

Mission Moments
Printer-friendly version
From the Center for U.S. Missions
Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field
October 20, 2006

Size Matters: Mission, Ministry, Boards and Staff Part 2 of 3

by Glenn Lucas

Understanding the roles of the board of directors and of pastor and staff, in relation to a congregation's size, is vital in realizing the greatest Kingdom health and growth. In part one of this article (at www.centerforusmissions.org – Newsletters – 2006 – Oct. 6, 2006) we explored the roles of the board of directors and of staff in the Family Church (50 or less active members) and the Pastoral Church (50-150 members). Here we will consider these roles in the Program and Corporate size churches. In the final part, we will explore specific duties of the board and the dangers that arise when the size, the role of the pastor/staff and the governance model utilized by a church are misaligned.

The Program Church – Active Membership: 150 - 350

In a Program Church, the role of the pastor becomes even more central to the execution of ministry. In this size church, the need for high quality personal relationships with the pastor must be supplemented by other spiritual support. The pastor can no longer personally deliver most of the ministry because the need for more targeted programming has grown along with the increase in active membership. Programs headed by trained leaders and/or staff begin to deliver ministry that the pastor once delivered directly. Practically speaking, the pastor may no longer be able to teach all the Bible studies, lead the youth ministry, teach confirmation, etc.

The pastor in the Program Church invests more time in relationship with leaders as they execute ministry as an extension of the Office of the Public Ministry. The pastor's role is one of vision casting, training, equipping, encouraging, evaluation, planning and program oversight. His interpersonal skills must now be focused on shepherding the programs of the church. Functionally, much of his time is spent in keeping consensus on mission, leading toward attaining goals and motivating leaders.

The pastor of a church that grows to this size must let go of many of the things he once did. This letting go can be difficult for both the pastor and congregation. To be successful, the pastor also must have or develop competency in team ministry and the delegation of ministry to others, without micromanaging that which has been delegated. Congregations need to be ready for the transition to more ministry led by people other than the pastor.

Due to the changes involved, the transition from a Pastoral Church to a Program Church is one of the most difficult. It's not surprising, therefore, that most churches in mainline denominations remain Pastoral Churches. Failure to make the transition in roles and behaviors, by either the pastor or the congregation, often leads to frustration and burnout.

In the Program Church, the distribution of influence and power changes. The pastor is the number one authority and the board is second. This shift in influence is especially noticeable in congregations with active membership between 120 and 240. In this size congregation, more of the power is in task forces and committees, which are greatly influenced by the pastor. The board usually continues to be a working board, often made up of the chairpersons of the committees that plan and execute ministry.

In a Program Church with active membership between 225 and 450 (Corporate size), the power shift is even greater as the board becomes increasingly dependent on the pastor and paid staff. The board often begins the shift from being a working board to being a policy board, one that sets the direction and goals of ministry and evaluates the effectiveness of the ministry as it is overseen by the pastor and staff.

The danger for a board that has grown to this size and beyond is that it may continue to try to be a working board and micromanage every detail of the ministry, either directly in board meetings, or through the chairperson or committees. When this happens, the pastor, staff and even board members quickly become frustrated. The pastor and staff have an understanding of the outcomes for which the board is holding them accountable and feel hindered in achieving those outcomes by the board itself. The pastor may contribute to the problem if he continues to bring to the board the reports and issues for decision that should be made at the staff or committee level.

Boards that do not make the shift from being a working board to a policy board at the top end of the Program size church often end up with long meetings from which most members walk away frustrated, feeling like nothing significant was accomplished. In congregations of this size, the board meeting agenda must be well thought out, with appropriate but limited discussion times for topics requiring clarification or action.

The Corporate Church – Active Membership: 350 plus

The Corporate Church has grown to a size where the dynamics and role of the board of directors has shifted significantly from the Pastoral size and even the smaller Program size church. At this size, the pastor relates largely to multiple staff members who oversee the execution and delivery of ministry. The role of the senior pastor is to pastor the staff, who in turn oversee and/or deliver much of the ministry the senior pastor once supervised directly. The pastor spends a significant portion of his time on staffing issues, making sure the right people are in place and doing the right things to achieve the goals set by the board. Ideally the senior pastor has hired the staff members or had a significant voice in the selection process. It is important that the staff know who is in charge. The senior pastor in this size congregation must generate energy, not just manage it.

At this size, the pastor has less connection with the lay members and may not even know many of them. At this size, the cry goes up that the church has become less intimate, unless considerable and ongoing attention is given to building relationship among members. Members give up the closeness once experienced with the pastor, in exchange for the quality and variety of ministries that meet their needs. The key is the quality and variety. When one or both of these are missing, the level of discontent among members rises quickly.

The major sources of power are information, competence, commitment, time, and specialized skills, most of which are found in the senior pastor and the full-time professional staff, especially as attendance grows to 450 plus. The senior pastor must continue to hone his competency and skills in communication, team building and oversight.

The transition to a Corporate Church is usually rooted in the upper end of the Program Church. At this size, the board is dependent on the vast knowledge base and competency of the senior pastor and staff. To be effective, the board governs by policy. The board, in consultation with the senior pastor and staff, sets the direction for ministry, establishing specific and reasonable outcomes for which it holds the senior pastor accountable. Because the senior pastor is ultimately held accountable for the outcomes the board has set, they relate primarily to him. He in turn relates to the staff and others who oversee the ministry of the congregation. It is important that the board not undermine or usurp the role of the senior pastor in relating to staff and others overseeing or executing ministry under his supervision.

In most congregations that have grown to this size, there is little understanding of the board's role. So board members must receive training in boardmanship and policy-based governance. They need to understand the congregation and the outcomes they seek as it relates to the overall effectiveness of the vital Kingdom work the church does. The board should arrange training in this model of governance for all board members and communicate the vision to the congregation.

Mission Moments, a biweekly electronic newsletter from the Center for U.S. Missions, brings information and encouragement to all who desire to share the God's great love in Jesus Christ with others. The Center for U.S. Missions provides research and training for mission work among unevangelized people in the United States. A partnership of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Missions, Concordia University in Irvine, California, and the North America Mission Executives of the LCMS, the Center serves all Christian denominations.

www.centerforusmissions.org

Contact us at office@centerforusmissions.org
1530 Concordia West; Irvine, CA 92612-3299;
949-854-8002 x1780; fax 949-854-6854

Michael Ruhl, Executive Director, mike.ruhl@cui.edu
Glenn Lucas, Director of Training; glenn.lucas@cui.edu
Mike Zehnder, National Worship Consultant; rmike.zehnder@cui.edu
Michelle Connor, Coordinator; michelle.connor@cui.edu
Karen Kogler, Mission Moments editor; karen.kogler@sbcglobal.net

*To unsubscribe (or to subscribe if you received this as a forward), go to
<http://centerforusmissions.com/index.php?page=news-subscribe> or email us.*