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Biblical Overview of Leadership

I Preamble

In our experience of working with churches over many years we have observed some common challenges.

- **Lack of clear focus.** The training of the twelve was highly effective. The apostles knew what they were supposed to do and did it with faith and courage.
- **Confusion about leadership.** There is often a tension between the desire for strong leadership and fear of such leadership. Capable leaders frequently express the desire for a positive team to work with. Yet when such teams or team members present themselves, they often come to be viewed as a threat by the leader or pastor. Many leaders fear those that are their equals or superiors in terms of ability and giftedness. This reflects a deficiency of spiritual maturity.
- **Uncertainty about decision making in the church.** Whole systems of church governance models have been established to address these concerns. Some churches are pastor led, some are elder or board led and some are congregationally governed. All have elements of Biblical support. But how should we understand what the Bible teaches about leadership and governance? And how can we find practical and workable ways of applying these teachings in our church in a way that conforms to government regulations?

II The Purpose of the Church

- A. To make disciples of non-disciples, to show and teach each believer to be a mature follower of Jesus. And to do so by the power of the Holy Spirit in a manner that brings glory to God.
- B. How will they do this?
 1. By actively & effectively reaching out to those who are like sheep without a shepherd
 2. By gathering learners in large and small groups for instruction, worship, prayer, fellowship and equipping for ministry
- C. What is a church? (each local church is an expression of the universal church, the body of Christ)
 1. It is a Christian community
 - a. That meets for regular instruction, worship, encouragement, prayer and equipping
 - b. That has recognized leadership
 2. It is intentional about continuity and making more disciples

III Leadership in the Church¹

A. Servant Leadership as taught by Jesus and the Apostles

1. "Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.'" Luke 22:24-26

¹ For a more detailed study, see *Leadership in the Church of the New Testament* at [www.http://vision-ministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Leadership-in-the-Church-of-the-NT-parts-12.Feb2016.pdf](http://vision-ministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Leadership-in-the-Church-of-the-NT-parts-12.Feb2016.pdf)

2. "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust." Acts 14:23
3. "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.
 - a. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. " Titus 1:5-9
4. "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away". I Peter 5:1-4

B. First principles of leadership from The Servant's Guide to Leadership by Richard Rardin

1. God is the author of authority – he shares it that his will might be accomplished
2. Leadership is a partnership – between God and people who carry out his purposes
3. The first shall be last – leaders are not in it for themselves but for the good of those they lead as the Lord defines their good
4. Leadership is from the inside out – character matters more than performance
5. Leadership is a Spiritual Gift – not everyone has it.
6. The sheep are the Lord's – they are never "your people"
7. Human leaders are to obey in faith; God gives the increase in his own time and way

C. Usage of the terms; Elder, Pastor, Shepherd, Bishop, Evangelist, Prophet, Apostle, Deacon

1. These terms are primarily used to describe the spiritual work that people do in obedience to Christ.
2. They are not terms to communicate status or elevated value or prestige. Any dignity or esteem which comes to such individuals should emerge because of their devoted service for Christ, not because they deserve superior status due to titles that have been conferred on them.
3. Jesus spoke with severity to those who longed for elevated status
 - a. "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi', for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father', for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher', for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Matthew 23:8-12
 - b. We should therefore exercise caution in these matters because pride is one of the great temptations to which we are all susceptible
4. Nevertheless the apostles did refer to themselves as apostles and referred to others as prophets, evangelists, elders, deacons, shepherds and pastors
 - a. We believe that any of these terms may be used to describe spiritual leaders in the church but always with the great caution of Jesus regarding the dangers of pride and worldly views of leadership.
 - b. VMC does not encourage the usage of the term 'reverend' to describe pastors or other full time ministry people

