

Preworkshop Assignments

for the

Planning for Growth and Vitality Weekend Workshop for the Smaller Mid-size Congregation

Readings and Exercises Packet to be completed before attending the workshop

Each Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregation is unique because it is made up of unique individuals and has a unique history. It is valuable to study a congregation using lenses aimed from different perspectives. Please read through the following pages and complete the exercises.

The exercises should take from one to two hours to complete and will form the core of our discussion on the first evening of the workshop. Note that items #5 and #6 should be coordinated among team members.



Four Types of Growth



Dynamics of Growth



Church Characteristics by Size



Board and Congregational Governance



Items to Bring for the Workshop



Telling Your Congregation's Story



These readings and exercises are for participants in the Planning for Growth and Vitality Weekend Workshop for the Smaller Mid-size Congregation. The exercises are to be completed before attending the workshop.

Members of congregations can contact their district offices to indicate interest in arranging a workshop.



How to Contact New Congregation and Growth Resources

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Four Types of Growth

One lens for examining how churches grow has been created by Loren B. Mead in his book *More Than Numbers: The Way Churches Grow*. The author outlines four dimensions of growth and states that a growing, vital congregation would most likely be attending to each of the following dimensions.

Numerical Growth

When we talk about church growth, we usually describe it as an increase in church membership. A broader look shows us that numerical growth includes growth in Sunday worship attendance, church school attendance, adult religious education attendance, size of the budget, number of activities, and number of active members. The most important number is the number of *active* members, not the number of members on the book.

Examining the trend in growth at a church is more important than looking at a snapshot in time, because this examination allows us to track trends in participation and relate those trends to growth in the wider community. For instance, has this church's growth plateaued, or is the church growing or declining in membership?

To provide a basis of comparison, in 2002, approximately two-thirds of the 1,050 congregations in the United States that made up the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) had fewer than 150 adult members. Eighty-three percent had fewer than 250 members. In 2002, our entire association had 158,607 adult members and 263,080 children and youth nationwide.

In the United States, there are approximately 300,000 congregations of all faith traditions. A 5-year study of 14,301 houses of worship from 41 faith groups conducted by the Hartford Institute for Religious Research (published in February 2001) found that half of all the congregations in the United States have fewer than 100 regular worshippers, and 52 percent of them are in small towns. The study also found that 51 percent of these congregations, especially on the West Coast, reported growth, and the authors concluded that this growth was a result of community service or outreach.

What is the trend for growth in your church? Has your growth plateaued? If so, for how long? Is your growth on an increase? Are numbers declining? How does your trend compare with the growth of the community at large?

Maturational Growth

Maturational growth is growth in the stature and religious maturity of each member, as well as growth in the ability to nurture and be nurtured. A healthy, growing congregation empowers its members to contribute their unique talents and gifts for the well-being of the whole.

Another illustration of maturational growth in a congregation is people using their own unique talents and gifts and challenging others to use theirs, in order to minister to one another and to the wider community. This concept of ministry is important if a church is to be vital and growing.

As Mead indicates, the congregation must be able to challenge, support, and encourage each one of its members to:

- ✚ Grow in the maturity of their faith
- ✚ Deepen their spiritual roots, and
- ✚ Broaden their religious imaginations.

It is important to emphasize the difference in orientation from one of “church membership” to that of “personal ministry”—from the consumer orientation, where members expect the organization to deliver them spiritual care, to that of contributing one’s unique talents and gifts to others through a sense of personal ministry.

Organic Growth

Organic growth is the growth of the congregation as a functioning community. The congregation is able to maintain itself as a living organism and as an institution that can engage with other institutions of society. Organic growth involves having healthy internal organizational systems, such as

- ✚ Policies, processes, practices, and programs.
- ✚ Recruiting and succession planning practices for leaders.
- ✚ Evaluation mechanisms for programs, volunteers, and paid staff.
- ✚ Practices that deal with conflict openly and honestly.

Organic growth helps the organizational structures of the congregation become a launching pad for both internal and external ministry. It can either facilitate or impede a congregation’s capacity to incorporate new members into active participation in its ministry.

Incarnational Growth

Incarnational growth is the ability to take the meanings and values of the Unitarian Universalist faith and make them real in the world and the society outside the congregation. The congregation grows in its ability to, in the words of UU theologian James Luther Adams, “socially incarnate” what the Unitarian Universalist faith is all about.

To make a difference in the world, a congregation must be able to both build up and send forth. It must

- ✚ Build itself into a religious community in which people can deepen their spiritual lives and be challenged to live out their faith.
- ✚ Send its members out to engage in the world in order to make it more loving and just.

Incarnational growth is how a congregation makes a difference in the world and embodies its message and values to affect lives and the social environment in the larger community. When a congregation manifests its faith and principles in tangible ways, people will be able to state, “Oh, that is the church that” (For example, one of our churches in Portland, Oregon, is known as “the church that is the hate-free zone.”)

