

## Strategies for Effective Pastoral Leadership

### Good Governance

Good governance in the Church begins with “collaborative leadership” – the notion that vision setting and decision making can be a shared process between the pastor and leadership Board. This requires mutual empowerment, open communication, intentional process, and reciprocal trust. It also welcomes the Holy Spirit as the generative source of creative energy and collective wisdom. Too often we see conflict in congregations that have lost their “leadership balance” and vested authority disproportionately one way or another – either the minister calls all the shots or the Council/Consistory holds all the cards. Collaborative leadership is a dance in which neither partner dominates and grace abounds.

Even more challenging are situations in which the leadership style becomes passive aggressive – on some issues the clergy person claims full authority and on others throws her/his hands up in the air and wants nothing to do with it. Or, the leadership Board maintains exclusive control over property decisions, finances and constitutional matters, but wants nothing to do with the vision for worship, spiritual formation or community outreach. This sort of governance bifurcation is sometimes justified by the comfort in knowing *who’s in charge of what*, but in reality does not allow for a healthy, comprehensive approach to congregational leadership. More often than not, it leads to divisive agendas and disputes over priorities and expenditures, rather than the living out of a common Mission.

The leadership of Moses was collaborative in many ways. Upon his reluctance to accept the call, due to a speech impediment (or perhaps just poor communication skills) God reminded Moses that his brother Aaron was plenty eloquent. Together they would make a fine leadership team, with sister Miriam serving as lead musician! Moses’ style was a continual dialogue with the leaders of the Hebrew people, working neither apart from them nor against them, but with them through their thirst and hunger, their bitter complaining and stubborn idolatry. The wilderness trek was a relational journey. And when Moses died on Mount Nebo looking in to the promised land, the people were sufficiently prepared to receive their new spiritual leader, Joshua, who would eventually guide their liturgical procession across the River Jordan, side-by-side those who carried the Ark of the Covenant.

In many ways, Jesus presents us a remarkable model for pastoral leadership. Encourage and empower the people. Set bold vision and challenge the status quo. But also care deeply for your leadership. Invest time and heart in them. Give space for their questions and wonderings. Show them infectious appreciation and offer them your confidence. Cheerlead more and chastise less. Love them into the kind of shared leadership that can birth (and today re-birth) the Church!

Several strategies enhance our ability to practice collaborative leadership:

- Developing our emotional intelligence (EQ) prompts a greater awareness of the people and dynamics around us. It also fosters our ability to be sufficiently self-assured that we can let go of insecurities (which lead to controlling tendencies) in order to allow others some leadership space.
- The relationship between Pastor and Moderator (President or board Chair), in particular, is crucial. Collaborative leadership is enhanced by what occurs behind the scenes in

timely and appropriate ways. Many pastors huddle up with their key lay leader(s) in preparatory meetings for the purpose of planning agendas, generating ideas, determining process, and establishing the tone and tempo of meetings. This is not manipulation; it is solid leadership!

- Preparing for leadership succession is an imperative strategy for smooth transition and consistent governance. This is true for key lay leaders and staff. It is always wiser to have surfaced and vetted potential leaders in advance of elections, than to launch into committee or congregational meetings with no preparation. God has called us into the ministry to empower and equip the laity, and this is why clergy play a central role in the nominating process.
- The best way to advance collaborative leadership in the local church is to talk about it. Share this approach to leadership with enthusiastic transparency! People appreciate leaders who are intentional about the way they serve the church. Good governance doesn't happen by accident. Creating and maintaining healthy congregations requires a purposeful approach, anchored by a spirit of open communication and trust.

These are just a few ideas about Good Governance. Wouldn't it be wonderful if some of you could share your insights and best practices around collaborative leadership? **Please go to the [blog site](#) and contribute your thoughts in the Comments section.**