D. Full time or Financially Supported Church Leaders

1. The Christian movement is about the spread of the Gospel, the good news of the kingdom of God which is not like the kingdoms of this world. It is about the people coming to know and walk with God and with his people through a Spirit generated relationship with Jesus Christ. Organization, finances and financially supported leaders may be used by the church with great impact. They should be servants to the movement; they are not the essential ingredients.
2. From the very beginning of the Christian movement, some of its leaders were financially supported to do the work God had called them to do. This was true of:
 - a. Jesus Christ
 - i Sent his disciples to preach and heal, staying with receptive households Luke 9:1-6
 - ii Was supported by some who had been healed by him Luke 8:3
 - iii He had no permanent home Luke 9:58
 - iv His ministry was not financially lucrative
 - b. Apostles
 - i Paul taught that “those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel” I Corinthians 9:14 although they may choose to forgo such a right in some circumstances as Paul himself did I Corinthians 9:15-18
 - ii He taught that it would be wrong to “muzzle the ox who treads out the grain” I Corinthians 9:9, so it would be wrong to withhold financial support for those who preach the Gospel
 - iii When financial support was not available Paul made tents for a living, though it was not his preference to do so. Acts 18:3-5
 - c. Elders
 - i Elders (plural) were appointed by the apostles or their delegates to provide leadership in the churches. Acts 14:24; I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
 - ii Some elders/shepherds/pastors should be financially supported I Timothy 5:17
3. These passages provide principles to go by. They do not give us detailed descriptions about how and to what extent and in what manner full time Christian ministry people should be financially supported. We should be guided by these specific principles, by the general teaching of Scripture and by the wisdom he gives his people

E. The N.T. church had leaders “in the churches and among” the churches

1. It is hard to imagine the church of the NT without the ministry of the apostles. They provided the example, care and leadership for all of the New Testament churches.
2. The apostles appointed elders in all the churches. Many were volunteer elders and some “worked hard at preaching and teaching” and were financially supported so they could devote themselves fully to the work of God as the apostles did.
3. The NT does not tell us exactly how it was organized but it is clear that “leaders within and among” were of great value
4. VMC seeks to provide the “leaders among” aspect of ministry by offering vision, leadership, support and care among the churches as well as providing help for leaders within the churches

IV Groups guide and govern; individuals lead

A. The Bible is full of heroic characters that provided daring and faithful leadership.

1. Noah, Joseph, Rahab, Samson, David, Esther, Daniel, Peter and Paul
2. How many leadership groups would approve Noah's building program or Samson's 300 foxes burning the fields of the Philistines plan?

B. There is strong Biblical basis for group forms of influencing.

1. The term "elders" is mentioned 186 times in the (NIV) Bible, 127 times in the O.T. and 57 times in the N.T.
2. Rehoboam's failure to listen to his advisors led to a "nation split" and Peter's individualistic approach resulted in a severe rebuke by the Lord.
3. Could the conflict between Paul and Barnabas have been resolved differently if they'd been willing to hear other mature voices?
4. Is there a way to have the best of both worlds?
5. As is frequently the case in Scripture, the answer is found at the point of tension between two ideals.

C. It is possible to value the effectiveness of the individual leader as well as the benefits of guidance and governance that comes from a group.

1. Accept the idea; groups guide and govern, individuals lead.
2. Establish agreements about :
 - a. What each is to do (the group & the individual – see parts 4 & 5)
 - b. How the group makes decisions together.
3. Expect important decisions to require faith and wisdom.
4. Learn to admit our fears related to the questions we are discussing.
5. Accept the instruction of Scripture and the invite the Holy Spirit into the decision making dialogue.
6. Be willing to make risky decisions that require faith in God.
7. If the decision doesn't work out well; don't give up on courageous faith.

D. Responsibilities of Leadership Groups

1. Clarify overall direction
2. Develop policies for the ministry
3. Empower individuals to lead
4. Supervise finances
5. Address controversies
6. Pray
7. Reflect the perspectives of the people you are leading
8. Guard or nurture orthodoxy

E. Responsibility of Individual Leaders

1. See ministry possibilities or vision, share it with others and improve it together
2. Get the work done
3. Engage others to help deepen and broaden the scope of the work
4. Respect people and treat them the way Jesus did
5. Conform to moral and budgetary standards as you lead.

