Simplified Accountable Structure

Unleash Your Congregation’s Leadership Potential
Greetings in Christ!

Churches across the country are exploring new ways to organize their leadership, so that the congregation’s members can be unleashed for ministry. Many churches are discovering that a simplified, accountable leadership structure changes their focus from meetings to ministry.

The Arkansas Conference Cabinet and the Center for Vitality have teamed up to provide this workbook and a suite of online resources for congregations seeking to create a simplified, accountable leadership structure. In creating this workbook and our online resources, we depended on the great research and experiences found in two books: Kay Kotan’s *Mission Possible: Structuring your Church for Missional Effectiveness* and Dan Hotchkiss’ *Governance and Ministry*.

A simplified single board structure makes it possible for your church to better focus on leadership equipping, missional alignment, and your next steps in ministry. Meanwhile, removing bureaucratic redundancies allows more members to spend their time in service as disciples who make disciples. By consolidating administrative functions into a single board, disciples can focus on using their spiritual gifts and passions for ministry to contribute to the vitality of the congregation as it seeks to reach the mission field. This method of simplifying your church’s administrative leadership and governance is allowed by ¶247.2 of the 2016 Discipline of the United Methodist Church.

Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.
# Simplified Structure Planning Workbook

Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

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STEP ONE: KNOW YOUR “WHY”

Adapted from chapter seven of *IMPACT: Reclaiming the Calling of Lay Ministry* by Kay Kotan and Blake Bradford

How a church is structured to make decisions really should matter to the missional leader. The structure needs to be clear, simple, and enable actual decisions. Multi-layered, time-consuming decision-making will be stumbling blocks for new leaders to become involved. The inherited system of multiple committees is designed for an era of maintenance, not mission.

In many ways, our traditional committee process of decision-making is perfectly designed for maintaining a church’s current state, but creating internal change is hard, and dealing with our changing culture is even more difficult. Even more challenging is the model of an Administrative Board and Council on Ministries, a double-headed legacy model used by many congregations which places two separate bodies in competition with one another for power and authority of the church’s mission. In this system, “everyone” is responsible for the church’s mission and vision in a way that actually no one is held responsible. With a clear, accountable leadership team, the church will stay stuck in a maintenance mode, with new ideas stuck in an endless loop.

If the process of moving from ministry idea to ministry implementation is too cumbersome, today’s leaders will opt out. Gone are the days where a church can take four to six months running decisions through multiple committees to make critical decisions. Our world moves at a much quicker pace today, and we are living in a post-Christendom culture that simply won’t wait for the church to catch up. Leaders are looking to work within a governance process where real and greater missional impact can be experienced routinely.

Modern leaders desire the opportunity to mobilize laity to fulfill our disciple-making mission. That is missional impact that ties directly to the mission and vision of the church. Leaders want to connect the dots of their ministry tied in directly to the big picture of the church’s purpose. Today’s leaders, especially millennials, desire the opportunity to make a real difference in the community, not fill a slot on nomination committee report.
Churches desiring to recruit and equip modern leaders will likely need to shift into the simplified, accountable leadership structure. This is often called a single-board model of governance (although using that terminology can be misleading), in which all the ongoing administrative and strategic functions of leadership are delegated to a single executive team. This structure is enabled by the 2016 UMC Book of Discipline ¶ 247.2. The duties and responsibilities of the traditional four administrative committees -- finance, personnel (Staff/Pastor Parish Relations), property (Trustees), and administrative board -- can be combined into a single governing leadership team. This simplification of your structure allows a streamlined and clear line of accountable leadership:

- The governance responsibilities of fiduciary work (goal assessment, financial and facility oversight, and legal responsibilities), generative work (creativity, teambuilding, new questions), and strategic work (creating plans for the future) take priority in the lay leadership team’s work.
- The management of the day-to-day church should be the responsibility of the pastor and staff (paid and unpaid).
- The laity of the church are equipped for ministry.

When leadership moves to the simplified, accountable leadership structure, the church begins to align all its resources to the congregation’s mission and unique vision. Those resources include such things as time, energy, people, facility, budget, or calendar.

With a clearly stated purpose and trajectory (the “WHY”), decisions are made with the focus on the church’s community mission field, and the congregation’s resources (people, facility, and financial) are focused on the church’s mission and disciple-making plan. In other words, the strategic work of aligning our church, its members, and its resources toward its purpose of making disciples becomes the sole focus of the governing board. Policies and guidelines are created to allow permission-giving to ministries and new ideas to ensure both congregational alignment and alignment with the conference trajectory.

The policies and guiding principles (see page 26) of the congregation become the traffic guard rails for the church ministries, keeping the church on the road toward fulfilling its mission. Individual decisions by the board/council on every ministry are no longer required. Monthly presentation and long oral reports certainly are not required. Instead, permission-giving guidelines are provided so decisions are made easily with flexibility without the board/council micromanaging every decision. Whenever decisions are made, the governing board should be asking itself if a new policy or new guiding principle needs to be created.
What is Accountable Leadership?
Responsibility + Authority + Accountability

Responsibility: A duty or obligation to satisfactorily perform or complete a task by one person
+ Authority: The power to give direction and/or make decisions
+ Accountability: An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions
Use the following 4 categories to discern your “why”:

1. **Efficiency!** Moving toward a permission-giving culture with less meetings and more ministry!

