



Board Governance Manual for Small Churches

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Module 1: Introduction to Board Governance Manual

Summary

A Board Governance Manual serves as a guiding document to help clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations between the pastor and the church board.

Why a Governance Manual?

- Ensures an appropriate spiritual tone and processes for a church
- Ensures unity about expectations and that expectations are known to all
- Is a help when recruiting board members
- Provides continuity during times of change
- Provides a significant focus on mission and monitoring
- Reinforces a healthy, Christ-like board leadership culture and church health

A good manual emphasizes the importance of mission alignment. By focusing on the church's mission, boards can ensure that their efforts are focused on fulfilling God's vision for their church. This includes setting up evaluation processes that allow for regular reflection on how well the church is fulfilling its mission, giving feedback to the pastor, and ensuring the board itself remains effective.

The four areas of the manual are:

1. Mission – a description of the purpose of your church as well as the values that shape your church culture and how you approach ministry.
2. Board Responsibilities – an outline of the responsibilities of board members and how the board works together with the pastor.
3. Ministry Boundaries - the expectations that we have of our pastor and each other in ministry and operational matters, including an identification of areas that need to come to the board for approval.
4. Ministry Evaluation – the annual evaluation and discernment processes we follow to consider how well we are doing as a church, give feedback to our pastor, and reflect on how well the board is doing its job.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the four areas of the board governance manual are areas of strength for us? What area needs the most development?
2. What are the potential benefits of having a clear, written manual for recruiting and training new board members and volunteers?

Module 2: Developing a Church Mission Statement

Summary

This module dives into the process of developing a clear and compelling mission statement for your church. A mission statement is a short, clear statement about why the church exists, what the church does, and who the church serves. The church's mission statement should align with God's overarching mission in the world, as revealed through scripture.

This module also encourages churches to root their mission statements in the biblical story of God's reconciling work, particularly through Christ. This biblical foundation anchors the church's mission in God's ongoing work of redemption, rather than seeing it as an isolated or inward-focused activity.

A well-crafted mission statement serves several purposes. It communicates the church's purpose to the congregation and the wider community, guides decision-making processes, and serves as a way to evaluate ministry effectiveness.

The process of creating a mission statement can vary. Some churches may have the pastor or board draft a statement, while others might involve the congregation more broadly. Regardless of the process, the end result should be a concise, memorable, and actionable statement that reflects God's vision for that church in its unique context.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do we have a mission or purpose statement? If so, what are the strengths of our current statement? What are some areas that we would like to re-examine?
2. Discuss the quote from Christopher Wright, “It is not so much the case that God has a mission for His church in the world, as that God has a church for His mission in the world.”
3. What are some of the key Scripture passages from this module that caught your attention as it relates to creating a mission statement?
4. What are some of the broken areas in our community that need to be reconciled to God’s original plan for flourishing and fullness of life?

Resources:

Eldership and the Mission of God: Equipping Teams for Faithful Church Leadership, J.R. Briggs & Bob Hyatt

Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches, Peter Greer & Chris Horst

Module 3: Writing a Mission Statement

Summary

In this module, the focus shifts to the practical steps of writing and implementing the mission statement. Several methods for creating the mission statement are presented, from having one person draft it to engaging the whole congregation in the process. The benefits and challenges of each approach are discussed, with an emphasis on involving as many voices as possible to ensure that the mission resonates with the broader church community.

The module also stresses the importance of clear, concise language that is both inspiring and understandable to everyone, including those outside the church. It should avoid Christian jargon and be relatable to people who may not yet be familiar with the church's vision or theology.

Once the mission statement is finalized, it's essential to integrate it into the everyday life of the church. This can be done by displaying it prominently in church communications, using it to guide decision-making, and revisiting it in sermons or church meetings. The mission statement should not be written once and then forgotten; rather, it should be a living document that continually shapes the church's direction and priorities.

