

UNDERSTANDING THE TASK

“Examining Leadership and Decision-Making Concerns”

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Definition of the Task

- Upon the pastor’s termination, members who were closest to the pastor will have the greatest sense of loss, regret, and fear for the future. Others will see the pastor’s departure as an opportunity to exert their leadership and move the church to its “proper” stance

Major Issues to Consider

- Being explicit about lay leadership shifts. Recognizing burnout and dropout of leaders, honoring past leaders and finding ways to keep them involved
- Considering future lay leadership needs and potentially expanding the leadership base
- Looking at professional staffing needs
- Learning about healthy, realistic and open decision-making processes and structures
- Considering expanding the methods by which a congregation makes decisions.
- Creating an atmosphere that honors and maximizes the opportunities of diversity in the congregation
- Updating governing church documents such as constitution, bylaws, covenants, job descriptions, policies and procedures
- Recognizing power and control of decisions and directions of congregation.
- Managing conflicts in productive ways

Various Methods of Engaging the Congregation in This Task

- Affirm the different styles and talents of the leaders
- Teach conflict management and resolution skills and processes
- Rethink the procedure for developing leadership and the length of terms of office
- Recognize and celebrate the leaders who are going out of office; hold closure ceremonies
- Assess leadership needed to reach interim goals and recruit leaders to meet those needs
- Use older leaders as mentors
- Determine whether decision-making processes are congruent with those stated in governing documents
- Conduct a seminar on decision-making methods
- Open the decision-making process
- Begin new member orientation
- Develop a new covenant with broad member participation
- Clarify personnel policies and procedures

- Train the chairs of the various organizations and committees
- Practice open communication
- Conduct “Time and Talent” survey
- Conduct a Spiritual Gifts inventory
- Commission new leaders – including the Transition Team and Pastoral Search Committee
- Review governing documents and determine congruence with current practice

Healthy Signs

- Open leadership and decision-making structures
- Interdependency
- Win/win decisions
- Clear decisions are made, with follow-through
- Shared leadership in maintenance and developmental tasks
- Election, acceptance, and support of new leadership
- People are asking the process questions: “How do we make decisions?” “What kind of lay leaders do we need?”
- Inclusiveness: both old and new leaders are involved in the work of the church
- Conflicts and differences are dealt with openly and in a timely manner

Caution Signs

- Division and destructive sub-grouping
- Competition and avoidance
- Counter-dependency
- Power plays
- Win/lose decisions
- Decisions are not clear, are not carried out, or fall apart
- The Pastoral Search Committee becomes a power center
- Secret meetings
- Self-authorized decisions
- Gossip and rumors
- Exclusiveness in leadership positions
- Blaming
- Avoidance of conflict

Things to Keep In Mind

- If revision is needed on the governing documents it should be worked on after the church has established the principles of decision-making
- The Transition Team should not spend its energy in the area of governing documents, for it potentially can drain the life out of the Team. This kind of work is very tedious and will distract the Team from focusing on the major issues. A viable approach is to assign it to a small task force that is separate from the Transition Team
- The Team should use multiple methods of involving the congregation in this task.
- Let the Transition Team do the work – the intentional interim minister should be pastor to the people and process consultant to the Team

References: Portions of this material are adapted from Mead, Loren B. *A Change of Pastors...And How it Affects Change in the Congregation*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2005; and Nicholson, Roger S, editor. *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1998.