendency of an over-controlling-personality layperson or pastor to dominate committee decisions
6. Provides childcare for all committees on the same night, thereby allowing both husband and wife in young families to participate
7. Reduces the amount of time the pastor, staff, and members spend in meetings each month, thus increasing their available time for other ministries. With quarterly governing board meetings and quarterly meetings of the strategic-planning team and committees, many laypersons find the number of nights devoted to church meetings each year reduces from eighteen or twenty-four to eight.

The personnel committee and the nominations committee are exceptions to this “all-committees-on-the-same-night strategy.” Some members in these two committees also serve on other committees, and the personnel committee requires the senior pastor’s presence throughout the entire meeting, at all of its meetings.

D. How many people should serve on each committee? The most effective committees have not more than six members (with three-year, rotating tenures), except for the personnel committee, in which some denominations require a larger number of members. Committees in churches with fewer than fifty in average worship attendance should consist of three members (with three-year, rotating tenures). Section VIII. The Nominating Committee, below, describes the best way to form committees.

E. How many committees should we have? In recent decades, many congregations made the mistake of adding a new committee to address each new need. In many cases that produced a longer and longer list of committees functioning less and less effectively.

In most midsize and large congregations that average between 125 and 900 in worship attendance, nine committees can adequately perform ministry-management functions under the policy-setting and oversight of the governing board. The committee list often includes Christian education, evangelism, membership care, property, stewardship, finance, benevolences, worship, nominations, and personnel. Accomplish all other ministries through ministry teams (see Section IV. Ministry Teams, below).

Many midsize and large churches benefit from reducing their total number of committees to seven. Four of the seven—Property, Personnel, Nominations, and Finance—are required in many denominations. Call the other three committees the NOW system (Nurture, Outreach, and Witness). Accomplish all other ministries through ministry teams (see Section IV. Ministry Teams, below).

In congregations that shift to this seven-committee, NOW system, but previously had a much greater number of committees, the nominating committee nominates six people for each of the seven committees (with three-year, rotating terms). Then, the nominating committee groups the remaining, previously longer list of committees under those seven headings and converts some of the previous committees to “ministry teams” that operate under the auspices of a committee but whose members do not have to attend committee meetings. (See Section IV. Ministry Teams, below, for a detailed description of how ministry teams function.)

Many congregations averaging fewer than 125 in worship also benefit from the NOW system described above. However, many congregations that average fewer than 125 in worship also benefit from the strategic-planning structure for small churches described above, in Section II.

F. Who should chair the committees? The short answer: people who have the ministry gifts, the passions, and the leadership skills for involving other people in the ministries that each committee supervises.

The longer answer: avoid and/or revise church bylaws that say a governing-board member must chair each committee. This antiquated rule (developed in an earlier century when few people were well educated, then reinforced by the military, division-commander, chain-of-command culture of World War II) produces three negative results: it (1) puts board members in roles for which they have no passion, (2) burns out a short list of overworked board members, and (3) systematically excludes from ministry participation large numbers of enthusiastic, gifted church members.

Avoid allowing the committees to select their own chairpersons. This results in one or more of the following:

1. A “take charge” personality (who may or may not have the appropriate skills) volunteering for the chairperson position
2. The same person chairing the committee for years, since the committee members begin to feel that a change appears to mean that they do not like this chairperson
3. A lack of cohesiveness among various committees as each rows its own boat in a different direction
4. A chairperson who feels more accountable to the committee than to the church’s overall ministry direction
5. Less and less creativity as the years pass and the same people have the same discussions that end in the same ways
6. Increasing frustration among staff and governing-board members as they realize that each committee has become its own governing board

For maximum committee effectiveness, the nominating committee selects all of the committee chairpersons. Pick people with the gifts and passions for the ministries this committee supervises, even if they are not governing-board members. In some congregations, each committee’s vice-chairperson often (but not automatically) becomes the chairperson after two years. This provides in-service training. If a church follows that tradition, the nominating committee should also select the vice-chairperson of all committees.

The congregation’s bylaws should limit committee chairperson service to two consecutive years. This protects the church from perils such as unconscious ownership of the committees by the chairpersons, reduction of creativity, leader burnout, and directionless-drifting committees.

G. How should we select members of each committee? Avoid allowing each chairperson to select committee members in isolation from other chairpersons. In the most effective congregations, the nominating committee selects all members of all committees, using the guidelines below, in Section VIII., The Nominating Committee. In another, less-effective but better-than-nothing option, chairpersons meet together and select the members of each committee.

Both of the above options for selecting committee members prevent the natural but destructive tendency toward (1) the same people serving year after year, (2) few new members on committees, (3) very few younger adults on committees, and (4) some people serving on two or three committees.

The congregation’s bylaws should state that (1) committee members can serve a maximum of three consecutive years, with one-third of the committee members newly appointed or elected each year and (2) no individual can serve on more than one committee (exceptions: the nominating committee and personnel committee). Note: some wonderful people *prefer* to serve

more than three years without rotating off experience some grief when a congregation first institutes this rule; however, the procedure improves the overall effectiveness of all committees.

Committees more democratically reflect current congregational thinking when at least one-third of the committee members have joined the congregation during the last five years. While this rule is usually not in the bylaws, make it a nominating committee goal. New members bring new ideas. Older members bring continuity. Churches need both ingredients. Note: when selecting relatively new members for service on committees, remember that only about 15 percent of adults enjoy serving on committees; most people prefer serving on ministry teams, and ministry team experience is good in-service training for people who serve on a committee.

Committees more often stay in touch with the current needs of people in their communities when one-third of the committee members are in the twenty-five-to-forty-four age range. Exceptions to that principle: retirement community churches such as in Sun City, Arizona, which have zero young adults in the community due to age restrictions on real-estate purchases. In most communities, however, the church's future vitality depends on its ability to meet the ministry needs of the young-adult parents of youth and children. Older adults quite naturally assume that young adults think the way *they did* when they were young adults. That is true of some issues but not others. No one can accurately represent young-adult thinking and needs except young adults.

H. Provide each committee a written definition of its responsibilities. Create a one-page description of each committee that includes (1) purpose, (2) how the members and chairpersons are selected and how long they can serve, (3) how often and when the committees meet, and (4) a list of the committee's responsibilities.

Example of the purpose statement of one congregation's stewardship committee:

"To educate and encourage church members/attendees to be good stewards of their time, talent, and treasure."

Example of *one item* from the responsibility list of one congregation's stewardship committee:

"1. Responsible for the implementation of annual stewardship drive (securing pledges and commitments) to be held in October."

To get started developing these written definitions of responsibilities,

1. Ask each committee to list everything it usually does in a twelve-month period.
2. Compare the lists from each committee to address gaps and overlaps.
3. Publish and distribute the lists.
4. Ask each committee at the end of each year for any needed updates to their sheet (additions, subtractions, and corrections).

I. How do we get year-to-year continuity in committees? Procedures suggested under several of the questions addressed above produce automatic continuity. Some congregations also create an annual *Plan Book*, described below, in Section VII. Organizational Cohesiveness and Coordination.

J. How do we get cohesive purpose and direction among the various committees? Ask all committee chairpersons to meet together with the church staff, as a strategic-planning team—prior to the initial committee meetings—and establish not more than three overall priorities for the next twelve months. (Organizations with more than three priorities probably have no real priority; they have simply collected a list of what different groups want to do.)

Ask each committee, as it sets several measurable goals for the year, to be aware of and try to contribute to one or more of the church's two or three priorities for this year.

Ask the committee chairpersons to meet together with the church staff, as a strategic-planning team, quarterly, in the manner described above, in Section II. Strategic Planning Team. As outlined in that section, the strategic-planning team meeting *must always* precede the committee meetings, *not* follow them. The strategic-planning team meeting prior to committee meetings (a) helps everyone stay focused on overall church goals, (b) provides reminders of items to which specific committees should give attention in the pursuit of those goals, and (c) provides a high level of communication and resulting cohesiveness.

K. How do we improve committee creativity? As suggested above, mandate that all committees meet on specific dates each year, all on the same nights (with the exception of the nominating committee and the personnel committee). Committees that do not meet cannot create. Committees that do not meet find that the chairperson and/or one or two other people make most of their decisions—eliminating the creative synergy of a group discussion.

Provide the chairpersons and committees with an annual orientation led by the senior pastor and the governing-board chairperson. This leadership-training seminar (1) covers matters outlined below, in Section VI. Annual Leadership Seminar, and (2) photocopies for distribution the documents in Section VI. that the senior pastor and governing board chairperson feel are helpful. Of crucial importance are these topics: how to develop meeting agendas, how committee chairpersons communicate their activities to one another, procedures for getting newsletter information to the church secretary, and how to lead committee meetings.

