

Pastor and Board: The Mentoring Role of the Pastor

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European Nazarene College **Germany District Learning Center**

I remember conducting my first local church Board two-day planning retreat. What a blessing for me! The retreat format was built around “Characteristics of Strong and Effective Board Members.” Upon completing the retreat, a board member shared with the group that “we have a year of work as a board outlined for us this weekend.” It dawned on me in that retreat setting the mentoring role a pastor/leader has in relation to the local church governing board.

Since that retreat years ago, I have given significant time to both the characteristics of strong and effective local church boards, and also to the ways in which pastors can intentionally mentor and develop the boards they serve. Both pastor and board want to move from vision to action to results. The big questions are why, who, how and for what purpose?

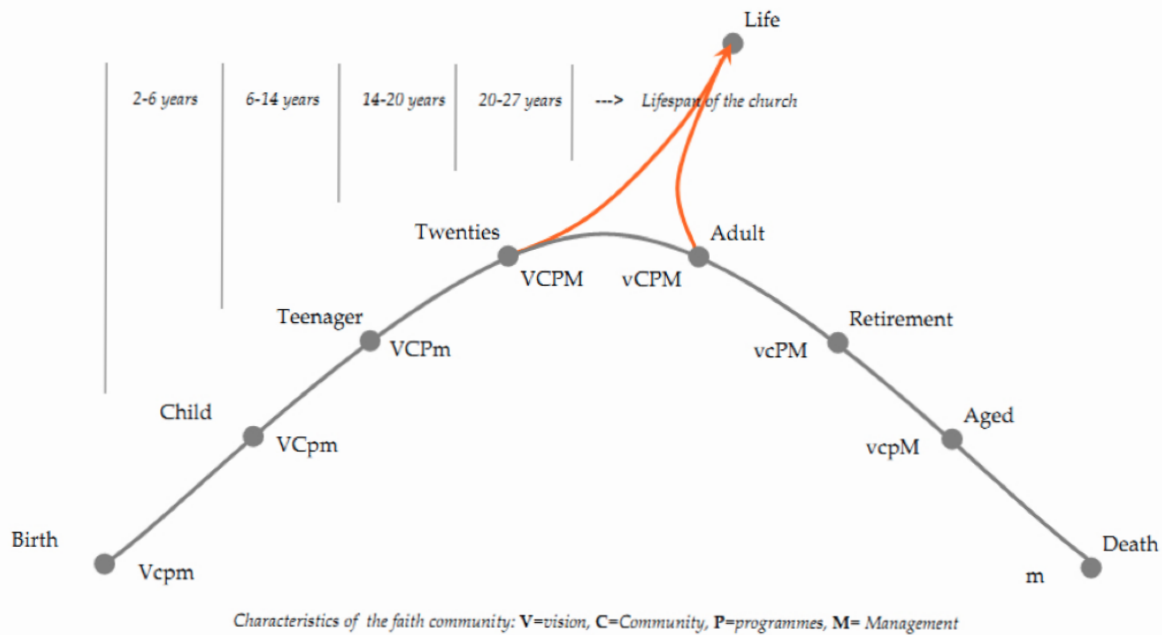
Permit me to share with you a foundational working assumption regarding my perspective on local church boards and pastors.

**STRONG BOARDS EMPOWER *MISSIONAL* AND *VISIONARY* PASTORS,
STRONG PASTORS EMBRACE *PASSIONATE* AND *ENGAGED* BOARDS.**

Let's begin by asking several important, board-related questions:

1. What *one* word would you use to characterize the board on which you serve?
2. What are the major strengths of this board ?
3. What is the most *critical issue or major concern* facing the board?
4. What *one board-related question* would you like answered?

Lifespan and stages of a faith community.



In light of the “Lifespan and stages of a faith community” graph above, what has *changed* significantly in the community surrounding the local church you serve to which the board must adjust, and recommend or make appropriate transitions?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Let’s pause and work through the some of the implications of these thoughts for strong and effective local church boards.

Twelve “characteristics” of strong and effective boards are given below, with an accompanying “best practice” for each characteristic. This section is developed more fully in the book, *Best Practices for Effective Boards*, published by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, and available on Amazon for downloading. Strong and Effective boards function in the embrace and affirmation that both strong pastor/leaders and strong boards are vital and required for local congregations to fulfill their God-given mission and vision in the communities where He has placed them.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG AND EFFECTIVE BOARDS

#1. Board members understand the role, purpose, and function of the board.