F. Trust is the key

1. Trusting God and trusting each other.
2. To be most fruitful, leadership groups must deliberately limit their sphere of influence so that individuals can lead more freely. And individual leaders must limit their freedom so that the benefits of collegial wisdom can have its legitimate place.
3. When we do this, groups are empowered to govern and individuals to lead.
4. When there is confusion between the lines of governing and leading, its time to communicate and negotiate

G. Understanding compromise

1. When is it good?
 - a. When it is an expression of humility and grace
 - b. When it expresses trust in God and in my brothers or sisters
 - c. When it enables unity to flow though my preferred outcome was lost
 - d. When it allows decisions to be made even though my view was not implemented
 - e. When I feel torn but not cheated or victimized
2. When is it not good?
 - a. When the good of others is sacrificed for the sake of our “success”
 - b. When decisions are emotionally motivated; guilt, fear, anger, depression
 - c. When what is straightforward or honest truth-telling is “shaded”
 - d. When our core beliefs or commitments are sacrificed
3. Supporting decisions we don't prefer
 - a. Is necessary
 - b. You are entitled to your own opinions but do not create division
 - c. If you feel your values are compromised; leave respectfully
 - d. For the sake of a high calling and the unity of the body of Christ we will support decisions that are different from what we preferred

V Three Categories of Servant-Leaders Every Church Needs. To be identified and appointed to service for the glory of God. This is an abbreviated VMC document. For the full version <http://vision-ministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Three-Categories-of-Servant-Leaders-Cultivating-Functioning-Planning-Oct29.14.pdf> (also available in Mandarin and French)

<p>“Directional” Leaders</p> <p>Thinking:</p> <p>Where are we going as a church?</p> <p>David & Paul</p>	<p>“Organizational” Leaders</p> <p>Thinking:</p> <p>How will we organize & deploy people & resources for ministry?</p> <p>Solomon & “the seven”</p> <p>I Kings 10:5; II Chronicles 9:4</p>	<p>“Pastoral” Leaders</p> <p>Thinking:</p> <p>How will we Reach, Teach, Correct and Care for people?</p> <p>Ministry is about People</p> <p>Barnabas & Timothy</p>
Leading the whole	Organizing the whole	Reaching, Teaching, Caring & Correcting among the whole
Assessing and adapting to environmental changes	Adjusting ministries to the demands of complexity	Gathers grass-roots and constructive feed back
Setting direction/vision that others will follow	Detailed planning of programs & budgeting	Putting the ministry plan into action with people
Initiate the vision	Initiate a plan	Initiate the work
Aligning key people & groups	Organizing and staffing	Helping people adapt to change
Motivates people to move towards common goals	Maintaining order creating functional systems	Helping people participate according to gifts etc.
Insist that the main things continue to be the main things	Make the main things do-able	Join the big ideals to where real people live and serve
Approaches multiplication from a broad and somewhat detached big picture perspective	Approaches multiplication from a comprehensive planning perspective	Approaches multiplication from a close up people perspective
Doing right things	Doing things right	Doing right things in a Godly manner

1. The primary servant leaders of a church should identify themselves and those around them in accordance with the above categories and should plan their team functions accordingly
2. Some full time pastors are gifted as directional and organisational leaders but many are not
3. A leadership team should address this reality by acknowledging and cooperating with their directional and organizational leaders

Church Governance and Registration

I Church Leadership, Governance and Culture

A. Leadership and Governance is influenced by Culture

1. The country in which a church is located, its culture, language, heritage and legal system all have an impact on how churches are led and governed.
2. The NT makes specific comments about the cultures of Jews, Greeks and Cretans. Paul makes specific and strong mention about “being all things to all men” in order to advance the Gospel.
3. We should also be prepared to make cultural adaptations in terms of leadership and governance.
4. The governance model we have been describing may be called an elder- led church governance model. This does not mean that the congregation does not have a voice in congregational direction.
 - a. The elders/board and lead pastor of the church should consult the congregation on matters that will significantly change the direction or philosophy of ministry of the church.
 - b. The elders/board and lead pastor should have the specific approval of the congregation on matters such as:
 - i The hiring of a lead pastor
 - ii Major borrowing of finances
 - iii Purchase of land or facilities
 - iv Financial statements and annual budget