Provide the chairpersons with a one-page *Report Form* that includes the following.

Committee Name:

Date of Meeting:

Chairperson:

Names of Committee Members Present:

Others Present:

1. Our committee discussed the following agenda:
2. Our committee took the following action (jobs assigned, to whom, due date, etc.):
3. Our committee makes the following recommendations for governing-board approval:

If the church has multiple staff, the senior pastor assigns each staff member the role of working with one or several committees. Coach the staff members in how to work with their committees without (1) over-controlling the committee or (2) passively watching the committee from the bleachers. Either extreme stifles a committee's creative thinking.

L. How do we help committees involve other church members and attendees in various ministries? Remind the committee members at each year's orientation session that their goal is not to do the ministries for the congregation but to involve the congregation in doing the ministries.

As outlined in greater detail below, in Section IV. Ministry Teams, ask each committee to develop several ministry teams to accomplish the various ministries for which the committee is responsible. Example: morning-worship greeter team, food-pantry ministry team, teacher teams for each Sunday school class. Church members and attendees who comprise the ministry teams do not attend committee meetings, but they accomplish the ministries that committee are responsible for managing. These ministry teams do *not* meet and do *not* report; they are strictly action teams, not committees or subcommittees.

Institute some sort of annual system that helps members and attendees to (1) identify their personal spiritual gifts and (2) answer the question of "How do I feel God is calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?" Couple that annual system with a procedure for connecting their responses with the ministry teams that each of the standing committees develop. See resources suggested below, in Section V. Spiritual Gifts Education. Interview all new members, asking them to select a ministry team on which they wish to serve; make their selection of a service role a mandatory element in becoming an official member of the congregation; but also invite not-yet-member attendees to join a ministry team.

M. How can committee chairpersons facilitate more effective committee meetings? To avoid wasting committee members' time in meetings that seem meaningless to them, ask these questions:

1. *Do we understand the value of meetings?* Discussing issues one person at a time by telephone gives the chairperson permission to act. Committee meetings accomplish a different purpose: opportunity for creativity, unity, and motivation.

2. *Is the frequency of our committee meetings appropriate?* Most committees function best by meeting quarterly, one month ahead of a quarterly governing-board meeting. Many committees that meet monthly generate committee-member burnout. At the other extreme, in churches whose committees meet “only when we have something to meet about,” (a) few meetings happen, (b) unity shrivels, (c) the pastor, by influencing each committee chairperson, controls all decisions, and (d) the congregation’s members slide toward either withdrawal from participation or explosive conflict.

3. *Do we state in advance the beginning and ending time for each meeting?* If not, or if we state them but do not stick to them, we are saying that we do not appreciate our peoples’ willingness to set aside time from busy lives to gift their energy and creativity.

4. *Do committee chairpersons ask vice-chairpersons to serve as observer-monitors of the meeting’s process effectiveness?* This helps to minimize side-tracks and keep the meeting moving toward its goals while involving all committee members in the discussions and decisions. It also provides excellent training, should the committee vice-chairperson become its chairperson in later years.

5. *Do we teach chairpersons the art of printed agendas?* Printed agendas keep committee meetings focused, democratic, creative, and time-efficient. Label every item “Information,” “Discussion/Problem Solving,” or “Decision.” After the opening prayer, the committee chairperson asks for additional agenda items. If a controlling or passive-aggressive committee member brings up new agenda items at the end of the meeting, the chairperson says, “Let’s put that on the agenda for the next meeting.”

6. *Do we understand the value of meeting minutes?* Include these items: date, where the meeting was held, chairperson, names of everyone present, agenda items discussed, assignments to individual committee members, decisions within the committee’s range of authority, and recommendations to the governing board.

7. *Do we require that committees provide written reports and recommendations to the governing board?* Oral reports and recommendations lead to (a) imprecise recommendations, (b) poor communication, and (c) unnecessarily long governing-board meetings.

8. *Do we understand our committees’ limitations?* Only about 15 percent of church members who want to do something meaningful and worthwhile with their time classify committee meetings in that category. Healthy congregations therefore have small and few committees. They involve attendees and members in one of eight-to-fifteen-or-more ministry teams. Examples: Worship greeter ministry team, food-pantry ministry team, congregational-care ministry team, first-time worship visitor ministry team, etc.

9. *Do we provide an annual orientation for committees?* This equips committee chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, and committee members with training materials on how to exert positive leadership in meetings. See below, in Section VI. Annual Leadership Seminar, several items to photocopy and use as teaching tools at an annual seminar held during the first month when committees begin functioning for the year.

10. *Does our governing board permit committees to function?* Healthy boards focus on their big-picture role of receiving committee reports and voting on their recommendations. Unhealthy boards behave like committees instead of boards. The committees stop functioning. Members know they are wasting their time.

N. The Bottom Line. The old cliché—“what standing committees do best is *stand*”—is only true when the senior pastor, staff, and chairpersons fail to provide effective organizational structure and leadership for the committees. Effectively led committees do more than stand. They create, lead, and manage the ministries to which God calls congregations.

How well do our church’s committees function?

IV. Ministry Teams

How do ministry teams work? How can a church add ministry teams without radical revision of its present structure and/or the time-consuming and conflict-producing bylaws revision process?

A. Each ministry team is comprised of church members and worship attendees who have not yet joined the church. Ministry-team coordinators recruit their teams in informal ways *throughout the year*. Most team members begin serving during the first month of the church year—January, September, June, or whenever. Others are invited to join a ministry team at other times of the year. Ministry teams are excellent in-service learning and participation experiences for congregational newcomers.

B. Ministry teams are not new; only the title is new. Examples of informal ministry teams that were not called ministry teams but have long played important roles in congregations include the adult choir, ushers, morning worship greeters, food pantry workers, and used-clothing workers.

C. Ministry team is *not* a new way of saying committee, subcommittee, or task force! Those groups still serve a valid but *very different* function. Some churches make a fatal error: instead of instituting ministry teams, they stop calling their committees “committees” and start calling them “ministry teams.” This accomplishes nothing. Churches that effectively transition to a ministry-team structure neither rename nor disband all of their committees. They add ministry teams while reducing the number and size of their traditional committees and the size and frequency of governing board meetings.

D. The ministry team structure and function fits the way today’s incredibly busy young adults are willing to volunteer their limited time. Married couples today work an average of 26 percent longer per week than they did thirty years ago. (*American Demographics*, July 2000)

They will give time to (1) meaningful relationships with other people and (2) opportunities to make a difference in the lives of other people.

However, only about 15 percent of young adults will give precious time to (1) positions of status on boards/committees and (2) attending meetings.

Ministry teams produce the two *desired* opportunities noted above, without requiring the two behaviors that volunteers consider time wasters.

E. Ministry teams are not a rotation of members to accomplish a specific task. That procedure—a remnant of the now dysfunctional committee-dominated system—focuses only on a *task* and produces almost no *fellowship* while accomplishing that task.

F. Ministry teams create a marvelous mix of task and fellowship. Affinity (a passion or enthusiasm) glues the ministry team together. While the affinity may seem unimportant to other people, members of the ministry team often feel it is the best way to use their gifts or skills to make a difference.

G. Ministry teams motivate people. Ability x Motivation = Ministry Effectiveness. Ability without Motivation is irrelevant. What causes motivation?

The word “motivation” comes from two Latin words, *motum* and *movare*, which literally mean “to move yourself.” Many experts believe that no one can actually motivate someone else. However, church leaders can create an organizational climate in which motivation is likely to happen.

Motivation is *not* delegation: Delegating-leaders give subordinates responsibility for decision-making and problem solving. Delegation works where people draw financial paychecks for their work rather than intrinsic paychecks. Delegation also motivates some church volunteers from the World War II generation. However, delegation does not motivate large numbers of people born subsequent to 1946.

Motivation is *not* manipulation: Manipulation attempts to get people to take action for your benefit. Motivation attempts to get people to take action for their benefit.

Motivation is *not* inspiration: Inspiration is temporary and external. Motivation is lasting and internal.

H. Ministry teams satisfy innate human needs that cause people to move themselves in new thinking and behavior directions. Ten universal human needs:

- People want to be needed—a basic human feeling that begins as a child.
- People want to help others—a natural instinct that is reinforced through parenting.
- People want to make a difference—to be part of something greater than self.
- People want to support causes in which they believe.
- People want to share their God-given gifts.
- People want to sharpen their skills and learn new skills.
- People want self-esteem and affirmation—to feel good about themselves.
- People want to avoid being lonely.
- People want a sense of belonging and acceptance—in every group they try to avoid being an outsider, unaccepted, and unwanted.

Think of ten organizational climate factors that are the opposite of those ten. You have defined a *de*-motivational team climate.