Additionally, the module highlights that the mission statement can be used as a benchmark for evaluating programs, ministries, and initiatives. If something the church is doing doesn't align with the mission, it should either be reconsidered or restructured to fit within the mission's framework.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss which method we would like to use to get input in creating our mission statement. What steps should we take to involve lay leaders and the congregation in the mission statement development process?
2. What are some of the key demographic characteristics of our community? What community needs are currently unmet?
3. In this module several sample mission statements were shared. What parts of the sample statements caught your attention?
 - To lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus.
 - To see people far from God come into relationship with him.
 - To be a heaven on earth community living and loving like Jesus.
 - Imperfect people, risking it all to make Jesus real one life at a time.
 - To urgently lead people to say yes to Jesus and his purposes for their lives.
 - To grow in love for God and neighbour, reach new people, and heal a broken world.
4. How is our church positioned to meet the needs of our community?
5. What are some practical ways we can make our mission statement visible and central to the life of the church?
6. How can we use our mission statement to guide decision-making and evaluate new ministries or initiatives?

Module 4: Board Responsibilities and Spiritual Postures of Board Leadership

Summary

This module introduces the concept of "spiritual postures," which are the attitudes and mindsets that church board members should embody in their leadership roles. These postures include Allegiance to Christ, Missional Stewardship, Reliance on the Holy Spirit, Honouring Others, Servant Leadership, Unity, and Prayer.

The module also covers legal responsibilities, including honesty, loyalty, care, and diligence, reinforcing the alignment between spiritual values and legal duties. Together, these postures promote a board culture that honors Christ and fosters a supportive, mission-focused environment.

Finally, this module covers the key responsibilities of board leaders, such as discerning mission direction, nurturing a relationship with the lead pastor, monitoring the church's progress, and ensuring accountability to the congregation.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which spiritual postures resonate most with you, and how do they influence our ministry as board leaders?
2. How can board members demonstrate “Allegiance to Christ” in decision making?
3. What are some practical ways that we can cultivate a healthy, mutually supportive relationship between the board and our pastor?
4. What are the five key areas of responsibility for the board? What are our key areas of strength? Where would we like to develop?
5. Matthew 18 encourages us to talk directly and privately with someone if we have a concern. How comfortable is the board in modelling this kind of respectful discussion?

Resources:

High Impact Church Boards: How to Develop Healthy, Intentional, and Empowered Church Leaders, T.J. Addington

Serving as a Board Member: Practical Guidance for Directors of Christian Ministries, John Pellowe

Module 5: Board Positions, Committees, and Agenda Planning

Summary

This module reviews the core board roles of Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer and introduces the function of board committees. The Board Chair is responsible for facilitating meetings, setting agendas, and ensuring all voices are heard. The Secretary handles administrative duties like recording minutes and preserving records, while the Treasurer manages financial oversight, budgeting, and accountability.

Committees can assist the board and pastor in addressing specific ministry and practical areas of the church such as missions, outreach, abuse prevention, women's ministry, men's ministry, building maintenance, hospitality, and others! A key question to consider is how committees will stay connected to the Lead Pastor and to the board so that ministry flourishes.

The module also reviews some practical considerations like agenda planning, minute-taking, conflicts of interest, protecting confidentiality, and board development through ongoing learning.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the roles of Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer support the effectiveness of the board?
2. What types of committees could benefit our church? What are some practical ways we can keep committees connected with the Lead Pastor and the board?
3. How does agenda planning contribute to productive and mission-focused board meetings?
4. What steps can the board take to ensure confidentiality and manage conflicts of interest?
5. In what ways could our church incorporate board development and spiritual growth into board meetings?

Resources:

Canada Revenue Agency Resources

Books and Records Guidance <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenueagency/services/charities-giving/charities/operating-a-registered-charity/booksrecords.html>

Canadian Centre for Christian Charities Resources (cccc.org)

- Article: What Should Be Included in the Board Minutes?
- Help, I'm a New Church Treasurer (Recorded Seminar)
https://www.cccc.org/cart/view_item/help_im_a_church_treasurer_recorded
- Serving as a Board Member (Online Video)
https://www.cccc.org/cart/view_item/dvd_board_online

The Art of Kubernēsis (1 Corinthians 12:28): Leading as the Church Board Chairperson, Larry J. Perkins

Mina's Guide to Minute Taking: Principles, Standards & Practical Tools, Eli Minas

Module 6: Ministry Boundaries & Expectations

Summary

This module focuses on establishing clear boundaries and expectations for both pastors and board members to ensure a healthy and effective ministry environment. The key principles are that boundaries are reasonable, known, and kept to a manageable number. It is important that these boundaries are set collaboratively with the pastor and board working together.