The Whole Is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

These different kinds of growth interact with one another. For example,

- ✚ A member’s ability to articulate her faith may have an impact on numerical growth as she talks with others in the community.
- ✚ A congregation’s commitment to engaging in the “Welcoming Congregation” process may lead to greater diversity in the wider community, lead to the maturational growth of current members, and have an impact on organic systems within the church.

We may be tempted to focus our attention on one aspect of growth at the expense of others, but it is important to attend to each one of them.

Assessing Your Current Strengths and Weaknesses

In your opinion, what are your congregation's strengths for, and challenges to, growth? Complete these exercises alone or in conversation with your church team. Put a check mark in the column to indicate whether each activity is a weakness or strength; then describe the reason for your rating.

Numerical Growth

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Recruiting new members from people new to the community		
Conducting an intentional "Invite a Friend to Church" Sunday		
Identifying, inviting, and following up with newcomers		
Incorporating new members into the congregation, making space for them, and helping them join in		
Keeping track of, and following up with, members who reduce their church attendance or their pledges		
Other		

Assessing Your Current Strengths and Weaknesses

Maturational Growth

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Offering significant programs for children		
Offering significant programs for youth		
Offering significant programs for young adults		
Conducting spiritual growth programs or retreats for adults		
Offering significant programs for seniors		
Helping members define their unique talents, gifts, and personal ministry		
Encouraging involvement in social justice activities		
Helping members reevaluate and renew their membership from time to time		
Other		

Assessing Your Current Strengths and Weaknesses

Organic Growth

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Effectiveness of leadership:		
Planning and decision making		
Managing conflicts		
Setting and carrying out priorities		
Handling mistakes		
Managing finances		
Effectiveness of congregation:		
Recruiting, training, and nurturing leadership		
Creating a high quality of life as a community		
Creating opportunities to know one another on a personal level		
Other		

Assessing Your Current Strengths and Weaknesses

Incarnational Growth

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Supporting and encouraging members to be involved in social justice activities		
Reaching out to others in need		
Relating to community agencies of care		
Relating to groups advocating change in the community		
Defining shared ministry goals for the congregation		
Making opportunities to discuss community, national, or world issues in light of our faith		
Offering opportunities in worship to reflect upon community issues and concerns		
Being aware of what other members do at work		
Creating a definite identity for our church in the larger community		
Other		



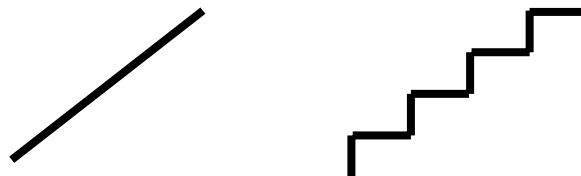
Dynamics of Growth

Much has been written about the dynamics of church growth. According to British anthropologist Robin Dunbar, humans tend to form primary groups of 12 or so and clans of about 50, and this tendency holds within congregations. At about 150 members, a qualitative shift occurs and a true organization comes into being, as evidenced by formal governing, formal communication, formal leadership roles and responsibilities, and explicit procedures. Larger organizations seem to work best when they are built of combinations of these natural-size groups, often referred to in congregational growth literature as *cells*.

The Alban Institute, an organization focusing on effective church management, has identified specific characteristics relating to numerical size and its implications for congregational vitality. Its findings related to church size are summarized as follows:

- ✚ Congregations fall into distinctive size categories and are organized in predictable ways related to numerical size.
- ✚ Average worship service attendance, looking at all ages and all days of the week, is the indicator of size for congregations.
- ✚ Congregations don't grow or decline smoothly but instead tend to plateau at certain predictable levels of attendance.
- ✚ Familiar patterns of behavior must be relinquished for a congregation to grow beyond the attendance plateau.

Over the years, attendance patterns in growing congregations alternate between plateaus and inclines. Intentional effort is required to rise off each plateau and so to increase attendance.



Churches that have been growing steadily tend to hit an attendance plateau, often evidenced by a change in year-to-year attendance. Although the number of visitors, membership, or

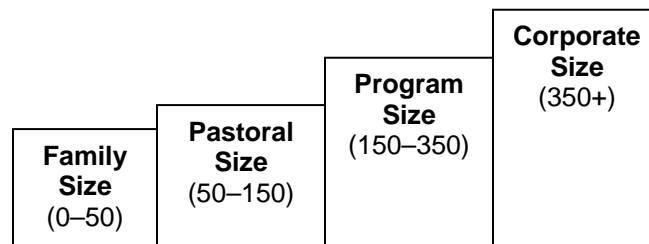
dollars contributed may continue to increase, attendance remains static. An attendance plateau can be caused by the following:

- ✚Community demographics.
- ✚Physical factors (facilities have reached capacity).
- ✚Transition or sociological limits.

Congregational life during a growth transition tends to be stressful and confusing because known “ways of being” are changing. For example,

- ✚Members are constantly coming up against new situations—new ways of relating. Previously valid expectations are no longer reliable. Relationships among members are being reshaped.
- ✚The dynamics of ministry are changing, as are key structures and processes.
- ✚Leaders have a hard time planning because the barometer they once used for predicting and regulating the life of the congregation is no longer reliable.