B. Three forms of church governance

1. Episcopacy - Bishops Hi-lighted
 - a. It is the system in which the chief ministers of the church are bishops, others being presbyters (or priests, this is the word commonly translated, elder) and deacons. Those who hold to this system point to the apostolic role, their delegates, ie. Timothy and Titus and to the leadership roles within each local church.
 - b. This system is practiced in a variety of ways. It has clear advantages in terms of overall coordination and in the clarity of knowing exactly who is responsible.
 - c. It is not common among evangelicals in Canada
2. Presbyterianism - Elders Hi-lighted
 - a. In the New Testament it is beyond question that the presbyters occupy an important place. They are identical with the bishops, and form the principle local leadership ministry. In each place there appears to have been a number of presbyters who formed a leadership team which was in charge of local church affairs. That is the natural conclusion to which exhortations like Heb. 13:17; I Thess. 5:12 f., etc., point.
 - b. This system is also practiced in a variety of ways. In some cases it is practiced in "independent congregations" but also finds application in regional or national hierarchal forms.
3. Congregational - Congregation Hi-lighted
 - a. A third form of church government stresses the role of the individual Christian and makes the local congregation the seat of authority. Two concepts are basic to the congregational scheme: autonomy and democracy. By autonomy we mean that the local congregation is independent and self-governing. There is no external power which can dictate courses of action to the local church. By democracy we mean that every member of the local congregation has a voice in its affairs.
 - b. In such churches individuals are appointed to specialized leadership roles as required by the congregation or body.

4. There are two additional systems not addressed here. The "state church" (in Europe and others) and "no government" (the Holy Spirit directs everything) views are also practiced and advocated by some.
 - a. Regarding forms of church government Leon Morris says, "A consideration of all this evidence then, leaves us with the conclusion that it is impossible to read back any of our modern systems into the apostolic age. If we are determined to shut our eyes to all that conflicts with our own system, then we may find it there, but hardly otherwise. It is better to recognize that in the New Testament church there were elements that were capable of being developed into the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational systems, and which, in point of fact, have so developed. But, while there is no reason why any modern Christian should not hold fast to his particular church polity and rejoice in the values it secures to him, that does not give him license to un-church others whose reading of the evidence is different."

C. The VMC Model of Governance

1. The most common model of governance among VMC related churches is the elder-led or team leadership model.
2. We seek to balance the need for leaders among the churches (apostle-like ministry) and in the churches (volunteer elder teams and financially supported pastors). Groups guide and govern, individuals lead.
3. Some churches affiliated with VMC are more pastor-led, some are more elder led and some are more congregationally governed.

II Getting Organized

A. Choose your model of church governance

1. Elder led. (Pastor with elders, can be quite diverse in practice) The VMC downloadable by-law is designed for an elder led church (See Section IV C)
2. Congregationally governed. (Can also be very diverse)
3. All churches will require a church board of some kind to conform to Canadian charity law

B. Leadership & Governance in a church plant

1. Church plants go through stages of development
 - a. The planter and planting team, a small group of committed co-workers who help the church get started
 - b. The planter and a steering team, a team that is appointed annually until the church can be fully established and organized
 - c. The planter, elders (team) and deacons (individual appointees), people that are appointed to leadership roles based on Biblical guidelines
2. Full Service VMC Church Planting Package
 - a. The Church Plant agrees that it is part of and under the overall direction of VMC and as such is accountable to VMC for management of the resources entrusted to them.
 - b. The Church Plant also agrees to manage the resources VMC has entrusted to them.
 - c. The Church Plant will maintain a bank account under the terms and conditions outlined below.
 - d. The bank account balance and other assets purchased are held in trust by VMC for the Church Plant.