2. **Alignment** with the congregation’s mission & vision, and with the disciple-making trajectory of the Arkansas Conference

3. **Accountability!** When “everyone” is in charge, no one is actually held responsible. Our structure should enable leaders to hold themselves and others accountable for missional fruitfulness.

4. **Unleashing Laity for Missional Leadership!** Our churches must be structured so that leaders can lead, not simply maintain the status quo. The more time our best leaders spend on administration, the less they are able to spend on the mission field (Both strategy and mobilization)

**Bishop’s Mission Plan Next Step #7 Unleash Lay Leadership**

Laity will be coached and mentored so they increasingly demonstrate passion, boldness, and excellence in faith sharing, servant ministry, stewardship, and utilizing their spiritual gifts. Disciples make other disciples. Increasing the number of new disciples who are equipped to contribute to the vitality of their congregations so they can make disciples who make disciples will enable churches to reach their mission fields with excellence and passion.

**Simplified your structure is not about consolidating power, it is about making the congregation’s decision-making nimbler and unleashing lay leadership for more ministry!**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Date</th>
<th>Timeline Step</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___________</td>
<td>1. Determine why a structure change is needed or desired. Read Kay Kotan’s short book <em>Mission Possible</em> and/or watch the Simplified, Accountable Leadership Structure training videos on the Center for Vitality website. To assist your leadership in discernment and equip them in basic principles of the leadership model.</td>
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<tr>
<td>___________</td>
<td>2. Create a basic draft timeline and plan.</td>
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<td>___________</td>
<td>3. Consult your Chief Mission Strategist /District Superintendent (and Circuit Elder) for a preliminary conversation about a potential structure change.</td>
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<td>___________</td>
<td>4. Ensure the congregation is prepared for an accountable leadership model of governance. Prepare for and lead congregational conversations about potential changes. Congregational conversations with two-way communication. Lead with the “why” and then follow with the “what” and “how”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________</td>
<td>5. Leadership discernment of feedback from congregation; Build leadership structure model.</td>
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<td>___________</td>
<td>6. Letter to District Superintendent requesting structure change.</td>
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<td>___________</td>
<td>7. Committee on Nominations and Lay Leadership assembles to nominate new leaders illustrating new leadership criteria and structure.</td>
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<td>___________</td>
<td>8. Charge Conference called with proper notice to approve:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ New structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Nominations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ A founding set of guiding principles that the new board is authorized to adapt to meet the ministry and missional needs of the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________</td>
<td>9. Congregational vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Once approved all existing administrative teams cease to exist as separate bodies (this does not include ministry teams) on a certain date set by the Charge Conference. The responsibilities and authority of the constituent bodies will rest in the new board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________</td>
<td>10. First meeting of the new board. Elect a trustee chair, orient the board on the guiding principles, and approve a board covenant.</td>
</tr>
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STEP THREE: CONSULT YOUR DS

Your district superintendent (DS) is also your district’s Chief Mission Strategist (CMS). For reasons connected to Disciplinary accountability, legal requirements, and to maintain alignment with the district missional plans and the Arkansas Conference Trajectory, consult with your CMS/DS before you really begin the process of moving toward simplified, accountable leadership structure, and then at every stage of the process leading up to and including the Charge Conference in which you seek approval to change structures.

Consulting Your Chief Mission Strategist/District Superintendent

1. Share your reasons for a possible structure change.

2. List the names and roles of lay officers involved in the discussion up to this point.

3. Share which Disciplinary administrative committees you believe will be incorporated into the governing Leadership Team. While this may, of course, change as your church leadership wrestles with the possibilities and options, the CMS/DS may have particular recommendations or requirements so that your church’s structure may be approved.

4. Share your possible timeline for the structure change.

Understand that this conversation is your PRELIMINARY consultation, not your FINAL consultation.
STEP FOUR: PREPARE CONGREGATION

Ensure that the congregation is prepared for an accountable leadership model of governance. Moving too quickly in the preparation stage will doom the process. Take your time, address concerns with transparency,

Tips to prepare your congregation:

- Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!

- Listen! Listen! Listen! Preparing the congregation is not only about “selling” a new structure or even “selling” a new set of leadership behaviors based on accountable leadership. Make sure to provide space for two-way communication so that the congregation can have ownership over the final result.

- Lead with the “why” and then follow with the “what” and “how.” If your only “why” is the smaller membership of the church, and a simplified board sounds easier with smaller numbers, you are approaching this change for the wrong reason. Changing the structure without changing behaviors means that your church will keep on doing what it has always done, but now with less voices around the leadership table. Keep your “why” missional!

- For members who have been United Methodists for a long time, the “loss” of the Discipline-mandated administrative committees operating as separate and independent bodies can be perceived as a power grab, a loss of Methodist identity, or a loss of important checks-and-balances. Lack of excellent communication and complete transparency at this early point of discussion will destroy the trust the leadership will need to transition the structure and to lead with a simplified, accountable leadership model.