I. Each ministry team involves a group of attendees in accomplishing a specific ministry. The ministry teams' efforts grow out of and are consistent with the congregation's core values, beliefs, vision, and mission. Linkage with church committees focuses more on empowerment than on supervision. Examples:

- Reporting back in meetings is not the goal of a ministry-team structure.
- Involving large numbers of worshipers in ministries that give them a sense of personal fulfillment and spiritual accomplishment is the goal of this structure.
- The primary role of church staff, lay leaders, and committees is to help the ministry teams succeed, *not* to direct their actions and restrain them from exceeding the boundaries of their authority (which is how the traditional 1946-2000 system comes across to many young adults).

J. “Control” and “accountability” are two different things. The governing board and committees do not assume micro-management control of the ministry teams. Rather, they hold ministry teams accountable to their church's core values, beliefs, vision, and mission.

K. In some congregations, a ministry team can form spontaneously, without seeking approval from a committee. One congregation says that the formation of a ministry team is automatically approved if the proposed ministry (1) introduces people to Jesus in positive ways, (2) helps people grow spiritually, or (3) relieves suffering.

In another congregation, the formation of a new ministry team is automatically approved if (1) the goal is consistent with the congregation's values, beliefs, and mission and (2) the person with the ministry team idea can find three other people to help him or her accomplish it.

That permission-giving atmosphere increases the number of enthusiastic, energetic people in a church's ministries.

L. In other congregations, each ministry team is established and its coordinator approved by the committee under which its action ministry seems logically to fall. A major objective of expanding the number of ministry teams is to increase the number of enthusiastic, engaged people working to accomplish the congregation's various ministries—WITHOUT adding a longer tail to the congregation's hierarchical structure. To avoid that pitfall, use the following guidelines:

- The nominating committee does NOT nominate any of the ministry-team coordinators or members.
- A ministry team coordinator is NOT required to be presently serving on a committee; that would severely limit the number of skilled, enthusiastic people willing to serve as ministry team coordinators.
- A ministry team coordinator is NOT required to begin serving on a committee as part of his or her role with the ministry team.
- A ministry team coordinator is NOT required to report to a specific committee member; each team is directly accountable to a committee, but making a team accountable to ONE PERSON on that committee is not a wise procedure.
- Should a problem arise with some aspect of a ministry team's work, the appropriate committee discusses the issue with the coordinator.

Church staff and lay leaders who experience the most transition stress when adding ministry teams to their governing board and committee system typically have a high personal need to control or to be controlled.

M. Each ministry team has authority to test new ideas and take actions that conform to agreed-upon guidelines. For example, in one congregation, a ministry team can do whatever it chooses (without consulting a committee) as long the action (1) is consistent with the congregation's core values, beliefs, vision, and mission and (2) does not require a financial funding appeal to the congregation or does not exceed that ministry team's line item in the church budget.

Guidelines example from a large congregation:

1. Ministry teams make most of their own decisions, measuring them against the congregation's core values, beliefs, vision, and mission.
2. Ministry teams must clear some decisions through a staff meeting, such as putting something on the church calendar.
3. Ministry teams must get a few decisions approved by the governing board, such as any expenditure that requires a financial appeal to the congregation or is not covered in the church budget. These guidelines allow ministry teams to operate from a values-base that gives them permission to experiment with new ideas and discontinue ideas that did not work.

N. How can congregations with traditional structures transition to an increased number of active, engaged members by establishing or expanding the use of ministry teams? In many congregations, the governing board appoints a "Fine-tuning Our Organizational Structure Task Force" to study and discuss *Church Effectiveness Nuggets Volume 23*; then, "make appropriate recommendations to the governing board regarding how to implement its principles in our congregation." In this process, everyone is encouraged to remember that the primary objective of this task force is NOT to change the organizational structure. Rather, its primary objective is to recommend ways to fine-tune the organizational structure so as to increase the percentage of the congregation's members and attendees who are actively engaged in helping to achieve the purpose for which the church and its organizational structure exists: effective accomplishment of mission and ministries.

O. In large churches, ministry teams function best with leadership from a part-time or full-time staff member. Often called “Director of Volunteer Ministries,” these leaders obtain training by attending megachurch workshops around the country and from organizations that sponsor training events for Directors of Volunteer Ministries. Contact your denominational office for information regarding how to connect with an organization of this sort, or for the names of churches in your area that effectively use this model.

P. Some church leaders benefit from studying one of the best examples of the ministry team model in use around the country. One such congregation is Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, whose motto is “Every Member in Ministry.” As part of that congregation’s twice-annually seminar, one of the pastors conducts an especially helpful workshop that details how that congregation develops and uses ministry teams. While this is an extremely large congregation, the ministry team model, as outlined in this *Nuggets Volume*, works equally well in small and midsize churches.

Q. Some churches develop a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the five components of an effective organizational system described above as they transition from an older-model organizational structure into one that includes the five governance system essentials described above: 1. Policy-Setting Group. 2. Coordinating-Calendar-Communicating-Visioning Group. 3. Ministry Management Groups. 4. Ministry Action Teams. 5. Spiritual Gifts Identification (through which individuals feel that assuming a church responsibility is a meaningful way to answer God’s call with their talents and passions).

R. Some churches fine-tune their organizational structure to align it with the “4 by 4 Ministry Team Model.” This system originated in New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, a young, fast-growing, megachurch that from its beginning has involved a high percentage of members in what has grown into several hundred ministries. Learn more about that Honolulu congregation’s annual training events at their www.newhope-hawaii.org Internet site.

S. The Bottom Line. Non-profits are America’s largest employer. Volunteers show up for work in churches that pay well. The salary is challenge, personal growth, opportunity to make a difference, and the numerous meaningful experiences that money cannot buy.

Church members who need a raise seldom ask for it. They just become pew potatoes or dropouts. How does our church pay its members? Do they need a raise?

Should our church fine-tune its organizational system to fit the way today’s volunteers are willing to use their time for important causes?

Study/Discussion/Planning Session #3

Organization and Communication Task Force Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you recall instances where this paragraph or section was true in your personal experience and/or in a congregation?
2. What would you like to add or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways does the idea in this section or paragraph seem true of our congregation?
4. What suggested methods from this section or paragraph should we consider using in our congregation?

Task Force Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions.

V. Spiritual Gifts Education

Churches of every size benefit from some form of spiritual gifts education among members/attendees, which leaders usually unfold in three ways: (a) The first year that involves a high percentage of church members in completing a spiritual gifts survey. (b) Subsequent years attempt to build on members' first-year insights. (c) New attendees and members complete a spiritual gifts survey as they select a ministry team in which to serve.

Four liabilities encountered in the many types of spiritual gifts survey instruments:

1. The survey instrument's terminology often communicates with people in evangelical- and fundamentalist-theology congregations but not with congregants in mainline denominations.
2. The survey instrument's extremely time-consuming format means (a) few congregations use the surveys and (b) only a tiny percentage of members complete the survey.
3. The survey instrument provides no means by which individuals can make the mental leap from recognizing their personal spiritual gifts to putting them into action in their congregation.
4. The survey instrument provides no organizational suggestions that enable church leaders to link survey use with their congregation's committee or ministry team system.

Many versions of spiritual gifts inventory are available from publishing houses and denominational offices. For a spiritual gifts survey instrument and a year-around system that overcomes all four of the above liabilities, see *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 24, Identifying and Mobilizing Parishioners' Spiritual Giftabilities*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free of charge.

Purchasers receive (a) permission to photocopy the survey instrument for local use, (b) a step-by-step, year-around procedure that any congregation can modify to fit its unique size and ministries and (c) an annual time/talent tool that helps individuals make the mental leap from recognizing their spiritual gift(s) to selecting and committing themselves to a ministry.

VI. Annual Leadership Seminar

Schedule a leadership seminar for committee chairpersons and committee members in May, late August, or in January, depending on when the church year begins. Review matters such as the annual responsibility list for each committee, how to form ministry teams, develop meeting agendas, conduct effective meetings, communicate with the other committee chairpersons, and provide newsletter information to the church secretary.

The following pages provide teaching resources that the pastor and governing board chairperson may want to photocopy for use in the annual seminar.

Meetings Matter!

“I hate meetings,” the pastor said. “Our church staff meets every couple of months. I’m too busy to do it more often. Our church board meets twice a year. Our committees seldom meet. Some never meet. The chairperson handles things.”

What happens in churches where meetings seldom happen? (a) Staff conflict increases. (b) Staff spends several hours each week helping church members clear up misunderstandings caused by poor planning, coordination, and communication. (c) Congregational behavior becomes passive as more people retreat to the bleachers to watch, cheer, and boo the staff and a short list of hard-working volunteer leaders. (d) Ten percent of church members feel increasingly self-righteous and burned out. (e) Feelings of attachment to one another and the congregation weaken. (f) People discuss “how things are going” in informal groups, and those conversations grow increasingly negative.

