

# Single Board Model of Governance Brings Benefits to Congregations of all Sizes

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Leaders at First UMC Anahuac are experiencing new ministry successes after adopting a streamlined committee leadership structure popularized by the Vibrant Church Initiative and larger congregations.

- **Problem:** The “typical” church structure of multiple committees is *driving the mission* of the church versus the *mission* driving the *structure*.
- **Solution:** Streamlining congregational leadership structures to the popular Accountable Leadership Model for greater success in their mission of *making disciples for the transformation of the world*.

It may sound hard to believe, but a growing number of congregations across the conference are bidding “goodbye” to committee-heavy church structures, and saying “hello” to a single board model. Dr. Jesse Brannen, Director of the TAC Center for Congregational Excellence and Vibrant Church Initiative Director Rev. Mike Tyson are seeing churches experience new levels of success in their mission, thanks to the streamlined Accountable Leadership concepts outlined in a book called *Winning on Purpose* by John Edmund Kaiser. The *buzz* around this idea is requiring Jesse to hit the speaking circuit, sharing nuggets of insight with leaders at district trainings and local church leadership meetings.



The concept of a single board with 9-13 members elected by the charge conference initially caught fire through the Vibrant Church Initiative.

“We have all been waking up to the fact that, for decades, churches and committees therein have generally been consensus-driven and not always focused on the mission,” notes Jesse. “But we are now realizing that decisions in this model of church governance are not very timely, if they happen at all, and that multiple committee structures often create bottlenecks and dysfunction.”

According to Mike, the Judicial Council has approved this alternative structure, ruling that the Discipline 247.2 provides the options to be creative as long as the duties of the Trustees and SPRC are covered.

Rev. Dr. Kelly Krone heard about this model and asked Jesse if it would be appropriate for a 100-125-member church such as **FUMC Anahuac**. The answer: Absolutely!



photo by Jill Krone

“Churches seem to be experiencing a vacuum of trained leaders, so it made sense to me that we could develop a smaller group of leaders that see the vision and want to work toward the mission instead of writing committee meeting reports,” notes Kelly. Following a candid discussion and training session with leaders and members of the congregation, **FUMC Anahuac** voted to transition to this Accountable Leadership model.

“We see the value in returning to a simpler time,” adds Kelly. “What we once called the Board of Stewards

governed the church in the 1940s. We are calling our new 14-member structure the same -- but with more focus on implementing the mission of the church.” The basic functions and factions of the church will be represented, per the Book of Discipline, on the new board: SPRC, Finance, Lay leader, Young adults, and key ministries of the church.

Kelly has seen the power of self-directed work teams in the corporate world, which can make things happen without getting entangled in detours and roadblocks. He completed his doctorate on the power of the inclusive, leadership circle where each voice is heard and where leadership is a shared responsibility. “Our vote to move to this style of leadership and governance has brought a new sense of renewal and outward focus. Our board’s function will be to empower others to live into the mission rather than discussing past events or old news.”

### **Basic Components of the Accountable Leadership Model**

During the various trainings he has given around the conference in recent months, Jesse explains 1) the key concepts of accountability and how traditional leadership structures thereby dilute the overall effectiveness of the leaders, and 2) the strengths of the single board model.

“For example, the Accountable Leadership model marries responsibility and authority with accountability, promotes church unity, functions on a high level of trust, facilitates quick decisions, and is driven by mission fulfillment,” he notes. This model’s acronym of SIMPLE reminds all of the importance of **S**etting expectations, **I**nviting commitment, **M**easuring progress, **P**roviding feedback, **L**inking to consequences and **E**valuating effectiveness.

### **“We are in”**

According to Mike Tyson, almost a dozen VCI churches have also voted to transition to this model, with **FUMC Pasadena** being the farthest along and the reports from there are very positive. In like fashion, Kelly sensed his congregation was ready for a change in direction and that members would be agreeable to participate in this “interesting experiment in a small church setting.” He adds, “Rather than focusing on the daily operation of the church, our leadership’s agenda will now focus on spiritual formation, any pressing decisions, and accountability with regard to missional goals.”

Brandon Bess, the Lay Leader of **FUMC Anahuac**, states, “As our membership grows with younger, out-of-town working families, this model of leadership lends to more ‘quality’ work from the governing board and a speedier process, more aligned with how business is done today.”

### **Is it a Good Fit for your Congregation?**

Jesse urges leaders to consult with their District Superintendents and request any support needed from the Center for Congregational Excellence. He adds, “I am ready to do a town hall discussion with any churches interested in this mission-minded model, and help with trainings and transitions as needed.”