DESIGN YOUR CONGREGATIONAL PREPARATION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear “Why”, Timeline, and Talking Points:</th>
<th>Newsletter/Written Communication:</th>
<th>Townhalls or other Two-Way Communication:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is responsible:</td>
<td>Who is responsible:</td>
<td>Who is responsible:</td>
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STEP FIVE: LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT

DISCERNMENT
Following initial Communications, discuss what you learned about a possible change:
1. How successfully was the concept of accountable leadership understood and received?
2. Did the congregation understand the concept and Disciplinary validity of simplified governance? Will it fulfill the missional purposes of the church?
3. What concerns were expressed? Were any of the concerns rooted in issues that should become Guiding Principles for the new leadership structure?
4. Should certain fiduciary responsibilities require a separate committee, such as Staff-Parish Relations Committee, in order for your church to be the most effective and fruitful?

BUILD LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE
All the Disciplinary requirements and limitations of each of the new Leadership Board’s constituent committees remains in effect. Rules to remember:
1. A separate Nominations Committee, chaired by the Pastor, is required because the Board cannot self-nominate.
2. You will need nine to fifteen members. Board members serve a three-year term. The Lay Leader and Lay Delegate are exempt from the three-year term. After being off the Board for a year, the person can roll back onto the Board if elected. SPRC and Trustees have limits on the number of members, so (depending on your Leadership Team’s size and composition), all members of the Leadership Team may be barred as voting members of some of the constituent committees. For instance, there is a limit of 9 on Trustees. There is also a limit of 9 on SPRC, not counting Lay Leader and Lay Member of Annual Conference.
3. Pay attention to Disciplinary conflicts of interest. Family members cannot serve on the Board together. If it cannot be avoided, the family members may need to excuse themselves from the room or not vote on issues with potential conflict of interest. Staff and family of staff cannot serve on the Board because of SPRC membership restrictions.
4. Trustee Requirements: At the first meeting at the beginning of each new year, the Board will elect a Trustee Chair to satisfy the corporate resolution requirement. It is recommended the Board Chair serve as the Trustee Chair. The Leadership Board, serving as the Trustees, is also the legal Board of Directors. All Board members who serve as Trustees must be over 18. The Trustee membership rule of minimum 1/3 laymen and 1/3 lay women remains in effect. The Pastor cannot be a Trustee.
5. Even though the re-structuring occurs, ministry teams are still needed and in place. Fewer people on the Board means more people are available to do ministry. Simplifying structure is the combining of the four administrative teams of the Council, Trustees, Finance and SPR Committees. The nurture, outreach, and witnessing ministries continue their disciple-making work.
6. The concept of a Leadership Board is designed to increase accountability and alignment for the whole church towards its holistic mission, not be a place for ministry representatives to negotiate “turf.” Members of the Board only represent and lead the whole church, not a particular interest group.
7. While the Leadership Board may designate specialists (such as finance specialists) from the membership of their Board, the whole Board, in toto, serves as the finance committee, Trustees, etc., not just the designated specialists.
8. The small number of governance officers on the Leadership Team requires huge trust and congregation-wide accountability. It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you describe your future Charge Conference as being “All professing members and all Clergy appointed or located at the charge.” This allows the larger church to have a say in nominations and hold the Leadership accountable in its role as the Charge Conference’s executive committee.
9. Churches on multi-point charges will particularly need to take care to support and respect the organizational structure and ministry of one another’s churches.
The next several pages contain structure examples. Contact your DS for requirements and recommendations specific to your church and district. Many of the examples contain components that can be modified and customized to your setting. Example A below is a standard example.
Structure Model B

Example B:
Separate SPRC reporting to the Leadership Board

Charge Conference
(Governance)

Leadership Board
Serves as Church Council, Trustees, & Finance
(Governance, Strategy, Accountability)

Nominations Committee

SPRC
(Governance & Staff Accountability)

Pastor
(Leadership)

Pros:
- Creates stronger checks & balances in the governance, and offers an independent voice
- Separate SPRC has more capacity to do required assessment and consultation work

Cons:
- Separate SPRC dilutes the efficiency and accountability of the Leadership Board
- Pastor can receive mixed messages about priorities
- Overall church strategy and staffing get siloed
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Structure Model C

Example C: Dual Election

Leadership Board contains 3-4 members of SPRC, including Chair and Lay Leader who serve both on the SPRC and on the Leadership Board as Personnel Specialists. SPRC continues to report to Leadership Board.

Pros:
- Creates stronger checks & balances in the governance than Example A,
- Multiple SPRC members on the Board make for stronger shared vision than Example B

Cons:
- The shared Board members/SPRC can create authority issues and operational vagueness
- Separate SPRC dilutes the efficiency and accountability of the Leadership Board
- Pastor can receive mixed messages about priorities
Structure Model D

Example D: Using Specialist Designations

Some church leaders still appreciate issuing titles and certain areas of responsibility for the areas of finance, trustees, and SPR. There are pros and cons for titles or designees (for example “Finance Specialist”),

Imagine sitting around the table with all the members of the simplified structure board.
Now imagine there are 4 hats sitting in front of each person.

When there is a financial issue of a governing nature that needs the attention of the simplified structure, everyone at the table picks up their “financial hat.” Each person on the board is responsible for the final financial decisions of the board.

- Now a topic for staff/ pastor-parish relations needs to be addressed by the board. Now everyone on the board removes their “financial hat” and replaces it with the “staff/ pastor-parish relations hat.”
- The same is true for a trustee issue.
- When a general governing issue needs to be addressed by the board, the participants put on their fourth hat, “council/ board hat.”