These difficulties arise both when a church is growing larger and when it is downsizing. Our focus for this workshop is on growth—on moving from a small size to a larger size.



Adults and Children at Weekly Worship





The In-Between Church,
by Alice Mann

Examining Organic Growth

Alice Mann defines two significant dimensions of change in orientation as churches grow numerically:

- ✚ Change from organism to organization.
- ✚ Change from group centered to pastor (or minister) centered.

Organism or Organization?

Because the membership of family- and pastoral-size churches is relatively homogeneous, these churches resemble an **organism** more than an organization. The congregation's identity is largely inherent in the central relationships of the familial bond (family-size church) or the relationship between the ordained leader and the congregation (pastoral-size church).

The variety and complexity of relationships in the program- and corporate-size churches, in contrast, necessitate conscious attention to identity, purpose, structure, role of leaders, and so on. The large number and variety of programs can be unified only through conscious efforts to construct a clear identity for the **organization**.

Group Centered or Minister Centered?

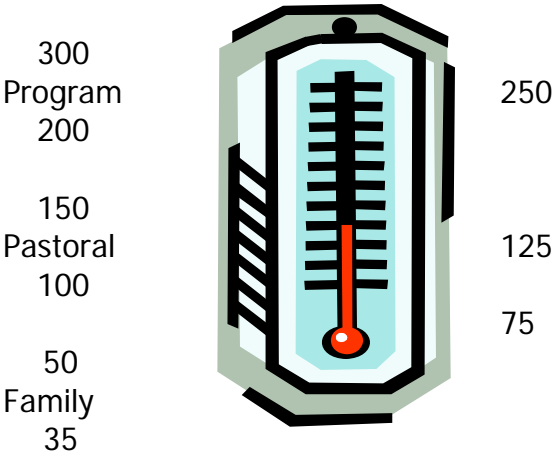
A group-centered church focuses on the congregation as a whole—not on an individual, such as the minister. The family-size church is an example of a **group-centered congregation**, because it often functions as a “committee of the whole” and feels like a large family or tribe. A program-size church may also be group centered, because it focuses more on the teams that run the many programs and less on the minister.

As membership increases, the congregation begins to form networks or small groups that perform the various duties and functions. In the pastoral-size church, these networks are formed from two or more groups of members. In the corporate-size church, the networks are made up of staff, volunteer program heads, and committees.

A **minister-centered church**, however, focuses on the minister. Both the pastoral-size church and the corporate-size church are examples of the minister-centered model, because the minister serves as the *symbolic center* or nucleus for the various networks in these church models. Whether the system of communication is simple, as in the pastoral-size church, or complex, as in the corporate-size church, a center or nucleus is required to bring these networks together. This nucleus or symbolic center is the minister.

Exercise: Analyzing My Church

Circle the correct number:



Average Attendance at Weekly Services

<p>Group Centered or Minister Centered?</p> <p>Circle one, and then give your reasons in the space at the right.</p>	
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<p>Organism or Organization?</p> <p>Circle one, and then give your reasons in the space at the right.</p>	
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Attendance is generally



Down

Plateaued

Up





Church Characteristics by Size

The Family Church: Up to 50 attending worship weekly.

The family church is also called the *matriarchal church* or *patriarchal church*, or both, because strong lay leaders control interactions. It feels like a tribe or committee of the whole. Often, these fellowships are stable and long lasting.



Membership

- High ownership for survival.
- Groups are usually very homogeneous, with little conflict and little anonymity.
- Members are assimilated by "adoption" and nourished by intimacy.
- Members are very devoted and hardworking. Everyone participates.
- Members know every person by name, and they minister to one another.
- Visitors may find it hard to become a part of the community.

Minister's Role

- The minister, if there is one, is generally part-time. He or she assumes the chaplain role, leading worship and giving pastoral care.
- The minister maintains a direct pastoral relationship with each member and provides home and hospital visits.
- The minister provides quality sermons.
- The minister's term is often short because of funding issues or fit problems in the closeknit community. He or she may find it difficult to work with the matriarch or patriarch and may leave after a short tenure.

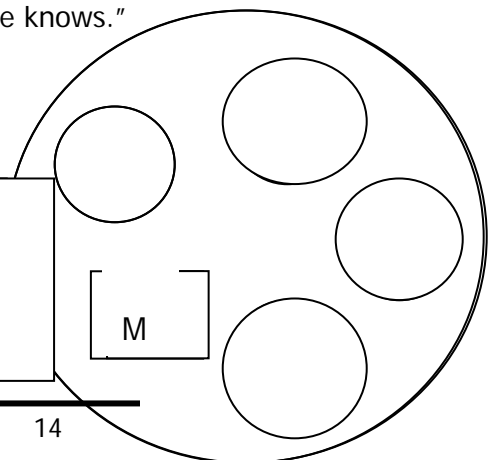
Organizational Structure

- Single-celled organism. The social system resembles an extended biological family.
- The minister acts as a consultant to the matriarch or patriarch.
- The governing board arranges much of the day-to-day life of the congregation.
- The organization often functions as a committee of the whole. Not everyone has equal influence, but members define and change ways of operating in their own characteristic ways.
- Leadership is group centered.
- Communication is informal, usually one to one.