Focus on policy formulation and mission strategy, not daily operations and implementation

#2. Board members know, communicate, and make decisions in light of the church's mission, vision, and values.

Mission, Vision, and Values Drive us

#3. Board members ask the right questions.

Think Questions

#4. Board members understand and embrace a board policy manual that contains the board-approved policies for effective and efficient legal, financial, and policy governance of the local church.

Write It Down

#5. Board members communicate with each others and address conflict situations as Christians.

Watch Your Words

#6. Board members relate to their leaders and constituency with one voice.

*Character Counts, Really Counts!
(Keep confidential conversations, confidential!)*

#7. Board members intentionally engage in mutual accountability, including systematic board development and evaluation.

Board Integrity Matters!

#8. Board members take time to process decisions, with no intentional surprises.

Take Time

#9. Board members embrace change and resolve to work through transitions and unite for the good of the Kingdom and the advancement of God's mission.

Yes! To Missional Change

#10. Board members participate in assessing the effectiveness of prior decisions.

Review/Revise/Redirect/Renew

#11. Board members are outstanding examples of giving regularly and sacrificially to the church, college, or organization they serve.

Role Models of Generosity and Stewardship

#12. Board members develop new leaders for increased responsibilities and commitment throughout the church, college, or organization

Pass It On!

How would you modify this list with additions or deletions to make these “characteristics” a mentoring outline to guide your pastor as she/he nurtures and strengthens the board? List below the top three “characteristics” or “best practices” on which you desire the board to focus during the next six to eighteen months.

1.

2.

3.

Recently I asked pastors and local church boards during a BoardServe tour to think about a local church board *vision* statement. I encouraged them to think about a statement that would give their boards a “big picture” of why they do what they do. Why do they work regularly on the seemingly routine and mundane work of the local congregation? For what purpose? To what end do “our” efforts lead? What characterizes a board at its best? I suggested the following statement as a starting point:

“The leadership ministry of the church board enables church attendees to fulfill their ministry to each other, and the church’s God-given mission and vision in the neighborhood and beyond”

How would you adapt this statement to this local church board on? Do you “see” in the statement a way for the board to “view” themselves individually and collectively and the work they do on a regular basis? What difference on your board would a conscious “vision” of yourselves as a leadership team, working with the pastor, make in enabling the people who call this local congregation their “home” church to actively participate in the ministry and mission of this faith community? And, to envision that everything done in a board meeting serves to facilitate, equip, and enable these individuals in their Christian ministry to each other, and their participation in the church’s mission, which is really the mission of God, in the neighborhood and beyond?

Try drafting a *vision* statement for your local church. Please share your draft statement with other board members.

Let's spend some time reviewing some of the basics regarding the local church board.

“GOVERN DILIGENTLY”

In the fascinating 12th chapter of Romans, two words jump out at me as I think about governing boards of local churches. The words from 12:8 are “govern diligently.” “We have different gifts; according to the grace given to us....If it is leadership, let him govern diligently.” Romans 12:6-8b (NIV).

What does it mean to “govern diligently?”

In various countries where I work with local church, school, and ministry organization boards, I discover much ambiguity regarding board governance. Board members want to make a positive impact on the boards to which they belong. These individuals and the boards on which they serve want to make a significant difference. They are thrilled to be asked to serve on a board of governance.

For many, the invitation provides an opportunity to be good stewards of the gifts, talents, education and experiences with which they have been blessed. Often, however, this excitement soon leads to frustration as the boards on which they serve - local churches, colleges, seminaries, universities, district and national boards, and ministry organizations - lack an understanding of the role, purpose, and structure of the board to required to “govern diligently.”

The big question regarding governing boards is this: “What should a local church governing board **be** and **do** to function as a strong and effective board who “governs diligently, effectively, and missionally?”

It is a privilege and responsibility to be elected to the church's governing board. Serving on this board is a ministry and a sacred trust. You make decisions as a board on behalf of others. One author states that "the board holds the future and mission in trust." A powerful statement. A profound responsibility. The board's duty requires it to ensure that the local church's spiritual, human and material resources are used for the benefit of its mission. It's all about the mission!