Governing issues to be addressed by the general board might be hearing the goal update report from the pastor and holding him or her accountable for the accomplishment of such.

When the meeting is over, this is where it gets a bit tricky.
- If you are a trustee specialist on the board, you pick up your “trustee hat” and wear it between board meetings.
- The same is true for the staff/ pastor-parish relations and finance specialists.
- These teams of people (usually three representatives in each of the three areas) are responsible for the day-to-day governing issues that come up within their designated area.

EXAMPLES:
- For example, if there is an employee issue that comes, the pastor may need some assistance from his staff/ pastor-parish relations specialists.
- If the furnace goes out, a Building Maintenance (Trustee) Specialist is contacted.
  - They are given the authority to handle the situation within the boundaries set by the board.
  - If a repair costs under a certain amount, the trustees have the authority to carry out the repairs.
  - If replacement is needed and is already in the budget, the trustee has the authority to carry out the replacement within any limitations set by the board about checking on cash flow or funding.
- The work of the two or three finance representatives will be to create the annual budget and take it to the board for review and approval.

In other words, people are given permission to go about their job duties efficiently and effectively without having to ask permission. Authority is granted while holding the persons responsible and accountable. Those on the board who are not trustee, finance, or staff/pastor-parish relations specialists wear the "Leadership board hat" between meetings. Their focus is on the accomplishment of the mission, vision, and goals.

NOW (Nurture/Outreach/Witness Specialists: Nurture, Outreach, and Witness Coordinators or Specialists could be assigned by the Board to be the contact person for these ministry areas,. In this model, these specialists are NOT the ministries' representative on the Board, but instead the Leadership Board’s assigned contacts for those ministry areas/.

PROS of Having Specialist Titles: Assigning specific and direct responsibility over a given area creates an identifiable go-to person for members. This is less of a learning curve for most congregations.

CONS of having Specialist Titles: The three people having these titles many times still act as their own separate committee, but now with only a couple of voices, robbing the larger Leadership Board of their responsibility and accountability. Therefore, three people end up making important decisions in their work area that they really do not have any authority to do. It creates or reinforces working silos. Accountability and adaptive change is harder to instill.

Adapted from 10 Prescriptions for a Healthy Church by Farr & Kotan
Structure: Assigning Board Responsibilities

Whole Board (Example A and variants)

Kay Kotan’s Mission Possible describes how your nominations could be structured:

To comply with the BOD and to keep the team fresh and accountable, you will still need to place members into three classes (i.e. Class of 2018, Class of 2019, Class of 2020). The board will be set up in three year classes. Approximately one-third of the board will then rotate off each year and new people will be seated. This allows for both continuity, historical preservation and including new leaders each year.

Example of board/council roster:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of 2019</th>
<th>Class of 2020</th>
<th>Class of 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Jones, T/F/SPR</td>
<td>Sue Smith, T/F/SPR/UMW</td>
<td>Jennifer Jackson, T/F/SPR/C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol Clark, T/F/SPR/LM</td>
<td>Ben Black, T/F/SPR/UMM</td>
<td>Abby Anderson, T/F/SPR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Miller, F/SPR/Y</td>
<td>Nan Newberry, T/F/SPR</td>
<td>Debbie Duncan, T/F/SPR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(youth cannot be trustee)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Lewis, LL/T/SPR/F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart Key

- T - Trustee
- SPR – Staff Parish Relations
- LL - Lay Leader
- UMM - United Methodist Men
- UMW - United Methodist Women
- Y - Youth
- F - Finance
- C - Chair
- LD - Lay Member to Annual Conf.

Boards with Specialists (Example D and variants)

Six – nine members

- 2-3 (SPRC specialists)
- 2-3 (Trustees specialists)
- 2-3 (Finance Team specialists)

Board Chair
Lay member to Annual Conference
Lay Leader (Could be Board Chair)

Optional Additions:
UMM rep?
UMW rep?
Youth rep?

1 Board Chair/Lay Leader/Lay AC
2 SPRC Specialists
2 Finance Specialists
2 Trustee/Facilities Specialists
1 Nurture Coordinator
1 Outreach Coordinator
1 Witness Coordinator

Optional Additions:
Lay Member to AC, UMM/UMW, Youth, separate Lay Leader

Note: Some Committees, such as
Leadership Discernment

1. What model speaks to you and your fellow leaders as you seek to be a vital congregation that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world?

2. How do the pros and cons of the different models address your congregation’s contextual needs, your pastoral and lay leadership styles, and your larger “WHY” of a structure change?
   - Separate Staff-Parish Relations Committee variants
   - Use of Specialists
   - Addition of NOW ministry components

3. What is the result of consultation with your DS, the Center for Vitality, the use of online and print resources, and experiences of other churches using the simplified, accountable leadership structure?

4. Map out your model. If the major flow cannot be easily charted out and explained on a napkin, it is too complex.

STEP SIX: REQUEST TO DS

Send a request to your District Superintendent requesting a ¶247.2 organizational structure change:

1. Current Church Council/Administrative Board should share purpose for a structure change.

2. List the Disciplinary Committees affected and share how (and by whom) those required administrative functions will be fulfilled.