Standards for Leadership

- Leaders collaborate; unity of the team is important.
- Standards (for accountability) are usually set by the whole community and can be voided by objections from any member. The matriarch or patriarch has final authority.
- Few policies or procedures are written, because "everyone knows."
- Decisions are usually based on history.

Matriarch/patriarch are parental figures and control leadership. Minister (M), if present, is pastor and consultant to matriarch and patriarch.



The Pastoral Church: 50 to 150 attending worship weekly.

The pastoral church is a coalition of two or three family and friendship networks unified around the person and role of the minister. The congregation has a sense of family—everyone knows everyone else. The majority of all churches in the United States are this size.



Membership

- ✚ Members recognize one another's faces and notice if someone new is present at worship.
- ✚ Membership inclusion is easier; more diversity exists.
- ✚ Subgroups form in the community like spokes of a wheel, with the minister at the hub.
- ✚ Opportunities for conflict grow.
- ✚ Members have stronger voices and look to the minister for leadership.
- ✚ Most members are involved and take responsibility for the functioning of the church.

Minister's Role

- ✚ The minister is central and relates to everyone. Expectations for the minister are high.
- ✚ The minister maintains a direct pastoral relationship with each member and cares for members in times of need.
- ✚ The minister attends many activities and leads small-group programs.
- ✚ The minister coordinates the work of a small leadership circle.
- ✚ The minister personally conducts worship.
- ✚ The minister recruits and shepherds new members through the membership path.
- ✚ Church growth depends on the popularity of the minister.
- ✚ As the church grows, it becomes more difficult to maintain a personal relationship with everyone.

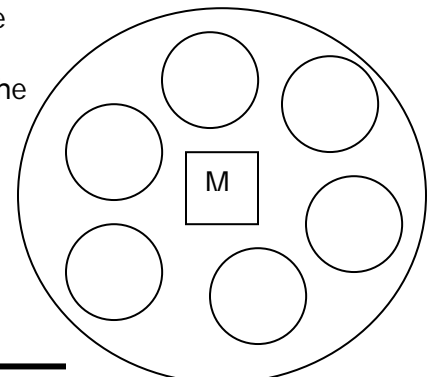
Organizational Structure

- ✚ A leadership circle made up of the minister and a small group of lay leaders replaces the matriarch/patriarch paradigm.
- ✚ The governing board usually operates like a committee, arranging much of the day-to-day life of the congregation.
- ✚ The effectiveness of the leadership circle depends on the minister's ability to delegate authority, assign responsibility, and recognize the accomplishments of others.
- ✚ The organization has an organism structure with minister-centered leadership.

Standards for Leadership

- ✚ Leaders facilitate.
- ✚ Standards for lay leaders and staff are usually informal and not well communicated. Tension may exist around who has authority for decisions and for performance evaluation.
- ✚ Standards for leader accountability are usually set by the whole community and can be voided by objections.
- ✚ Standards for staff are usually established and maintained by the staff as a team, with the minister at the head of the team.

Minister is central. Leadership circle is minister and small core of lay leaders.



The Program Church: 150 to 350 attending worship weekly.

The program church is known for the quality and variety of its programs. A small team of leaders, led by the minister, creates separate programs for children, youth, couples, seniors, and other age and interest groups.



Membership

- ✚ Entry points through programs are readily available for a wide range of visitors.
- ✚ Members take an active role in the ministry (pastoral care) of the church.
- ✚ Many interest groups, committees, and programs emerge to create the sense of belonging that people miss as the church grows. Members sometimes feel loyal to a smaller group rather than to the larger church community.
- ✚ A newcomer may find it more difficult to feel attached.

Minister's Role

- ✚ The minister is seen as a leader, shares information, and provides continuity across program areas.
- ✚ The minister must recruit, equip, develop, and inspire a small group of program leaders, both paid and unpaid.
- ✚ The minister spends less time with members and newcomers.
- ✚ The minister takes on administrator duties, delegates, or burns out. The presence of additional paid staff is essential.
- ✚ Lay leaders minister to one another in a healthy church.

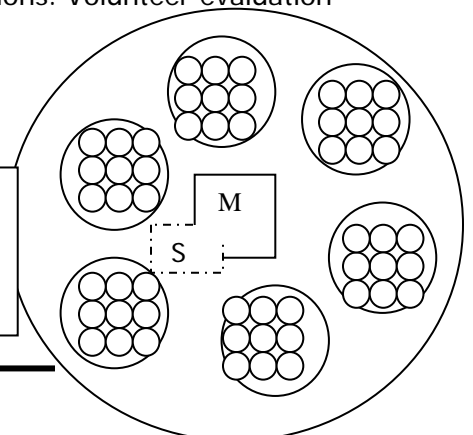
Organizational Structure

- ✚ Stretched cell structure, with many activities and programs expanding faster than the resources required to support them.
- ✚ The church has an organizational structure in which the variety and complexity of relationships require attention to matters of identity, purpose, structure, and the role of leaders.
- ✚ Important decisions are made by a relatively small number of the members.
- ✚ Decision making is broadly distributed within the wider leadership circle (perhaps 50 people).
- ✚ Two-thirds of program-size churches operate with no more than three full-time paid staff of any kind. About 40 percent of all churches of this size make extensive use of part-time workers.
- ✚ The church has a group-centered structure.