In a video recently produced on “Building Better Boards,” I define a governing board as... “**...an elected body that oversees the ministry and mission of a local church or ministry organization between annual membership meetings.” A governing board of a local church or a ministry organization “is guided by the Church *Manual* and/or ministry organization Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation,” and must insure that the legal documents and policy documents are up to date.**

Organizations, including local churches, evolve and change. So must their governing boards. Strong and effective boards receive recommendations from the church membership; boards also

shape strategic recommendations for the full membership to consider. Strategic thinking, missional planning and implementation planning are key responsibilities of a governing board that “governs diligently.”

Change is inevitable – change in demographics, expectations, economics, technology, government, and education –just to name a few. Problems arise in the **transitions**. How *do* we adjust to the facts, context and trends we face in the changing community, country or region in which we work and serve?

Understanding transitions is important for boards. How we manage the transitions can *facilitate* or *derail* the increased influence and impact, and the expanded enrollment growth we desire and envision for the local church we love and serve.

Growing local churches need strong and effective governing boards in order to identify new initiatives and clarify the vision needed for increased influence and impact, and for expanded enrollment growth. Otherwise, decline will be the result.

Strong boards encourage passion and engagement by the members. They ask thoughtful questions, but do not attempt to "micro-manage" the local church. They respect their pastors because, as an effective governing board, they have nominated or elected the very strongest, "mission fit" leaders possible. Their pastors know, communicate, make decisions, and submit recommendations to the boards with a laser beam commitment to the church's mission, vision, and values. They have earned the trust of their boards and work in cooperation with them.

Likewise, strong pastors “lead” by bringing out the best in board members, listening to them and providing significant opportunities for them to engage in the decision making process. These leaders are not intimidated by probing questions. They take time to process questions in need of answers; challenges in need of decisions. No “intentional” surprises by board members or board leaders! These leaders model a commitment to communicate with each other and address conflict situations as Christians.

To lead and be effective as a governing board means to function *appropriately* in the three modes of board governance:

1. The FIDUCIARY mode. In this mode of thinking, the board seeks to:
 - ensure the legal and financial integrity of the church;
 - serve as a faithful steward of the tangible assets (property/buildings/etc);
 - approve and deploy resources missionally and wisely;
 - guard the long term health and mission accomplishment of the church.

2. The STRATEGIC mode. In this mode of thinking, the board is:
 - a planning partner with the pastor;
 - proactive and intentional in strategic planning for mission and vision fulfillment;

aggressive in reviewing the strategic planning documents in light of the mission of the local church;

intentional in working with the pastor is assess the context within which the local church is placed to insure that the strategic plan is current and relevant.

3. The REPRESENTATIVE mode. In this mode of thinking, comments are rooted in the church's values; questions are framed to taking into account the heritage of the church; concerns are expressed in terms of the consistency with Manual policies and the doctrines of the Church of the Nazarene. policies are developed, and priorities are established consistent with the church's mission, vision, and values.

The board has fiduciary, strategic and representative governance and coordinating responsibilities for the local church in at least the areas of:

1. Mission and Vision clarity
2. Strategic thinking and planning
3. Financial health and legal standing
4. Budget approval and oversight
5. Mission implementation strategy and review
6. Curriculum consistency
7. Denominational connectivity
8. Property management and oversight

PLAN INTENTIONALLY AND DECISIVELY

In these and other areas of board responsibility, the board is a vital planning partner with the pastor. Together you move from vision to action to results with clear vision, deep humility, and intense resolve.

Consider using the following planning template as you prayerfully and convictionally begin move from vision to action to results.

1. The Mission of the local church is (Mission defines the church's essence." It's purpose for existence. It's reason for being):

2. The Vision for the local church is (Vision defines the "preferred future" for the church. It is a "see" word. A future orientation. A mental image of the future):

3. The Values of the local church are (Values define how we intend to operate as we pursue our vision. It clarifies the parameters within which we function as a church):

4. The Context in which the local church functions, based on of analysis of the church's internal and external:

Strengths,

Weaknesses,

Opportunities, and

Threats.

5. Based on the above analysis, the Priorities of the church to which we need give our priority attention are:

1).

2).

3).

6. In light of these Priorities, the Strategic Initiatives for the next three years are:

1).

2).

3).