3. Outline your model and your plan for seeking nominations.

4. Share your complete timeline, including future church explanatory gatherings, due dates for nominations committee work, the estimated date in which you will request a called Charge Conference, and plans for the inaugural meetings of a new Leadership Board.
STEP SEVEN: NOMINATIONS

The Nominations process actually starts months before the nominations begin. Notice, the official title of this committee is the Committee on Nominations and Leadership. We must have an intentional process of developing leaders. When churches have a leadership development process, it feeds the nominations process. Remember, as the Nominations Committee, you are seeking to raise up three or four leaders for the board/council each year to fill vacancies for classes rolling off. In order to have these leaders prepared and ready for a commitment, you will likely need eight to ten leaders in the leadership development pathway. Some leaders will discern they are better suited to lead ministry teams rather than be a board member.

Take some time to consider the type of leader the church needs as a leader.

- What are the characteristics, expectations and behaviors that would be beneficial?
- Is there expectation that members of the board would be regular worship attenders, participants in a small group, serving periodically, have a regular prayer life, and a tither (i.e. living and modeling their faith)?
- Is there an expectation that leaders would be available to attend most all board meetings?
- Would there be an expectation that leaders check their personal agendas at the door?
- Would there be an expectation that board members would be able to hold confidential information?
- Would the board member be able to openly support the decision of the board regardless of their personal feelings about the decision?

Whatever appropriate characteristics, expectations, and behaviors are named, potential leaders will discover these in the leadership development process. It is always best to be upfront with people rather than asking them to serve and then sharing with them in arrears your expectations. Set the standards and expectations upfront prior to inviting leadership commitments.

Adapted From Mission Possible from Kay Kotan

STEP EIGHT: CHARGE CONFERENCE

Charge Conference called with proper minimum 10-day notice and announcements to approve:

- New Structure and constituent committee responsibilities. It is suggested that you reference the UM Discipline Paragraphs of committee responsibilities
- Nominations Slate for the new Structure
- A founding set of Guiding Principles which the new board is authorized to adapt in order to meet the ministry and missional needs of the church. See Guiding Principles in Kay Kotan’s Mission Possible or online at vitality.arumc.org/simplified-structure/

STEP NINE: AFTER THE VOTE

Once approved all administrative committees specified in the resolution cease to exist as separate bodies (this does not include ministry teams) on a certain date set by the Charge Conference. The responsibilities and authority of the constituent bodies will rest in the new board.
STEP TEN: FIRST MEETING

At your first meeting:

- Create and join in a **Leadership Covenant**. A covenant is a sacred agreement with God and other board members. This covenant is a written agreement of the expectations and a code of conduct which should be agreed upon by the entire board. Without a covenant, there will most likely be ambiguity.

- Explain and discuss the LOVE+LEARN+LEAD model for healthy board meetings

- Elect a Chair of Trustees (annual requirement) from the Board’s membership.

- Orient the Board on Guiding Principles. See Guiding Principles in Kay Kotan’s *Mission Possible* or online at vitaly.arumc.org/simplified-structure/

- Share and discuss the Accountable Leadership Cycle

See Pages 22-25 for a Sample Monthly Agenda for the L3 Model.
Outline your agenda for the first meeting:

**LOVE**

**LEARN**

**LEAD**

See Page 26 for a suggestions on Guiding Principles.
What will be your process for creating your Board’s Guiding Principles:
SIMPLIFIED, ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE
GENERAL INFORMATION SUMMARY

General Information:
The following is a summary to guide churches shifting from the United Methodist Church’s former structure that include an Administrative Council, Finance Committee, Board of Trustees, and S/PPRC, to the new “Leadership Board” or “Single Board” alternative structure comprised of anywhere from 9-15 members. These notes are simply a quick summary. The Center for Vitality also provides more information, coaching, and expertise as your church discerns the most effective system to govern and lead your congregation into the mission field.

Leadership Board Purpose
- Utilize a leadership style that combines accountability, responsibility and authority
- Reduce micro management
- Synchronize and align all the church’s ministries with the mission, vision, and goals
- Reduce the number of people engaged in administration and free up resources (time, gifts, talents, etc…) for hands-on ministry and engagement in the mission field
- Empower the pastor to lead
- Assist smaller congregations who cannot sustain the traditional structure

Leadership Board Responsibilities
- Establish the church’s yearly budget
- Confirm the vision cast by the pastor and establish annual and long-term goals for the church
- Work in partnership with programs and ministries to ensure they fulfill the mission and vision of the church
- Work with the District Superintendent to hold the pastor accountable

*This team is not responsible for hearing reports. Other avenues for communication (bulletins, email, Facebook, newsletters, Town Hall meetings, etc…) within the congregation must be efficiently employed.

Pastor’s Role
- Cast the church’s vision
- Hire, supervise, assess (and if needed, terminate) both paid and unpaid staff
- Hold staff (paid and unpaid) accountable for leading their ministry areas and fulfilling the mission and vision of the church
- Monitor the accomplishment of church goals and make adjustments as required to ensure achievement of those goals
- Equip present leaders and raise up new leaders for the work of ministry
L3 Model Agenda
Loving • Learning • Leading

So, you have “downsized” your church administrative board and simplified your congregation’s leadership structure. More leaders are now moving from leading meetings to leading ministries. You might think that you are done and all the structural changes will automatically lead to fruitfulness. Now your simplified leadership council will be able to strategically and boldly guide your congregation into the mission field! However, changing structure will produce no new fruit unless your team’s behavior and expectations change.