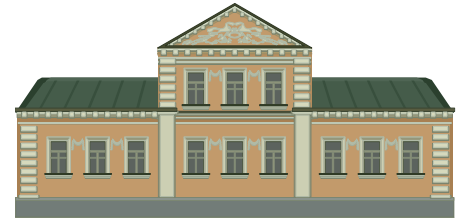
Standards for Leadership

- ✚ Leaders coordinate.
- ✚ Staff members view themselves as participants in a common cause.
- ✚ Standards for staff are formalized, as are performance expectations. Volunteer evaluation strategies take shape.
- ✚ Core lay leaders are experienced in leadership roles, causing processes to be formalized.
- ✚ Standards must be consistent and be communicated across subgroups.

Many cells of activity, headed up by lay leaders. Minister (M) and part-time or full-time staff members (S).



The Corporate Church: 350+ attending worship weekly.



The corporate church is known for excellence in worship and music, as well as for the range and diversity of its programs. Specialized ministries provide for narrowly identified groups of people. Half of the individuals in the United States who participate regularly in the life of a congregation are found in congregations with 400 or more regular participants.

Membership

- ✚ Visitor follow-up and new-member tracking systems are very intentional.
- ✚ Members are willing to sacrifice personal connections in favor of variety in programming and excellent worship services with professional musicians.
- ✚ Members must join smaller communities or feel disconnected.
- ✚ Leaders generate energy and enthusiasm.
- ✚ Distinct subcongregations often form around multiple worship services.
- ✚ Loyalty and responsibility to the church as a whole must be fostered.
- ✚ Most members find spiritual support in small groups, as well as from lay visitors.

Minister's Role

- ✚ The senior minister is a symbol of unity and stability.
- ✚ The minister acts as head of staff and must be skilled at working with diverse staff members.
- ✚ The minister spends quality time on sermon preparation and worship planning.
- ✚ The minister is expected to be visible in the community and to recruit new members.
- ✚ The minister knows fewer members on a personal level.
- ✚ The minister provides pastoral support to leaders.

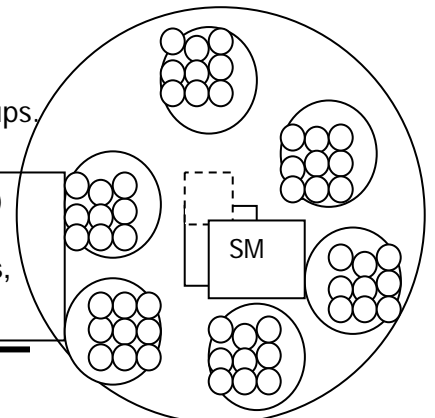
Organizational Structure

- ✚ Decision making is carried out by a multilayered structure of staff, boards, and committees.
- ✚ The church has an organizational structure in which the variety and complexity of relationships require attention to identity, purpose, structure, and the role of leaders.
- ✚ About a third of corporate-size churches have at least ten ongoing groups in addition to their classes, committees, and choirs.
- ✚ The structure is minister centered rather than group centered because of the need for a skilled head of staff, administrator, and symbolic presence to unite the congregation.

Standards for Leadership

- ✚ Leaders provide a symbolic presence, unite the congregation, and dictate policy.
- ✚ Staff members serve as advisors to the leaders (board president or minister).
- ✚ Several staff members represent special interest groups.
- ✚ The senior minister bears major responsibility for staff performance, sets standards, and provides feedback to individuals and the group.
- ✚ Volunteers are recruited for specific reasons; their performance is monitored and shaped.
- ✚ Leadership development becomes a unifying force across subgroups.
- ✚ Formal staff and volunteer evaluation systems are in place.

Many cells. Senior minister (SM) unites church and leads several full- and part-time staff members, and core of lay leaders.



Exercise: Identifying Size Characteristics of My Own Church



Go back through the section entitled “Church Characteristics by Size” and do the following:

1. Identify your church by numerical size, and turn to the page that describes that kind of church.
2. With a highlighter, mark each bulleted item that is typical of your church.
3. Some churches share characteristics of different types of churches. With a highlighter, mark each bulleted item that is typical of your church even though it is listed in the description of a larger or smaller church than yours.
4. What conclusions can you draw about your church and its characteristics?



Board and Congregational Governance Getting the Job Done, and What Is Our Job, Anyway?