What do meetings accomplish? Perceptions of reality are strongly influenced by face-to-face meetings. Well-led, regular meetings achieve the positive results listed below:

1. Meetings establish and maintain group reality by defining the staff, the team, or the committee. People present belong to it. Those absent do not!
2. Meetings create, enlarge, and maintain a pool of shared knowledge, experience, judgment, and folklore. However, that pool consists only of what participants experienced or discussed *as a group*. Thus, the frequency of meetings determines the degree of unity in a group.
3. Meetings increase communication among participants, reduce conflict among them, help them do their jobs more intelligently, and stimulate more energetic performance.
4. Meetings produce better ideas, plans, and decisions than do individuals working alone or ad hoc collections of people conversing in pairs.
5. Meetings create an idea laboratory in which one person’s innovative thinking is tested, amplified, refined, and shaped by argument and discussion.
6. Meetings help each participant understand the group’s collective aim and how his or her and everyone else’s work contribute to the group’s success.
7. Meetings create in all participants a stronger commitment to the objectives they pursue and the decisions they make.
8. Meetings produce decisions that fewer participants, staff members, and church members challenge than when the chairperson or pastor acts alone.
9. Meetings are often the only time when staff or group members perceive their senior pastor, supervisor, or chairperson as their leader, rather than merely the person to whom they report.
10. Meetings are an arena for establishing and maintaining group status. Each meeting-participant discovers and/or feels reinforced in his or her self-identity. The absence of meetings develops Lone Ranger staff and lay leaders who build personal fiefdoms and assume authority disproportionate to their actual role in the organization.

For additional insights, obtain *Harvard Business Review Reprint 76204* titled *How to Run a Meeting* by Anthony Jay, (Harvard Business School Publishing; custserv@hbsp.harvard.edu)

The Bottom Line. The frequency and quality of staff meetings, committee meetings, and board meetings make a difference in church health and vitality.

How to Chair Meetings

Do you want to increase your ability to chair productive meetings and deal with problem people? Study the following basics.

The Chairperson's Role: Hearing yourself talking a lot is a clue that you are failing the self-management challenge. Controlling the meeting does not mean imposing the chairperson's will on the group.

Studies indicate that effective discussions have two kinds of leaders: a *social* (team, relational) leader and a *task* (project) leader. Effective chairpersons focus on the *social* leadership role. Effective chairpersons encourage the clash of ideas from which creativity arises while discouraging the clash of personalities.

Steering Tips: Chairpersons are not responsible for the destination of ideas. However, they are responsible for the trip quality. Examples:

1. Begin on time. Never allow the people who arrive late to punish the people who arrive on time.
2. Define the meeting's objectives. "We are here today to" When someone attempts a derailment, say, "Should we put that on the agenda for the next meeting?"
3. Maintain an acceptable pace. "We need to discuss that, but shouldn't we concentrate on . . . tonight?"
4. Allow digressions but control their length. Brief digressions provide mental recesses that allow people to focus better. Lengthy digressions pull the committee into a black hole.
5. Provide thinking time within the meeting. "Several of these ideas sound good. Let's stop and review the alternatives we have identified thus far."
6. When something seems unclear, ask for clarification. "Say a little more about that idea." "Do you mean that we ought to . . . ?"
7. As the meeting progresses, summarize occasionally. "We seem to have thus far decided these three things What else should we do tonight?"
8. Untangle communication snags. "Isn't John really saying . . . ?"
9. Muzzle over-talkative people. "Let's move around the group and hear the opinions of each person."
10. Draw out silent people. "Joe, how do you feel about . . . ?"
11. Remember how sensitive mature people are to rejection. Suppress your inclination toward the squashing-reflex when you first hear a half-formed suggestion.
12. Cork the complaining or angry member. Listen patiently until he or she runs down. Ask questions to be sure you understand the point. If possible, say that you sympathize with strong personal feelings. Smile while saying you agree with a specific part of that position but are unsure about other parts. Ask the complainer for suggestions that might bring the group toward consensus. Say, "I appreciate you bringing it up." Then, move back to the discussion's mainstream.
13. Block oral sword fights. If two people argue heatedly, cool them by asking a neutral committee member a question, preferably one that requires a purely factual answer.
14. Avoid seeking premature approval. "I see some value in both lines of reasoning. I'm not sure we are ready to vote on this yet. Could we ask Joe to gather more facts; then discuss it again at the next meeting?"
15. Close on a positive note. Celebrate a matter that the group resolved in a satisfying way. Thank them.

For additional insights, obtain *Harvard Business Review Reprint 76204* titled *How to Run a Meeting* by Antony Jay. (Customer Service, Harvard Business School Publishing: custserv@hbsp.harvard.edu.)

The Bottom Line: Good meetings tend to happen if chairpersons have (a) passion for the ministries being discussed and (b) skill in guiding group members to use their creativity in an organized way. How skillfully do our congregation's leaders lead meetings?

Meeting Management Tips

A business leader defined hell as spending eternity in a boring meeting that focuses on everything and accomplishes nothing.

These ten tips can prevent that fate:

1. Provide a printed agenda at least one day prior to the meeting. This increases attendance by establishing the meeting's purpose.
2. Open the meeting by inviting everyone to make a "thirty-second comment." Depending on the situation, ask people to share names, roles, "why you are here," expectations for the meeting, a challenge they are facing right now, their mood today, or something good that has or is about to happen in their family. This sharing gives insight into what people are thinking, surfaces hidden agendas, increases the likelihood that people will speak freely during the meeting, minimizes tension and apprehension, and sets a collegial tone.
3. Distribute copies of the agenda. Ask if anyone has additional agenda items. This discourages passive-aggressive people from unexpectedly dumping substantive matters or pet peeves onto the table after you finish the agenda items; thus, ending the meeting with a sour note and/or a time-frustrated feeling. If that happens, suggest, "Perhaps we can put that on the agenda for the next meeting."
4. As you attack each agenda item, show special warmth when someone makes a suggestion. This discourages the quick-speak urge that often murders good ideas before they become full-grown.
5. Respond to an irrelevant idea by praising some aspect of it and asking that person and/or other participants to help grow that seed-thought into something of value.
6. Call on the senior staff or long-term members last. This keeps their pronouncements from inhibiting opinions from new or junior members.
7. Close on a positive note. Mention major meeting accomplishments. This is especially important when unresolved items were deferred to the next meeting.
8. Circle the room again, asking everyone to share a "thirty-second comment" related to (a) general feelings about this meeting, (b) something especially useful learned in this meeting, (c) personal actions planned as a result of the meeting, or (d) ways we might improve future meetings. This sharing reinforces the authority of decisions, increases the likelihood of prompt follow-through by people with delegated duties, provides evidence of each person's commitment to group decisions, lets people feel they accomplished several objectives, and closes the meeting on a positive note.
9. Make notes on those "thirty-second comments," some of which may appear on the next meeting's agenda as "Concerns from Our Last Meeting."
10. Develop a standard *Meeting Minutes Form*. This insures that absentee participants get an overview, reduces endangerment from flawed memories, and provides a summary for the church governing board, if needed. Include the meeting's time, date, and length; where held; who chaired it; names of attendees; apologies from absentees; all agenda items and other items discussed; decisions reached; names of persons to whom tasks were assigned and the due dates; recommendations for the church's governing board; and the next meeting's date, time, and place.

The Bottom Line. Stop complaining about meetings! Start improving their quality!

Energizing Passive Committees

Prior to the meeting, the chairperson had decided what the committee should decide. He opened with a lengthy monologue. The committee listened respectfully and approved his idea.

During ensuing weeks, the chairperson felt increasingly frustrated with the committee members' anemic follow-through. Only 15 percent of what they had decided got implemented. The chairperson complained, "Our people are just not committed!"

What causes passive committees?

1. *Well-meaning but autocratic chairpersons or staff.* Everyone knows a leader who claims to conduct "participative" meetings but whose peers label over-controlling.
2. *Long-tenured chairpersons.* Seeing the big picture is difficult when you are in the picture. Chairpersons seldom serve beyond two years without starting across the invisible line between serving the committee and owning it.
3. *Committee culture that seems impervious to change.* Church committees highly value keeping the peace. Autocrats flourish in such cultures. Improved decision-making habits rarely happen in settings where people feel they cannot alter the outcomes.
4. *Monologues that block dialogue.* When the chairperson (or a strongly outspoken committee member) refuses to permit dissenting opinions, few sacred cows are slain; most die of old age.