Adaptive change means that the conversation at the leadership table must change.
- If the leadership council continues to manage instead of lead, the church will be unable to build a vital congregation.
- If the leadership council continues to be a reporting entity, the church will be unable to claim opportunities to transform lives, communities, and the world.
- If the leadership council does not pursue intentional and strategic conversations about reaching new disciples, the church will not be able to equip disciples for the mission of Jesus Christ.

Your Leadership Council must be the group that looks after the overall effectiveness and fruitfulness of the congregation. Membership on the Leadership Council comes not from representing a particular ministry or constituency, but instead is focused solely on the disciple-making mission and the congregation as it lives into God’s vision.

When planning meetings and creating the monthly agenda, please do not expect that all the agenda content be provided by your pastor. Each person at the table should take turns praying, bringing the spiritual development time and/or the leadership development time. This sharing of spiritual leadership is coordinated by the chair.

As disciple-leaders, we should be challenging ourselves rather than relying on the pastor to provide all of these elements for the agenda. Remember, as leaders of the congregation, we are modeling leadership for others. The time used in each meeting can roughly be divided into thirds using the L3 model:

1/3 LOVING ~ Development Work
   Equipping and/or spiritual development

1/3 LEARNING ~ Fiduciary Work
   Measurement of goals
   Connection Status of new people & how they are engaged
   Financial reports
   Leadership Packet Materials involving fiduciary work

1/3 LEADING ~ Generative Work
   Challenges, Issues, Dreams, Discernment Next Steps

The next several pages are adapted from Kay Kotan’s Gear UP! and Mission Possible, along with Dan Hotchkiss’ Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership
Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

**L3 Model Agenda**

Loving Learning Leading

**L3 Loving**

1) Opening Prayer & Check-in
2) Spiritual Development and/or Leadership Development

**L3 Learning**

3) Pastoral Review of Annual Church Goals
4) Review of Leadership Packet

**L3 Leading**

5) Generative Work: Leadership Team Discussions
6) Communications Plan
7) Closing Prayer for the Mission Field

**DISCOVER MORE RESOURCES AT:**

vitality.arumc.org
1. Opening Prayer & Check-in

Each person at the table should take turns praying and perhaps sharing a devotional (or leading the spiritual development section of the agenda). This is also a time to create sacred space for members of the council to check in with one another as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ who care for each other and pray for one another.

2. Spiritual Development

Spiritual development is a time to deepen the faith of our disciple-leaders. What does it mean to be a fully devoted follower of Christ? What does it mean to be a disciple? What does Jesus Christ have to say about the characteristics of a Christian leader? What responsibilities does leadership carry in your church? What is different about being a leader in today’s church than in the church of yesterday, last year, and a decade ago? How does our Christian leadership allow us to show up differently in the world? As leaders, are we comfortable sharing our faith story? What are our “Glory Sightings”? Where have we have seen God at work in our lives since the last time the team gathered?

Ministry Leadership Development

Leadership development is a time to be studying, discussing, and challenging ourselves about effective church leadership and the changing landscapes of our culture as it relates to the church. As the culture continues to shift more and more away from being church-centric, how is the church responding with the message of Jesus Christ? What must the church be doing differently in order to be culturally relevant and reach new people? How are we leading conversations with our congregation that help bring them along with the challenges and required shifts to address them. How are we leading our congregation to understand we must be outwardly focused with the primary focus on the unchurched first and those of us already at the church second?

The more your Leadership Development is focused upon the mission field and the work of the board and less about the spiritual leadership of the board member, this category might be more appropriate under “LEARNING” in the Agenda.
3. Pastoral Review of Annual Church Goals

The leadership council (board/team/table) is accountable to Christ for the church living out its mission of making disciples. In turn, the leadership council holds the pastor accountable for leading the church into its vision – the unique way the church makes disciples, and fulfills God’s vision for the congregation. Annual Church Goals are usually created in the Fall and included in the Charge Conference Materials. These goals should be determined annually during a longer day-long or multi-day leadership council retreat that also includes periods of listening to the larger congregation and possibly congregational surveys. In smaller churches, this review should include an update of new people who have related to the congregation, and a study of how these new individuals have connected into the ministry and fellowship of the congregation (larger churches may include a data sheet (see next section).

Accountable leadership is the marriage of responsibility, authority, and accountability. Accountability is not the proverbial “club over the head” mentality, nor is it about blaming. Accountability is asking critical questions. It is being supportive. It is about asking about progress. It is asking what might be getting in the way of progress. Accountable leadership is identifying missing tools in the pastor’s tool box and helping acquire those needed tools. It is helping the pastor (as head of staff) hold the rest of the staff accountable. It is about encouragement. It is about celebrating progress and success along the way. Accountability is having crucial conversations about forward movement for the sake of the mission.