7. The Action Plan for **each** Initiative includes:

1). Specific, measurable Goals:

2). Timeline for accomplishing the each goal:

3). Personnel needed and assigned to each goal:

4). Budget required for each goal:

8. Desired Outcomes for each Initiative:

ASK STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

Remember the questions we discussed earlier in the session?

What is the most *critical issue or major concern* facing the board?

What legal documents need to be reviewed at least annually, and made available and maintained in a safe place, with copies made readily available to the board members?

What three *big ideas* should the Board focus on for the next three years?

These and other “big questions” can only be asked and thoughtfully discussed if the board agenda has been intentionally developed. Guard the board agenda! Significant reports are important. So are the blocks of time needed to discuss the big questions facing the church.

Cultivate the discipline to “think questions.” Not just any questions. Strong and effective boards ask the *right* questions. The questions asked above are examples of basic, on-going questions that probe the big issues and help define the real problems. Think also about these “problem-framing” questions:

Who are we? (What is our mission, vision, values?)

Where are we? (Not a location on a map, but in the “lifespan” of the congregation?)

Where are we going (if we continue to do as we have done?)

Where could we go (with a Spirit-inspired vision and a unified board?)

Why are we going “there”? (What is our motivation for growth?)

How will we get there? Spiritual, human and financial resources needed?

How will we know when we get there?

What one thing, if we do not attend to this issue soon, a) could create problems for us in the near future; or b) impede our focus on discipleship training?

Which question is most needed to be asked by this board? Why?

WHEN CONFLICTS ARISE

It is inevitable that good and godly board members differ and sometimes collide over vision, values, traditions, plans and programs. Embrace the following convictions as a board by which you will at times both lead and follow. Determine to work through conflict in a way that is fundamentally and qualitatively different from the way unbelievers settle their differences! In conflict situations:

1. Speak Gracefully. Watch the words you speak.
2. Live Gratefully. Don't complain, be grateful.
3. Listen Intently. Seek first to understand.
4. Forgive Freely. Be proactive in extending forgiveness.
5. Plan Decisively. Combine clear vision and deep humility with intense resolve.
6. Care deeply. Value people, not power.
7. Pray Earnestly. Pray for change in yourself even as you pray for change in others.

On which of the above seven convictions is this board the strongest?

Which two do you feel the board as a whole should focus some quality time in addressing? What difference will this change in board behavior make?

- 1.
- 2.

Strong and effective boards do not hesitate to identify the board values that will characterize them at their best and convict them at their worst. They commit to God and to each other a civility that in their most intense discussions their behavior will be characterized by:

- A magnanimous spirit
- A positive influence
- An inquisitive mind
- A freedom to ask questions
- An acceptance of board decisions
- A servant mentality
- An appreciation for protocol

A respect for confidentiality
A reliable word

Where do you personally need to give attention?

In Conclusion...

At the beginning of this board development presentation, the convictional statement was expressed that “Strong boards empower missional and visionary leaders; strong leaders embrace passionate and engaged boards.” The above “Lifestyle and Stages...” graph suggests why we need strong pastor/leaders and strong boards. Strong pastor/leaders and strong boards have the potential to “break out “ of the routine and ordinary to discover new approaches to the new realities facing the church in the community you are serving.

The changes in the community where the church you serve is located required a unified, spirit-directed leadership team of the church board in order to effectively and missionally navigate through the transitions necessary for the congregation. Remember, change is inevitable – change in demographics, expectations, economics, technology, government, and education –just to name a few. Study the graph above. Problems in the movement through the lifespan and stages arise in the transitions.

A big question for boards is: "How do we adjust to the facts, context, and trends we face in the changing community or country in which we work and serve?"

Remember to guard the Agenda! Ask the right questions. Empower your missional and visionary pastor. Be passionate and engaged board members! Communicate with each other and work through conflict situations as Spirit-filled christians.

Governing boards will shape the specific questions and answers needed for a particular time and setting. Boards may not have immediate answers to the fiduciary, strategic, or representative challenges before them. They must, however, have the *right* questions and answer the questions in a Christ-like spirit. And, in this process, they increasingly “govern diligently.”

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STRONG PASTORS EMBRACE *PASSIONATE* AND *ENGAGED* BOARDS.**

**TOGETHER, EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD,
THEY MOVE THE FAITH COMMUNITY THEY SERVE FROM
VISION TO ACTION TO RESULTS.**

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