What cures passive committees? Ram Charan lists four healthy-meeting behaviors. ("Conquering a Culture of Indecision," *Harvard Business Review*, April 2001) His principles also apply to church committees:

1. *Openness.* Dialogue is the success method of committees. Openness means the chairperson, or a powerful committee member, has not predetermined the outcome. Effective chairpersons create a safe atmosphere that encourages spirited discussion, group learning, and trust.
2. *Candor.* This chairperson behavior exudes openness by asking, "Can you think of any contrary opinions that might thwart follow-up action on our consensus?" Encouraging the expression of diverse opinions helps eradicate the secret vetoes of people who vote favorably but become passive pumpkins after adjournment. Effective chairpersons (a) ensure that the committee walks around all sides of the issue, (b) repeatedly restate the purpose toward which the committee's discussion is directed, and (c) ask for alternative ideas.
3. *Informality.* Highly formal meetings suppress candor and honest exchange of differing opinions. Informality has the opposite effect. People feel more comfortable asking questions and posing "what if" possibilities that can energize the group toward focused action. Effective chairpersons signal which behaviors are acceptable and politely refuse to sanction the four kinds of covert controllers: (a) extortionists who hold the group ransom until everyone sees it their way, (b) side-trackers who love tangents in which they can draw attention to themselves by saying, "When we did that ten years ago . . .", (c) silent liars who agree to something they later badmouth to other church members, and (d) malignant narcissists who try to divide the committee by soliciting support for their pet viewpoint from specific members.
4. *Closure.* Without closure, the enthusiastic follow-through actions derived from committee decisions die prior to birth. Ensure that everyone knows who will do what, and when, in specific terms.

The Bottom Line. If you photograph the dialogue in our committee meetings, what develops from that film?

Study/Discussion/Planning Session #4

Organization and Communication Task Force Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you recall instances where this paragraph or section was true in your personal experience and/or in a congregation?
2. What would you like to add or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways does the idea in this section or paragraph seem true of our congregation?
4. What suggested methods from this section or paragraph should we consider using in our congregation?

Task Force Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions.

VII. Organizational Cohesiveness and Cooperation

At least one-half of every congregation's members grew up in another denomination. The education process is endless. Distribute an organizational chart to all the congregation's members annually, outlining "how our church functions." Some churches also publish an annual *Congregational Plan Book*.

A. Major purposes of an annual *Plan Book*:

- a. Guides each committee, commission, department, or ministry in accomplishing its annual responsibilities
- b. Orients new committee members
- c. Educates committees regarding the role and responsibilities of the church's other committees
- d. Reduces ministry overlaps, ministry gaps, and church leader conflict

B. Contents of an annual congregational *Plan Book*: Each church's *Plan Book* content to some extent depends on that congregation's unique nature, history, circumstances, and denominational affiliation. Include the following items in each year's *Plan Book*:

- The church's one-sentence vision statement
- The church's two- or three-paragraph mission statement
- A list of the church's two or three priorities for this calendar year
- The church budget, which includes line-item amounts that each committee has authority to spend without asking the governing board's permission
- The calendar dates for all known church events this year
- The known calendar dates for all local school functions such as spring break; local high-school and college sports schedules; professional sports schedules, if applicable in that community; national holidays
- Church officers' names and telephone numbers
- Governing board members' names and telephone numbers
- Committee chairpersons' names and telephone numbers
- The purposes, composition of, and responsibilities of each committee
- The church's bylaws and/or references to congregational operating procedures required by its denomination (for example, United Methodist congregations use guidelines in *The Book of Discipline*, and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations use guidelines in *The Book of Order*)

C. Two options. Either (a) use the outline above and on the next page to prepare an annual *Plan Book* or (b) obtain a detailed example of an annual *Plan Book* and how to prepare it in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 25, Preparing an Annual Congregational Plan Book*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download free of charge.

Of extreme importance: provide a page for each of the congregation's committees. That page includes the following information:

- A one-sentence definition of the committee's purpose
- How the chairperson and members are selected and how long they serve
- How often and when the committee meets
- A list of the committee's traditional responsibilities (obtain this by asking last year's committee to list everything it remembers being responsible for during the last few years)

Example of the "purpose statement" of one congregation's stewardship committee:

"To educate and encourage church members to be good stewards of their time, talent, and treasure."

Example of one item from a lengthy responsibility list page for one congregation's stewardship committee:

"1. Responsible for the implementation of the annual stewardship drive (securing financial pledges and commitments), usually held in October."

At the end of each year, ask each outgoing committee to review its page in the Plan Book. Ask committees to suggest any additions, subtractions, and modifications that seem to make sense in view of their experiences during the last year.

Provide the model for a one-page report that each committee makes to the governing board. Under optimum operating procedures, the committee also shares this report with other committees to maintain high levels of communication among church leaders and staff. The report form includes the following items:

- Committee Name:
- Date of Meeting:
- Chairperson:
- Committee Members Present:
- Others Present:
- Our committee discussed the following agenda:
- Our committee took the following action (jobs assigned, to whom, due date, etc.)
- Our committee makes the following recommendations for governing board approval:

D. Plan Books are not bylaws! Rather, *Plan Books* are guidelines revised annually in the light of last year's experiences and new insights regarding how to improve organization systems to better accomplish God's unique mission and ministry vision for each congregation.

VIII. The Nominating Committee

In the traditional practices of many denominations and congregations, nominating committees have nominated *only* governing board members. That tradition, while time-worn by long habit and venerated as “the way we do it,” unintentionally produces much dysfunctional behavior in congregations—thereby limiting the ability of well-meaning and committed leaders to achieve maximum mission and ministry effectiveness.

The following guidelines help congregations achieve maximum mission and ministry effectiveness with minimum organizational dysfunction and conflict:

A. Attempt to have one-third of each committee consist of people who joined the congregation during the past five years. Research indicates that 34 percent of the typical congregation’s members began attending within the last five years. New members see the positives and negatives of church behavior with greater clarity. This protects the congregation from missed opportunities. Even in churches with smaller percentages of newcomers, the varied backgrounds and experiences of the newest members ensure a continuous flow of new ideas and a broader perspective.

B. Scrupulously apply three-year term limits to all governing board members and all committee members. This rule (a) protects people from burnout, (b) avoids the appearance that “a few people make all the decisions around here,” and (c) prevents collecting a group of well-meaning but change-resistant turf-holders. Even when the most sincere, humble, and well-meaning people retain a chairperson role for too many years, they move into a danger zone that involves one or all three of the above results.

C. If possible, draw one-third of each committee’s members from the twenty-five to forty-four age range. Older adults know *their generation’s* preferences. Appoint too few young adults and the leadership groups make decisions that fail to attract and grow the next generation of church leaders. This amputates the congregation’s future.

D. Limit committee size to six people. Research indicates that the most creative group size is five-to-seven people. Then, too, smaller committees are less likely to think they must do all of the committee’s ministries, rather than involving other church members on ministry teams that accomplish the committee’s ministries.

E. Scrupulously apply two-year term limits to all committee chairpersons. After more than two consecutive years as chairperson, many people begin feeling and acting as if they own this ministry rather than serve God through it. A two-year term limit, along with never allowing committees to select their own chairperson, protects effective leaders from obtaining a “life sentence” as committee chair. If the elections are left up to each committee, they often persuade a capable chairperson to “take it another year,” thus increasing the likelihood of burnout among the most dedicated leaders.

G. Members of the nominations committee do not nominate themselves as chairpersons. Monarchs reelect themselves; in democracies, the people nominate and elect the leaders. Congregations whose leaders behave like monarchs suffer similar outcomes, no matter how well-meaning and benevolent their monarchs.

H. Do not nominate staff members as committee chairs. Paid staff typically provides much of the leadership and many of the resources for committees, but conflict levels are lower and staff members receive less criticism when laypersons chair them.

I. Do not nominate two members of an immediate family (spouse, parents, and children) to the same committee. As much as possible, avoid such nominations for the governing board.

J. The financial secretary verifies to the nominations committee that all committee and governing board nominees are regular financial contributors to the church. Building a governing board and committee system without that criterion is like recruiting members for a football team who do not believe in football.

K. The worship attendance record-keeper verifies to the nominations committee that all committee and governing board nominees attended worship at least twenty-six of the fifty-two Sundays last year. This avoids the inevitable results of “putting someone on a committee in the hope that she or he will become more active.” That is like a corporation’s personnel director promoting a low-productivity employee in the hope that she or he will become a better employee.

L. No one serves on more than one committee. The only exceptions are the personnel committee, the nominations committee, and a few people who by denominational custom or mandate must serve “by virtue of office” as ex officio members.

M. Three tendencies cause congregations to assign committee roles to a short list of people. (a) We ask people to help us who we know personally. (b) We ask people to help us who have proven their dependability in the past. (c) We ask people to help us who agree with our viewpoints.