When the accountable leadership process is implemented at all levels, there is a deeper sense of purpose and direction. No one is lacking the understanding of what is expected of them and how their part ties into the bigger picture. With accountable leadership in place, there is a sense that we are all one big team pulling in the same direction – all pulling for the church to reach new people – all pulling for effectiveness, efficiency, and competency in its mission of making disciples.
When accountable leadership is in place, the pastor’s review is much easier. Without goals tied to mission and vision, the review is more subjective. Without goals established and measurable benchmarks along the way, there is really nothing to measure performance against. Without these benchmarks, we tend to base the pastor’s review on our own personal opinions and relationship with the pastor. For example, without clear expectations and goals, a team conducting the pastor’s annual review may base it on the pastoral care received or not by a particular team member. The expectations of that care may vary from team member to team member because no benchmarks or expectations were ever established. On the other hand, if there are clearly identified congregational goals that the pastor is responsible for, the expectation is set and the review is based on those – not the personal expectations of the team or a particular member of the team.

There are times during the year that this agenda item might need to move into executive (confidential) session so that the simplified structure leadership council may act as the congregation’s Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC). Confidentiality in S/PPRC matters is a disciplinary requirement. A church using a simplified structure model that includes the functions of S/PPRC in its leadership council should take care to follow all of the requirements, restrictions, and protections found in the United Methodist Discipline sections dedicated to the work of the S/PPRC.

4. Consent Calendar and Review of Leadership Packet

At least a week prior to the leadership council meeting, an electronic packet will be emailed to each team member for review prior to the meeting. This prepares the leaders for the consent calendar section of the agenda. Sending the packet out ahead of time keeps the team from having to take time from the meeting to read reports or listen to long (and often unprepared) oral reports. This also allows plenty of time to fully review the information and be prepared with questions, comments, or concerns as well as the ability to fully participate in conversations and decisions.

The usual method of working through most of the leadership packet is a Consent Calendar:

- A Consent Calendar methodology should include all the agenda items that a board needs receive for historical reasons or to vote on for legal purposes.
- The leader will ask if there are any corrections to the consent calendar agenda, or if anything needs to be removed from what is presented in the packet, for corrections or further discussion under Agenda Item #5: Generative Work. If not, a covering motion for approval will be called for and seconded for all items that remain on the consent calendar. A vote to approve will then be taken. This is more a formality than anything. Yet, it is important to have an accurate historical document of the governing decisions of the leadership council.
- The minutes of the last meeting are an example of a consent calendar items. Other items could include the signing of a contract that has already been approved, shifting funds between accounts,
- Members of the leadership council should have read the packet and come prepared to either vote approval for the items or to move the items toward the discussion phase of the agenda.
- For some items, especially financial matters and statistical data, a short oral description may prove very helpful. This also addresses the complexity of learning and processing styles among council members. The focus of any oral report should be to frame a fruitful and effective discussion.
The leadership packet should include reports, information and statistics that allow the leadership council to have a full picture of the vitality of the church. While numbers aren’t everything, numbers are indicators. When we are watching the numbers, we can more easily and quickly identify trends. The sooner trends are identified, the faster we are able to address them and course correct. Depending on the size of the church or staff availability, the packet is most often assembled by the church secretary or office/business manager. In smaller churches, the leadership council chair may take responsibility for preparing and distributing the packet.

**LEADERSHIP PACKET**

- **Financial Reports**
  - The balance sheet should include ALL assets and liabilities of the church.
  - The spending report should show the annual budget amounts and how much (dollar and/or percentage) of the budget in each ministry area has been spent year to date. The report does not need to show each individual entry. The leadership council is looking at ministry category spending only.
  - When it comes to review of the packet, the council leader will ask if there are any questions or comments about the financial report. For example, if the church is substantially behind in giving, this may need to be a point of discussion. The treasurer/bookkeeper may put a note on the report sent out in the packet with any notes of explanation. For example, a note may be placed on the financial report indicating that while we are halfway through the year, the giving in not half of the budgeted amount. Historically, the church has received 40% of its budgeted income by July 1, so the church would historically be on track.

- **Church’s Vital Signs** *They may also be called signs of fruitfulness.*
  - These signs are numbers that help us, as leaders, understand the healthiness of our church. These important statistics are average worship attendance, professions of faith, number of people participating in service, number of people involved in small groups, and generosity.
  - As leaders, don’t only look at the numbers for the past month. Pay attention to trends. This means you will want to have the packet prepared with historical information from the past three or five years. By including this historical information, it will be easier to identify trends. When trends are identified, the team needs to be talking about those trends and identifying any needed course correction.

- **Connecting New People Report**
  - It is important for the leadership council to know the number of new guests each week.
  - In addition, it is important for the leadership council to know the number of returning guests each week, and the level of connection (small groups, mission activities, etc).
  - Again we are looking for trends. If we are not seeing new people, we know we have an evangelism issue. If we are seeing first time guests, but not returning guests, we know we most likely have issues with hospitality and/or connection (or maybe even worship).