By Linda Thompson, Director of Regional Services
East Canadian Unitarian Council

Effective congregational management is a challenge. As congregations grow and change, the members' expectations may change as well. As congregational life becomes more complex, its management becomes more challenging. Effective decision making in, and stewardship of, our congregations is very important. Old patterns are often maintained, and the patterns of decision making, accountability, and communication that worked in a smaller, less formal congregation become frustrating, inefficient, and risky as a congregation grows and becomes more complex. Boards may have important "need to do" work on their agendas, yet get bogged down in the minutiae of managing the organization. A clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and areas of concern of the board, of each staff member (where applicable), and of each of the committees is key to effective governance.

Leadership is an important, yet elusive, concept. It takes on different forms in different settings. The intent of policy governance is to give operational definition to *leadership* as it applies in the specific context of a governing board. It addresses the following questions: How can a group of peers be a responsible owner-representative, exercising authority over activities they will never completely see, toward goals they cannot fully measure, through jobs and disciplines they will never master themselves? How can they fulfill their own accountability while not, at the same time, infringing unnecessarily on the creativity and prerogatives of management and committees? How can they do so when within themselves they disagree, there is a limited time for the task, and there is an unending stream of organizational details demanding inspection?

The basic job of any board can be described as follows: "The purpose of the Board job is, on behalf of some ownership, to see to it that the organization achieves what it should and avoids what is unacceptable."¹

¹ <http://www.carvergovernance.com/home.htm>. Carver Governance Design

The Board's Job

It is the board's responsibility to govern. The board has authority to govern; individual board members do not. The board as a group holds the authority a board holds. Hence, a staff person or a committee is bound by what the board says, but never by what any individual board member says. A board should pledge to its staff and committees that it will never be held accountable for keeping board members happy as individuals and will never hold a board member accountable for any criteria except those expressed officially by the full board. In other words, the board as a body is obligated to protect its staff and committees from the board as individuals.

In congregations, the "one voice" aspect of governance is regularly lost because a host of board committees run about involving themselves in issues most appropriately delegated to staff. Staff members end up taking direction from segments of the board. Personnel, finance, program, publicity, and other such committees are the prime offenders. The board should not have committees either to help or to instruct staff. Staff management is clearly a board matter.

The board has a specific job to do. Its job is not one of essentially looking over everyone else's shoulders, reacting, and being steered around by whatever staff and committees have been doing (a show-and-tell board meeting that consists of staff reports) or are thinking about doing (a board meeting that consists of reviewing and approving detailed plans). That a board has its own job to do means that if the board is responsible for getting its own job done, then board agendas should be the board's agendas, *not* the staff's agendas or a committee's agendas for the board. Boards should spend their time and effort developing processes and policies that enable them to monitor organizational activities, connect with the will of the congregation, and articulate the overall direction of the congregation.

Acting on Behalf of Some Ownership

Boards rarely "own" an organization themselves. They ordinarily represent a larger ownership. The owners of our congregations are the members. The board speaks on their behalf, a task that requires (1) knowing who the owners are and what their desires are and (2) being able to distinguish owners from customers (community at large, renters, and so on) and other stakeholder groups. Finding ways to link with owners even more than with management is a major challenge to any board.

Seeing to It

Seeing to it that things come out right requires three steps. First, the board must describe *right*—that is, the criteria that would signify success. Second, the board must determine who is accountable for reaching these criteria. This step is sometimes difficult in that boards have expectations of committees and staff but do not delegate sufficient authority to them. Third, the board must systematically check to see whether criteria are being met; that is, the board must monitor performance regularly.

Board operation can fail in all three areas, especially in the first and third. Outcome expectations (what differences are to be made in congregational life) are rarely developed. Acceptability of practices and methods is rarely clarified. Hence, when a board tries to monitor, it has no criteria against which to do so. The result is not monitoring, but foraging about. Consider the board practice of approving and reviewing a financial statement or a budget: The board has no idea what it would disapprove, for it has given no criteria to be met. Board development will help a board follow this path with more ability to read financial statements, but it does not provide the criteria for monitoring.

Achieving What It Should

What should any organization achieve? This is the most important aspect of instructing the committees and staff. The only achievement that justifies organizational existence is that which causes sufficient benefits for the right recipients to be worth the cost. What good is this organization to accomplish, for whom, and at what cost or relative worth? We often focus far more on what activities the congregation will be engaged in than on the benefits to be realized.

Consequently, boards give their staff and committees credit for programs, services, and curricula rather than expecting data (even crude data are better than none) on whether those programs were used by the right people to the right effect and whether the effort and cost expended were appropriate. In order to lead, boards must remember that services, programs, and curricula have no value unless they meet the desired ends. Boards should look past these operational means and on to the ends that really matter.

Avoiding What Is Unacceptable

Putting the board's emphasis on ends helps focus the effort of the board, but the board cannot forget that it is also accountable for the means. The term *means* includes not only practices and methods but situations and conduct as well—in other words, all aspects of the organization that are not ends. Concerning itself with means, however, is ordinarily an opening for boards to

become entangled in operational details. It is easy to begin micromanaging. Board members must face the problem that on the one hand, boards are accountable for staff and committee practices and situations, yet on the other hand, dealing with them directly trivializes the board job. Another approach is for the board to define and articulate the means that are unacceptable, and then get out of the way except to ensure that the boundaries thus set are being observed.