That (a) produces a natural reduction in leadership-group size over a period of years, (b) tends to burn out the church’s hardest working core-leadership group, and (c) reduce the involvement of, and thereby the commitment of, other church members.

The individuals who burn out (a) begin to feel judgmental toward people who do not work as hard and (b) begin to feel that they own their committee rather than serve on a committee. Those self-destructive and church-destructive feelings come to virtually everyone who serves too long on one committee, no matter how spiritually committed or idealistic that individual is.

Study/Discussion/Planning Session #5

Organization and Communication Task Force Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you recall instances where this paragraph or section was true in your personal experience and/or in a congregation?
2. What would you like to add or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways does the idea in this section or paragraph seem true of our congregation?
4. What suggested methods from this section or paragraph should we consider using in our congregation?

Task Force Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions.

IX. Congregational Communication

The Golden Rule of church communication: “Tell all of the people, all of the news, all of the time.” To get maximum attendance at an event, tell people five times in five ways over a period of five weeks.

A. Stack in the foyer copies of minutes, or a summary of decisions, from governing board meetings. Note in the worship bulletin that these are available to anyone who wishes to pick up a copy. While few people have a keen interest in this information, the procedure presents an open posture toward communicating board decisions with the congregation.

B. Print announcements on half-sheet worship bulletin inserts. Research indicates that this has a far greater communication impact with church members than any other *printed* medium. Far fewer people read similar announcements in the church newsletter. This procedure also reduces the time spent on oral announcements in the worship service, helping to prevent worship from running overtime.

C. Consider installing a “pastoral telecomputer.” This electronic system, preset to call during appropriate hours of the day or evening, sends telephone messages to specific lists, such as choir members, governing board members, or the entire membership. Within a few hours, the machine can telephone all of the congregation’s members and notify them of a funeral service time, announce a special function, or cancel a church service due to weather conditions. Most such equipment is capable of two-way communication. This allows people the machine telephones to raise a question or concern, if they wish to do so. The telecomputer pays for itself in labor and postage savings, replacing postcard reminders of meetings.

Check with Church Communications, Inc. (www.churchcommunications.com/contact) and other such companies. Shop carefully. Obtain a machine with sufficient capacity and speed. If technological advances make it possible, obtain equipment designed so that if an answering machine picks up, the church’s machine talks to the member’s machine. For a list of companies that provide equipment, contact *Your Church Magazine* and ask for a copy of their most recent annual *Desk Reference* (www.yourchurch.net).

A slightly different approach to accomplishing the above objective is to contract with a company that provides a variety of communications with individual parishioners, including voice messages via telephone and email messages. For detailed information regarding this service, visit the (www.sheepmail.com) Web site.

D. Consider whether installing a “Care Line” might benefit your congregation. This communication tool requires the church to install one additional private telephone line and answering machine. Each morning the senior pastor or a staff member records two minutes of congregational information, such as funeral service times, people in the hospital, today’s meetings and events, a Scripture reading, and a prayer. Members of the congregation and community can get the latest news about the church family, not just when the office is open but around the clock. The Care Line also saves the church secretary hours of answering questions, while insuring that everyone gets exactly the same information. In times of emergency or bad weather, a fifteen-second tape tells people about meeting or worship service cancellations.

E. Invest in computer software designed for congregational use. Automated Church System (Shelby Systems), which usually has nearby support services, has the largest number of users in the United States: 800/877-0222 (www.shelbyinc.com) For a list of all companies in the United States that produce specialized software for congregations, along with the strengths and weaknesses of each system, contact *The Clergy Journal* and ask for a copy of the January 2005 issue: 96160 Carmen Avenue East, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077-4422; 800/328-0200. Similar information is periodically available through *Your Church Magazine*. Ask for their most recent issue that covers congregational software and ask for their annual *Desk Reference*, which lists all the church software publishing companies (www.yourchurch.net).

F. As E-mail becomes a universal communication tool among church goers, congregations will increasingly take advantage of this medium. That usage will arrive at 100 percent among church members during the next five or ten years—due to technological advances that will make E-mail as simple as the U.S. Mail. Between now and that time, computer software will increasingly provide easy-to-use options that E-mail the weekly church newsletters to members who prefer to receive them that way while mailing them to others in the congregation.

G. Print top-quality church newsletters. Churches spend more than eighty million each year publishing and mailing three-quarters of a billion newsletters to member and attendees. Despite increased use of Internet Sites and e-mail communications, printed newsletters remain an essential ingredient in congregational communication. A constant intake of new members (typically, 8 percent to 10 percent of each congregation’s total membership per year) requires continuous education regarding local traditions. More weekend travel makes communicating major announcements through pulpit and adult classes insufficient.

Distribute the following pages to committee chairpersons, staff members, and office staff at the annual leadership seminar the first month of each year.

Common Newsletter Defects

1. Negative writing. Sermonizing and guilt-trip efforts to motivate attendance, giving, or friendliness seldom do. Verbal backhands modify the behavior of some people in some circumstances, but most newsletter scolding produces more backlash than forward motion.

2. Poor-quality reproduction. People tend to disregard hard-to-read, unclear print that looks as if it were mimeographed with a mixture of axle grease and vanishing ink, then run over by an eighteen-wheeler.

3. Wall-to-wall print. Readers who glance at newsletters with no space between columns, little paragraphing, and no white space assume the editor is trying to solve a paper shortage and expects readers to use fifty-power magnifying glasses. Thus, people glance at the newsletter when they open the mail and either trash-can it or stack it until they get in the mood for heavy reading.

4. No pastor's column. Some well-meaning clergy dismiss this task by saying, "Too time consuming. Let them come to church if they want to hear what I think!" Bad judgment! This column is the best-read element of any church paper. Research says 97 percent of people read the pastor's column, even if they read nothing else in the newsletter. Failing to write it equals failing to communicate with 50 percent to 70 percent more people than attend the worship services.

5. Dwelling too much on the WHAT instead of the WHY. The newspaper journalism formula of "who, what, where, and when" is important. But without a strong "why" of events and activities, a church is merely another social institution. A strong *why* makes a church activity unique among the list of priorities from which time-pressured people must choose!

6. Efforts to "funny up" the newspaper with cute stuff. Resist the use of inside jokes that only long-time members can catch. Pastors/editors may think puns and wisecracks reduce boredom, but many of these humor-efforts irritate more than enliven. Readers must sort through three inches of lettuce to find the sandwich meat.

7. Overweight, infrequent issues. Eight or ten pages published once a month discourage readership. Two or four pages bi-monthly or weekly communicate more timely information—plus, people are far more likely to scan it when they open the mail, rather than lay it aside until they have more time, which may never happen.

8. Italics or script type = tiring reading. If what you say is not interesting, an exotic typeface does not save it from a waste-basket destination.

9. Too many font sizes (sizes of print). This is tempting with the myriad choices that word-processors offer. But using more than two font sizes paints a messy, confusing appearance. *Sans serif* (no little hooks on the letters) is best for headlines; *serif* (little hooks on the letters) for the body text is most readable.

10. Typos, misspelled names, bloopers. No one can catch 100 percent of his or her own typing or spelling errors. Before printing, the typist should read the original copy to someone else while he or she follows along on the finished product. That is the *only* sure way to catch errors or omissions. Double-check all name spellings (don't assume that your original copy is accurate)! Double-check the headlines (more misspellings are overlooked there than in the body text)!

Newsletter Improvement Ideas

1. Decide on your paper's purpose. One church listed five goals for its newsletter:

- a. Publicize church events, programs, and aspirations.
- b. Indicate a concern for individual persons.
- c. Note the accomplishments of the church and its members.
- d. Furnish spiritual nourishment for those who seek it.
- e. Motivate people toward a positive response to God in their personal life, community, and world.

Newsletter editors commonly err by concentrating on one or two of these five purposes while excluding the others.

2. Decide on your target audience. Is it church members only? Prospective members? Other ministers? Former members who now live out of town? All of the above? What factors are important in communicating with each of these constituencies?

3. Content speaks as loudly as appearance. Too many editors over-attend to artistic design and pay little attention to writing quality. No amount of visual beauty makes up for absence of meaningful, well-written content. You must have something important to say, but you must also say it effectively. Provide newsletter editors with a copy of *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 13, How to Sharpen Your Writing Skills*. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com and download this resource free of charge.

4. Write inclusively. Have you given all pertinent facts in each news story? Do you unconsciously write for active members but not for casual attendees or visitors?

5. Show some enthusiasm. The only quality more contagious than enthusiasm is apathy, and the only thing more contagious than apathy is negativism. If you are not excited and positive about what is happening in the church, how can readers become so?