- **Minutes Of The Previous Meeting**
  - These will be approved (or approved as corrected) as part of the Consent Calendar Agenda

- **Special Reports & Ministry Team Reports**
  - If you have a group in your church that just feels the strong desire to report, you can offer to insert a report into the leadership council packet.
  - Please do not give way to returning to a reporting entity. Another reason for special reports might be a huge project going on that falls under the leadership council’s responsibility. Examples of this might be a major church remodel, building project, capital campaign, stewardship campaign, etc. Is something like this going on in the life of the congregation, it is appropriate and vital to have the person leading these special projects to submit a report for the packet. If it is just a progress report and things are going according to plan, there may not be a need for team discussion. However, if the project is not going according to plan or the project is stuck in some fashion, team discussion is probably needed and warranted.
  - One suggestion is to have a standard report form (or even online form using ARUMC’s free Google Apps system) that clearly asks at the beginning if the special report is an update or if Leadership council action is required.
  - Most Committee or Team reports can simply be approved under the Consent Calendar Items. Need for discussion of an item may require that it move from the consent calendar for discussion under *Agenda Item #5: Generative Work*
5) Generative Work: Leadership Council Assistance/Questions/Discussion

While the last section involved accountability to goals and understanding the church’s health and missional fruitfulness, this agenda time may be used to reflect on the value of the goals themselves. What goals may need to be added, adapted or changed to meet the changing ministry landscape and the needs of the mission field?

This is also the time where individuals team members may have questions, comments, concerns that need to be addressed for the overall good of the congregation as it pertains to church governance. Reports or items pulled from the Consent Calendar may need to be discussed. This is also a time for leadership council members to ask for help from other team members if they are stuck in individual assignments from the team. This could be an issue that brings about the need to establish a new guiding principle* to allow ministry to happen without the leadership council’s approval or intervention. This portion of the agenda deals with any places the leadership is stuck and needs to work through.

*What is a Guiding Principle? When the church moves into the simplified structure with the accountable leadership process, it will be helpful for the leadership council to identify some Guiding Principles. Guiding Principles is a document that gives permission for ministry to happen within healthy boundaries. Guiding Principles allows ministry to occur without constantly asking for permission. The principles give authority and responsibility to appropriate people while having a process of accountability in place. Most often leadership council develop these principles over time. It is a living document that is regularly visited, revamped and added to. Over time, as decisions are brought to the leadership council for approval, continuously ask yourself (when appropriate) how permission within healthy boundaries could be given in the Guiding Principles that would have allowed this decision not to have to come before the leadership council. How can this church create a culture of permission-giving with healthy boundaries in the framework of the mission and vision? A Guiding Principles document could include spending maximums, boundaries for Finance or Facilities Specialist authority, hiring/firing rules, and rules about Leadership council communication and transparency. (See page 26)

6) Communications Plan

What needs to be shared from this meeting? How can the board support the ministry of the pastors, staff and ministry teams by keeping the congregation abreast of the board’s strategic priorities and work toward the church’s mission? Clarity about what should be communicated keeps the board on task, places the work of the board during the meeting in context and connects the board to the larger congregation.

Closing Prayer

Prayer for the Mission Field, the Congregation, and our discernment of God’s unfolding plan.
Sample Guiding Principles

See vitality.arumc.org/simplified-structure/ for several samples of Guiding Principles. Be sure to build a set of principles appropriate for your context, budget, staffing, and style of leadership.

- Once the budget is approved, those responsible (i.e. staff and team leaders) for the various ministry areas have the authority to spend their budget to align with the objectives for their ministry area approved by the pastor. No further approval is needed to access the budget in their area of responsibility.

- The pastor is responsible for reviewing line items within ministry areas with staff and team leaders for accountability from the staff and to the board.

- Any single purchase or expenditure over $X needs to be ran by the treasurer for purposes of cash flow. The treasurer does not approve or deny purchases but rather confirms large purchases will not create cash flow issues.

- The pastor has the authority to hire and release employees using the church’s employee policies. When releasing an employee, the pastor will invite a board member to sit in.

- Any member of the Building Maintenance Team has the authority to purchase supplies for building maintenance and improvement up to $Y without approval. The Building Maintenance Team leader can authorize purchases for building maintenance and improvement up to $Z. Purchases up to $A can be approved by the pastor. Any purchases over $A need to be approved unless the expenditure is already approved in a capital expenditure line item in the approved budget.

- Any expenditure over $B will require three bids. Preference will be given to higher local companies offering competitive bids within 5% of other bids. If the expenditure is already approved in the budget and meets the previous criteria, there is no further approval needed.

- The pastor will review all paid staff annually using the approval evaluation process in the employee manual date DD/MM/YYYY. Paid staff will review unpaid staff/team and leaders annually using the same evaluation process.

- The board recognizes and approves the Building Usage Policies dated DD/MM/YYYY.

- The board recognizes and approves the Building Security and Key Policies dated DD/MM/YYYY.
Don’t Forget:

Communication Matters
✓ Particularly two-way communication!
✓ Simplified structure can make many members feel left out of the loop. Efforts to share and to listen must increase dramatically.

Leadership Matters
✓ Members of the leadership council should sign a published leadership covenant that lists expectations about the mission of the church, membership vows, presence and preparedness, behaviors, responsibility to the team, and accountable discipleship.

Clarity of Authority Matters
✓ Be very clear how other ministry teams, boards, and committees work together.
✓ In structures where there are area specialists: when the meeting is over, finance, staffing, and building specialists put on their respective “hats” and have authority to make decisions within the boundaries of the UM Discipline and the congregation’s Guiding Principles.
✓ Authority is granted while holding the persons responsible and accountable.