In summary, the job of a board can be described as follows:

- Taking into consideration the congregational trust in the exercise of responsibilities.
- Providing detailed information showing how responsibilities have been carried out and what outcomes have been achieved.
- Accepting the responsibility for outcomes, including problems created or not corrected.

Our congregations are self-governing agencies that hold a trust related to a particular purpose and mission, and they use donated funds to accomplish this mission. As a result, these organizations are responsible for what they choose to do and how well they do it. This means that boards, and to an extent committees, are, at minimum, accountable for the following:

- Establishment of an appropriate mission, policy priorities, or both and ensuring their relevance.
- Sound management of funds received from donors and of expenditures.
- Effective organizational governance (including structures and processes for managing human resources).
- The outcomes, quality, and range of their programs and services.

The active oversight of congregational activities by the board of directors can be referred to as *stewardship*. It is the duty of the board to oversee the conduct of the congregation's affairs, ensure that an effective team is in place to carry out day-to-day activities, account for its financial and other resources, ensure that established policies and procedures and limits of responsibility are followed, and ensure that issues related to the overall goals and mission of the congregation are addressed.

Mission and Strategic Planning

The definition of fundamental goals and strategy is the most important duty of the board. Unless it fulfills this duty, the board will have no touchstone to determine the appropriateness of its

actions, the performance of management, or the success of the congregation itself. The duty of every board is to

- Ensure that there is an established mission, communicate it to all members, and periodically review its appropriateness.
- Identify the key elements to success in sustaining this mission and establish a strategic planning process concerning how to get there.
- Approve a process for risk assessment and management to assist the board in anticipating risk, assessing it, and managing the outcome of risky actions.
- Oversee and monitor the achievement of the mission by setting measurable goals that are defined in terms of desired outcomes rather than activities.

Transparency and Communication

Openness, transparency of activities to membership, and two-way communication between the organization and its members are essential to successful stewardship. Transparency and open communication demand that a board do the following:

- Establish policies for communicating and receiving feedback from stakeholders.
- Ensure that the complaint and conflict procedures work effectively.
- Hold regular board meetings that provide an opportunity for discussion.
- Provide a collective memory of the organization by ensuring that appropriate minutes and documents are kept.
- Respond appropriately to requests for information.
- Ensure that staff and committees have clearly stated mandates and responsibilities, and that reporting and accountability expectations are in place.

Program Outcomes

The ultimate goal of accountability is to demonstrate to the members that the congregation does “good in a good way.” Congregations must face the issue of accountability for the good being done—that is, for the outcomes of the organization’s programs and services. Congregations are appropriately required to demonstrate that they are effective. Being well-intentioned is not sufficient. Organizations, too, are recognizing that the ability to provide information on performance motivates staff and volunteers and is a powerful recruitment tool.

What Is Outcome-Based Assessment?

The intent of outcome-based performance assessment is to change the focus of organizations from measuring their

effectiveness through examination of activities and inputs or outputs to examining results and outcomes. In other words, outcome-based assessment shifts the focus from how a program operates to the good it accomplishes. *Outcomes* may be defined as the benefits or changes for participants during or after their involvement in a program or in congregational life. Outcomes are differentiated from program outputs, which are the number of people served or the number of units of service provided. The implementation of outcome-based assessment is challenging for congregations. It is not always easy to determine how best to measure “how much good” a Sunday service accomplishes.

Although a variety of different approaches to conducting outcome-based assessment exist, all share some common tasks:

- Identifying outcome goals.
- Identifying or developing ways to measure progress toward, or achievement of, these goals and collecting and analyzing these data.
- Sharing the outcome assessments with members and using these assessments in the planning process.

Identifying Outcome Goals

Perhaps the most challenging task for a congregation is to identify outcome goals to be measured. The outcomes need to reflect the hoped-for achievements of programs and services. They should measure not how many people participated but what difference the service or program made in the lives of the participants.

Developing Measures and Collecting Data

A second, often prohibitively difficult task associated with outcome performance measurement is deciding what measures will be used to assess the outcomes selected. The alternatives include using data collected by someone else as a benchmark against which progress can be measured, tailoring already existing data to this application, or developing new data sets through the collection of entirely new information.

Some outcomes may be difficult to quantify or to measure at all because the time required for the effect of congregational life to be felt and realized is very long. Although it is evident that true outcome measurement often necessitates longer-term tracking of members, shorter-term measures might also be helpful. For example, in evaluating a new member adult education program, a congregation may not be able to track the member involvement for the decade or more that it would take to determine long-term impacts. However, it is possible for a follow-up survey to determine how program “graduates” were faring three, six, and even nine months later.

Disseminating and Using Results

Another issue is how to use the results of this kind of evaluation effectively. For busy, understaffed congregations, the requirement to do more with the results than include them in their annual reports may seem onerous. Results could be used to make a stronger case at canvass time or be used in committee and board recruitment, but it does take time.