6. Print in every issue the church's address and phone number (including area code). An out-of-town visitor may want to telephone or mail a contribution. Unless the church is too large to do so, list all staff members. Otherwise, how can a reader outside the city contact the appropriate leader?

7. Place real-estate agencies on your mailing list. They often talk with new residents weeks prior to anyone else. Even if they do not read the newsletter each week, the church name stays on the top of their consciousness.

8. Mail to your local newspaper's religious news editor. These news-hungry people have sizeable chunks of space to fill. They sometimes note and reprint news items on which you might not remember to send press releases.

9. For the greatest reading-ease, print black ink on white paper. The next best combination is black ink on yellow paper. The darker the ink and the lighter the paper, the better the readability! Exotic ink and dark-hued paper attract *attention*. But the object of printed matter is to attract *readers*!

10. In most instances avoid justifying right margins. In locally published church newsletters, this does little to improve appearance. "White space" (some empty space in the column margins), however, improves both appearance and readability. Lining up the right margins, especially in narrow-column newsletters, creates an awkward, dissimilar spacing between words. Reading becomes harder. Your eyes must jump along the uneven spaces rather than flow across an even line of words. Study modern publications. Even many national magazines have switched to "ragged right" margins in their articles.

11. When using pictures, show people in action, close up. Avoid lineups posed against a distant horizon.

12. Protect yourself from and make heroes of incompetent writers. Church leaders often say, "Write an article? I can't write!" At least 90 percent of these comments contain more accuracy than humility. Here is a way to overcome that problem: ask people who want an item in the newsletter to fill out the form on the next page. The pastor, church secretary, or newsletter editor can then quickly write the article himself or herself. Drawing from well-organized information takes far less time than editing or rewriting someone else's inappropriate material.

Distribute the form to key leaders. Leave a stack close to the telephone in the church secretary's office. This increases the number of articles submitted, improves writing quality, reduces time expended on phone calls to obtain left-out information, provides the church secretary with a quick way to get article information on the telephone, and improves news coverage.

Implementing these lists of dos and don'ts does not eliminate the need for forgiveness. Human beings never reach that level of perfection. These lists do, however, significantly increase a congregation's mission and ministry abilities.

Information for the Church Newsletter

Submitted by _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____ OK to call at work? _____

Event or activity to be publicized _____

Sponsor of event or activity _____

Day and date of event _____ Time of day _____

Location _____

Who is invited? _____

Speaker or other program feature _____

Speaker's title or other identification _____

Is there any other goal or special purpose involved in this event? Example: to develop a better understanding of the hunger issue.

Who is in charge of this event? _____ Phone _____

Other facts you want us to consider for use in this article: _____

Continue on back of form if you need additional space.

G. Print a top-quality, color brochure to communicate with potential attendees and newcomers. Begin by understanding that this type of communication is a science. Distribute these guidelines to the outreach committee, the communication committee, the staff, and whoever is responsible for publishing a church brochure.

- Studies show that two or more colors draw far greater attention and readership than does a one-color brochure.
- Studies show that the human eye automatically moves to the upper left of any *printed* material *first*. If the eye finds nothing of interest there, it tells the brain to skip the other parts. Therefore, print a need-meeting idea in that corner. *Never* put the history of your denomination on the left panel of a brochure. That information is institutional and “us-oriented.” Publicity material should be “you-focused,” connecting with a felt-need of people outside the church.
- Studies show that people are attracted to people more than to objects or to buildings. Therefore, include people pictures. Photos of buildings are okay but will draw fewer people into reading the print.
- Studies show that abundant white space increases readership. Brochures should not attempt to tell people everything about the church. That can come later, after they begin regular attendance.
- Studies show that people are particularly attracted to a church that provides a friendly atmosphere, strong youth and children programming, biblical preaching and teaching that relates to daily life, quality nursery care, and meaningful worship. If the congregation offers these, say so boldly—not in the fine print.
- Studies show that churches should make it easy for people to find the building—especially in metropolitan areas. Put a map on your brochure.

If you review several church brochures, you find that many of them are built around one of six different themes:

1. **Some brochures focus on the programmatic elements of church life**, such as Bible study, children and youth choirs, youth groups, and singles ministries.
2. **Some brochures focus on the spiritual and psychological, human need-meeting ministries of the church**, such as personal growth and educational opportunities for young adults.
3. **Some brochures focus on the biblical beliefs of the church.** This lets people know the congregation is biblically oriented by lifting up four-to-six Bible verses that support key church doctrines.
4. **Some brochures focus on the church’s ministry to the needy in the community and across the world**, such as food pantries, used clothing rooms, the world-peace movement, and community leadership involvement by church members.
5. **Some brochures focus on the congregation’s past history**, such as the distinguished, nationally known pastors who have served it in past decades, the construction dates of its great buildings, and its significant service to the community since 1810.
6. **Some brochures focus on the denomination’s history**, reviewing early founders’ names and thought patterns, the country or state of the movement’s origin, and the founding fathers’ 1820 belief systems.

The best overall advice is *blend and balance*. Hit the first three on the above list with greatest emphasis (upper-left of each page) and the last three lightly (right side and lower parts of pages and panels).

X. Vision, Mission, Strategy, Tactics, and Values

Developing a congregational vision statement and mission statement can energize a church (a) by strengthening convictions regarding its central purpose and (b) by helping to build dreams for the future consistent with these convictions.

A. Definitions and historic examples of classic planning words: understanding the classic terms related to planning, and distinguishing among them, can help clergy and lay leader accomplish more effective ministries.

Vision—paints a picture of the ideal end result we hope to achieve with our hopes, dreams, and efforts. (Vision is sometimes termed “mission” in mid-20th-century leadership literature.) The best Vision statements are short enough to fit on a T-shirt:

A few historical examples: Jesus’ *Vision* was “the Kingdom of God.” The four Gospels record Jesus speaking that phrase more than 100 times. Martin Luther’s vision was “faith alone.” John Calvin’s *Vision* was “the city of God. John Wesley’s *Vision* was “scriptural holiness.” One congregation’s vision is “helping the largest possible number of people make a life-changing connection with Jesus Christ.”

What is our congregation’s Vision?

Mission—is the specific action necessary to achieve the Vision. Mission is more specific than vision. (Mission was sometimes called “goals” and sometimes used interchangeably with “vision” in mid-20th-century leadership literature.) Whereas vision is always singular, mission is usually plural. Mission includes multiple objectives that work together to produce an ideal end result (vision).

Jesus’ missions included (a) inviting people to enter the kingdom of God and let the kingdom of God enter them, (b) incarnating God’s love in his behavior toward people, (c) urging the Jewish leaders to reverse their drift into legalism, and (d) reinstating the Old Testament vision of loving God in spirit and in truth with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and loving your neighbor as yourself.

John Wesley’s missions included (a) reforming the dead rituals of the Church of England, (b) helping people experience the life-changing presence of God as he had that night at Aldersgate Church, (c) helping people grow spiritually (scriptural holiness through life-long “sanctification”), and (d) involving people in caring actions toward poor, destitute, imprisoned, and hurting people.

One congregation describes its mission with four words: “Accepting, Transforming, Equipping, and Sending.”

What is our congregation’s Mission?

Strategy—describes the overall game-plan for accomplishing the Vision and Mission. Strategy is a specific procedure for accomplishing one or more of the missions. Strategies move us toward our ideal end result (Vision).

Jesus’ strategies included (a) recruiting twelve apostles, (b) giving the twelve apostles his kingdom-of-God vision, and (c) training the twelve apostles in how to accomplish the twin missions of his Great Commandments—love God and love your neighbor—(Luke 10:27) and his Great Commission—give others that message—(Matthew 28:19-20).

John Wesley’s strategies included (a) traveling across England, concentrating on the industrialized areas, and (b) preaching his vision of scriptural holiness to the largest possible number of people.

Many strategies work because a new technology emerges. Two new inventions helped Jesus’ disciples quickly expand faith in Christ: (a) the worldwide Roman road system that made travel easy and (b) the worldwide use of the Greek language that eradicated communication barriers between countries. Invention of the printing press, which created

inexpensive, mass-communication by 1500 AD, was that kind of strategy for Luther, Calvin and Wesley.

In contemporary church life, loss of loyalty to particular denominations, coupled with improved highways and rapid automobile transportation, ended the “neighborhood church era.” This made possible the strategy of spreading the Christianity through the ministries of gigantic congregations.

What is our congregation’s Strategy?

Tactics—are the specific means used to accomplish the Strategy. **Tactics are ways of implementing a strategy. Effective tactics achieve one of the missions that move us toward our desired end result (vision).**

Jesus’ tactics were pray, study, teach, preach, travel, befriend people, heal people physically, and heal people mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

John Wesley’s tactics included (a) the radically new practice of “field preaching” in which he spoke to large groups of people outdoors and (b) organizing converts who responded to his preaching into small groups or “classes” that met weekly. Class leaders held each person accountable for regular worship, Bible study, prayer, financial stewardship and personally witnessing.