Key areas covered include self-care, preaching, congregational care, staff and volunteer oversight, protecting assets, financial management, and communication.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a ministry boundary? Why is it important to set ministry boundaries, and how might they help prevent conflict?
2. Why is self-care important for the pastor and how can the board provide support in this area?
3. Pastors are often pulled in many different directions whether it be committee meetings or attending various church functions and events. What kind of boundaries can the board support so that workload expectation for the pastor is reasonable?
4. Which ministry boundaries outlined in the sample governance manual would we like to incorporate in our church? Discuss why these boundaries are important.
5. Are there any policies that we have already developed that should be referenced in this section of our board governance manual?

Module 7: A Biblical Foundation for Evaluation

Summary

This module provides several biblical examples of evaluation throughout Scripture.

- God evaluates His own creation.
- Old Testament prophets are sent to evaluate Israel's behaviour in relationship to God's commands.
- Jesus engages with John's disciples and provides an evaluation of His ministry.
- We observe evaluation in some of Jesus' parables.
- Paul evaluated the early church through his letters.
- Christ evaluated the seven churches in Revelation.

From God assessing His creation as "good" in Genesis to Christ's letters to the seven churches in Revelation, the Bible underscores the importance of discernment and alignment with God's mission. The module highlights key elements of biblical evaluation, including acknowledging Christ's lordship, understanding the church's unique context, involving reputable individuals, balancing affirmation and critique, fostering honest reflection, and encouraging repentance and action. This foundation for evaluation not only guides assessment but also promotes a church culture rooted in spiritual accountability and growth.

Discussion Questions:

1. What biblical principles for evaluation can we glean from Jesus' interaction with John's disciples in Matthew 11?
2. In what ways does honest evaluation encourage spiritual growth and alignment with God's mission?
3. What evaluation criteria are contained in the Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2 – 3? Which of these criteria are most relevant to our context?
4. What are the key elements of the Christ-centric pathway for evaluation?
5. Why is discernment an important part of the evaluation process?

Resources:

Devotional Guide:

"If You Can Hear, Listen to What the Spirit is Saying"

fivesmoothstones.ca/resources

Canadian research on ministry evaluation:

"How do Canadian Protestant Churches Evaluate Ministry Success?"

fivesmoothstones.ca/resources

Seven Deadly Spirits: The Message of Revelation's Letters for Today's Church, T. Scott Daniels

Module 8: Evaluation Processes for the Church

Summary

Building on the biblical foundation in Module 7, this module introduces practical evaluation processes tailored to three key areas: assessing the church's progress on its mission, providing feedback to the lead pastor, and evaluating the board's own effectiveness.

Churches are encouraged to integrate evaluation as an annual rhythm, focusing not only on numerical metrics but on spiritual and mission-related outcomes. As such, it is important not only to look at concrete information and numbers, but also to incorporate discernment, prayer, and listening to the Spirit as equally important.

Effective evaluation requires a humble, learning-focused posture, balancing accountability with grace.

Discussion Questions:

1. How will the board set aside time to integrate evaluation into its agenda?
2. How can our church's mission statement serve as a guide for evaluating its ministry effectiveness?
3. Discuss with the pastor what process we would like to follow in providing performance feedback.
4. How can we provide care for our pastor?
5. What are some areas the board should include in its board self-evaluation discussions?
What are some ways we can strengthen the board in the next year?

Resources:

The Board's Most Important Relationship: Training for Christian Ministry Directors and Staff Leaders, John Pellowe

The Social Profit Handbook: The Essential Guide to Setting Goals, Assessing Outcomes, and Achieving Success for Mission-Driven Organizations, David Grant