Committees and Staff

Once the clearly understood mandate of staff and committees has been developed, it is the task of those people to do their work. They have an obligation to report to the board and the membership, using the established and agreed-upon criteria. How they do their work, within the defined policies and procedures, is theirs to determine. For example, a Sunday services committee may have as its mandate "to ensure quality, inclusive worship services that reflect UU principles and purposes on forty-five Sundays of the year." The committee will have a budget that it may not exceed by more than 2 percent without prior board approval. The board may have established evaluation criteria that include increasing attendance figures, reported satisfaction of the services by 90 percent of those attending, return attendance rates of 10 percent by newcomers, and increased congregational involvement in the planning and implementing of services. The board may expect quarterly reports and an annual report to the congregation. There may be a stated expectation that the services contain no negative statements about other faith groups and include Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) positive messages. Beyond that, the board should get out of the way of the committee. Having stated its expectations, the board should allow the committee to do its work by using its members' creativity, talent, and efforts. The board should not look over the shoulder of the committee or interfere in its ongoing work. Similar management strategies would apply to other committees, staff members, and ministers.

Summary

It is often said that boards should stick to making policy and leave administration to managers. Policy governance, as its name implies, is about governing by policy. It has also often been said that boards should be (1) more involved and (2) more at arm's length. The truth is that boards should be more involved in some things and less involved in others.

The board can identify the situations, circumstances, practices, activities, conduct, and methods that are off-limits—that is, outside the authority granted to the staff and committees. Most

boards can identify these things in a half-dozen pages dealing with staff treatment, financial management, compensation, asset protection, and a few other areas of legitimate board concern. These proscriptions avoid telling the staff and committees how to manage, but they do tell them how not to manage. Although phrased in an intentionally negative or limiting way (to avoid the board's tendency to slip back into prescribing means), this approach is psychologically positive. The message is that with regard to operational means, if the board has not said you can't, you can.

Boards have a legal and a moral responsibility to attend to the business of congregations. However, in the interest of time, efficiency, and the fulfillment of staff and committee members, this responsibility needs to be balanced with the granting of appropriate autonomy. Using policies to articulate boundaries, principles, and accountability allows the board to meet its responsibilities while allowing ongoing management to fall to the staff and committees.

Think of the major points made in the preceding section, and then answer the following questions:



1. What strengths does our board possess?

2. What challenges currently face our board with regard to governance?



Items to Bring for the Workshop

Your church team members will be creating a collage about your church throughout the weekend. You will post the results of activities and discussions on the collage and take the collage back to your church at the end of the workshop. The collage will be created on a single sheet of poster board (this will be provided at the workshop).

Please bring as many of the following items as you can to create your collage:

- + Your congregation's logo, printed about three inches square.
- + Three-by-five-inch photos of activities at your church—three or four photos only.
- + Your current mission statement, printed on a small piece of paper about four inches wide. We suggest twelve-point type.
- + A program from a Sunday service.
- + Ribbon, stickers, or other colorful items to decorate your collage.
- + Crayons or fine-point markers for text and decoration.
- + If available, twelve copies of a current brochure describing your church in general—one copy for the collage and eleven copies for other church teams to take home with them.

Telling Your Congregation's Story—What Is Your Congregation Like?

Please have your **TEAM** complete this survey before arriving at the Planning for Growth and Vitality workshop.

CONGREGATION: _____ **LOCATION:** _____

CONTACT (for questions) _____ Phone; e-mail _____

VITAL STATISTICS

Established in the year _____ # of weekly services _____ Adult members _____ Children under 12 _____ Youth _____
 Urban Suburban Rural Other Own building Rent space Rent space on Sunday only Other _____

ATTENDANCE—AVERAGE NUMBER OF ADULTS IN WORSHIP IN THE LAST SIX YEARS

1. _____ (Current) 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____
 Seating capacity for Sunday service: _____ Number of visitors in the last six months _____ Adult visitors _____ Children _____

BUDGET FOR THE LAST SIX YEARS

1. _____ (Current) 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____
 Endowment? If yes, list endowment size: \$ _____

PAID STAFF (Please check all that apply)

	Paid	Volunteer	None	Less than 1/4 time	1/4 time	1/2 time	3/4 time	Full time
Parish minister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dir., children's RE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dir., life span RE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music director	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Custodian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MISSION

- Does your church have a mission statement? Yes No _____ Year written. **Please bring a copy with you!**
- On the whole, our congregation is committed to growth. (5 = strongly disagree/1 = strongly agree) 5 4 3 2 1

CHANGES: What are the three most significant changes your congregation has experienced in the last five years?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- On the whole, our congregation is open to change. (5 = strongly disagree/1 = strongly agree) 5 4 3 2 1

JOYS AND CONCERNS

If you were to light three candles of joy (J) and three candles of concern (C) for your congregation, what would they represent?

J1 _____ C1 _____
 J2 _____ C2 _____
 J3 _____ C3 _____

OTHER INFORMATION: Please add anything else you would like to share about your congregation.