What are our congregation’s Tactics?

B. How can we develop a vision statement and mission statement? Imagine that your congregation is five years from now. Because it has achieved the optimum of your leaders’ mission/ministry dreams, *Fortune* magazine interviews them for an article.

What is the topic sentence in each of the four or five paragraphs in the article, each of which describes what your church accomplished? What is the article’s title?

In such a scenario, the title is a one-sentence “vision statement,” which briefly describes the dramatic result of your church achieving what God calls it to do. (The dictionary defines *vision* as a picture or image of the future that we seek to create.)

The list of topic sentences from each of the four or five paragraphs is the “mission statement,” which details how your congregation achieved its vision. (The dictionary defines *mission* as the specific actions we take to arrive at our vision of the ideal future that we seek to create.)

Vision statements say *what* and are short enough to print on a t-shirt.

Mission statements say *how* and are not longer than one-half page.

For example, one congregation’s vision statement is “Make more and better disciples for Jesus Christ.” The seven short paragraphs that comprise the “mission statement” describe the principal ways in which that congregation accomplishes its two-fold vision statement of (1) making new disciples and (2) strengthening the spiritual life of present disciples.

An alternate preparation option: the step-by-step process for developing a mission statement found in *How to Set a Clear Direction for Your Church* by Bob Orr is ideal for planning retreats and/or a series of on-site meetings. Obtain from Church Growth, Inc. (www.churchgrowth.org).

C. Warning: vision and mission statements are not enough! Many pastors say, “Three years ago our church created a mission statement and a vision statement. We followed the plan to the letter, with much participation from our members and leaders. I can’t see that it made much difference. Did we do something wrong?”

If your church’s *values* do not support its *vision* statement and *mission* statement, the writing process creates zero change. *Values* describe the deeply ingrained thought patterns that determine our behaviors. Writing vision and mission statements is relatively easy. Changing a congregation’s values-driven behaviors is much more challenging and usually takes seven years of persistent effort.

D. What values should drive a church's behavior? According to its 2,000-year-old operator's manual, the church is the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Congregations therefore focus on the goal of extending Christ's ministry into their present generation and local communities by being, doing, and saying what Christ was, did, and said.

What core-value system produced Christ's behavior, thinking and words? His foundation value was the kingdom of God—a term Jesus used more than 100 times in the four Gospels. Inviting people to enter the kingdom of God and let the kingdom of God enter them drove Christ's behavior, thinking, and teaching. He summarized that core value in his two Great Commandments (Luke 10:27) and his Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Because healthy congregations and effective leaders operate from Christ's core-value system, their behaviors take three forms:

1. A spiritual focus that transforms the quality of people's lives by more fully developing their relationship with God (Luke 10:27)
2. An action focus that helps hurting people in the congregation and community and across the world (Luke 10:27, 29-37)
3. An influence focus that encourages more people to make an initial connection with God (Matthew 28:19-20)

Unless a congregation and its leaders operate from *all three* of those core values, the writing of vision and mission statements and the emphasizing of goals, priorities, passion, focus, methods, social science insights, marketing techniques, and business management procedures is like improving food service on the *Titanic*. The core values that leaders hold in their minds and hearts create their *basic motivations*—which determine their *behaviors* (how they spend their not-unlimited time and energy supply). Defective values produce disoriented thinking and dysfunctional behavior; thus, the vision and mission statements say one thing, but what leaders spend their time doing is quite another.

Christian history reveals a tendency toward selective amnesia regarding Christ's three core values. Pietists sometimes settle in on the *spiritual focus*, forgetting the other two. Activists sometimes lock in on the *helping hurting people focus*, forgetting the other two values. Entrepreneurs sometimes glue themselves to the *influence focus* (converting people), forgetting the other two values.

Congregational behaviors driven by this selective amnesia have been quite visible during the past fifty years. Many charismatics and fundamentalists locked in on helping people grow spiritually through Bible study, prayer, and worship. Many theological liberals and social-action enthusiasts locked in on helping hurting people and changing governmental and societal systems. Many evangelicals locked in on influencing more people to connect with God through inviting, witnessing, and marketing techniques.

Instead of recognizing their selective amnesia—failure to operate from *all three* of Christ's core values, each group tended to increase the voltage of efforts to condemn and reform the other two groups. Results: (1) The actual *behavior* of many congregations expresses one of Christ's three core values while unconsciously neglecting the others. (2) God does not bless with fruitfulness leaders whose behaviors do not match the mission and ministry of their Master.

Theological controversies regarding the question, Which of Christ's three core values is the most important? are based on illogical premises—like a dispute over which landing gear of an airplane is most important. Christ's core values are not multiple-choice. Congregations that drop one or more of the three from their agendas are planning a crash-and-burn future—regardless of what process they use to write an excellent vision and mission statement.

E. The Bottom Line. How can we start altering our congregation's behaviors so that they include all three of Christ's values?

Conclusion

A Harvard Business School professor likens the typical change-effort to “putting lipstick on a bulldog.” A leader sees a process or method that is ugly or needs improvement. The leader tries to change it, finds that more difficult than anticipated, decides to settle for superficial improvements, and moves on. The result: only minor improvements in the bulldog’s appearance, but now it is really angry. (Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Evolve!* [Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing])

A. Churches resist change for at least twelve reasons. Three of the big ones:

- Committee chairpersons or leaders who “want to do it my way”
- Fear of making a damaging mistake: Semco president Ricardo Semler says, “It’s scary, like asking yourself, ‘Why am I married to this person?’ You’ve put so much energy into establishing something, you don’t want to ask why.” (Walter Kiechel, *Harvard Management Update*, July 2001)
- Resistance to other people’s good ideas: “Personally, I hate change,” says Rosabeth Kanter, “but I love renovating my house.” People do not mind changing, but they prefer not to be changed. Change we think up ourselves is more appealing.

B. How can church leaders reduce the stress that often accompanies change, even when the change significantly benefits the people making the change? Some tips:

1. For all *major* changes, appoint a special task force to study it for several weeks and make recommendations to the governing board. As much as possible, avoid using the word “change,” a term high on most people’s unconscious list of anxiety-producing words. To most people, “improve,” “tweak,” and “fine-tune” raise fewer fears.
2. Never expect a standing committee, such as the worship committee, to recommend a major change. Standing committees capably manage and make minor tweaks in present procedures. For all significant changes, appoint a special task force to carry the ball.
3. Begin discussing the possible change several months or weeks before it goes into effect, if possible, at two or three meetings. People often change their minds but seldom instantly. People do not so much resist change as they resist *being* changed without consultation and consent.
4. If prudence or organizational rules require that you take a vote, never do that at the meeting in which you initially introduce the possibility of a major change. Forcing people to an instant vote on a major change usually forces 60 percent to vote against it.
5. Discuss the change in all groups the change would affect. The more significant the change, the harder you must work at coalition building.
6. Ask people to list all the positives and negatives related to the proposed change. Review the pros and cons of other options already considered and rejected.
7. Expect to give the same explanation speech six times, outlining the reasons why this change is beneficial. Some people are so busy rejecting the idea the first time they hear it, that they cannot hear and/or remember anything positive about it.
8. When you get close to the implementation stage, ask people to throw in suggestions for how to accomplish this change as smoothly as possible.
9. After the change-implementation is three-fourths completed, expect a few vocal resisters. Smile and nod your understanding of how they feel. Remind them what group(s) decided to make this change and why. Resist trying to rescue them from their “catastrophizing” emotion.
10. All but about 5 percent of them eventually say with pride how glad they are that “we” made significant improvements in that bulldog.

11. Resist your natural desire to gain 100 percent approval. Only in your dreams does that happen.
12. Resist your inclination to criticize the 5 percent of people who never, ever, as long as they live, agree with the change. Love them anyway.

C. In some denominations, talk with the appropriate denominational structure leader, prior to presenting organizational fine-tuning suggestions to the governing board. This insures that none of the proposed changes conflict with denominational regulations. This conversation also insures that when a governing board member raises that question at a meeting, leaders can say that they have already checked it out.

D. The Bottom Line. To ease transition stress and reduce anxiety, some governing boards vote to (a) use their fine-tuned organizational and communication system for twenty-four months before making any changes in bylaws rules; (b) evaluate their experiences at that time; and (c) if they do not find the changes beneficial, revert to the present system or fine-tune the new system in light of the two-year experiences.

Whatever direction the governing board moves, stay focused on the objective of fewer meetings, more ministries, and a larger percentage of people involved in meaningful ministries.