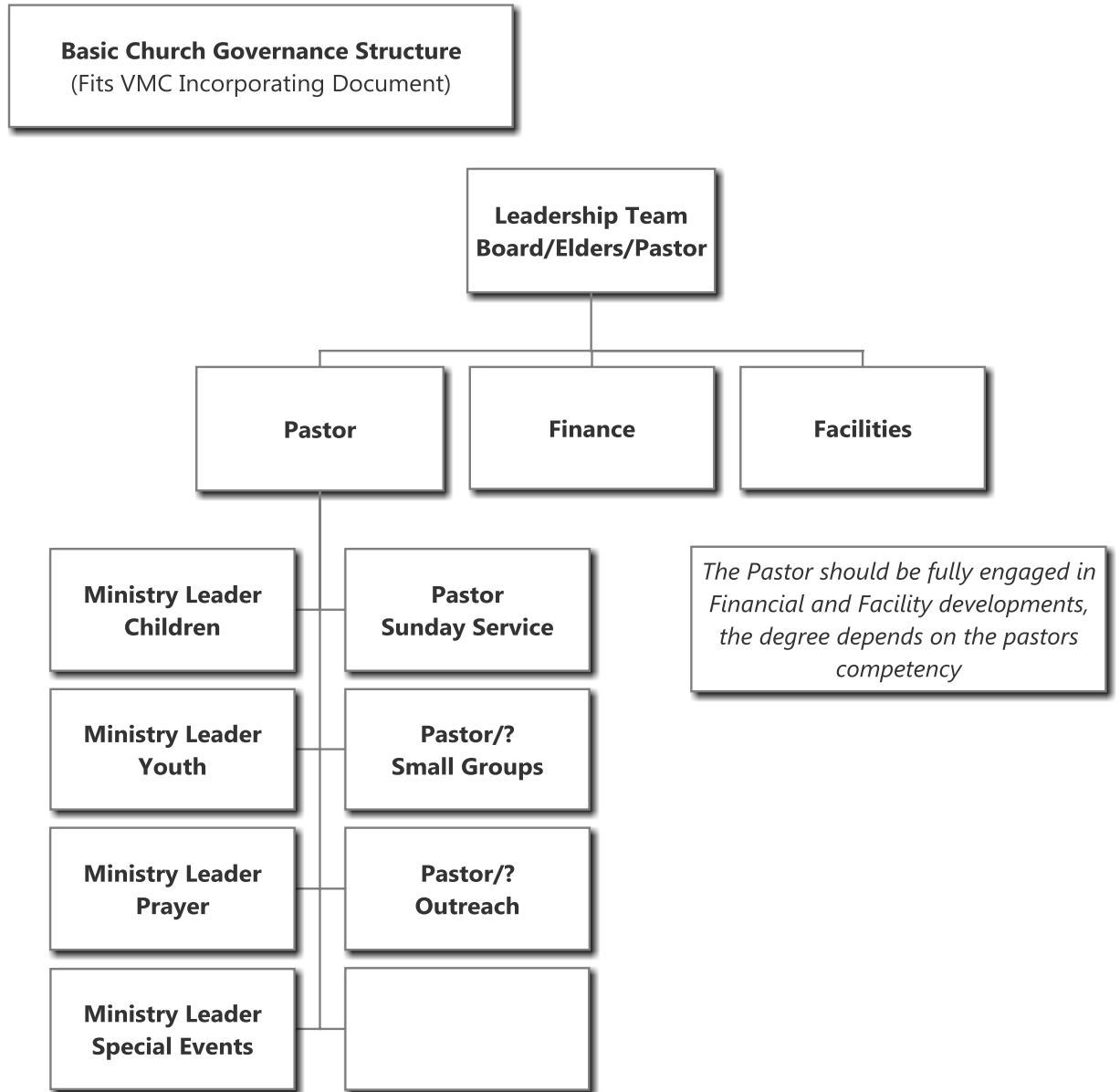
3. After one year the church plant must begin the process of applying for charitable status. VMC assists with the process. It is anticipated that after two years the church plant will be legally registered.

III Leadership in a more established church

A. Identify leadership roles and decision-making spheres for the following

1. Leadership Team (Elders) See "Leadership in the Church of the N.T." Part 2 pg 2:
<http://vision-ministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Leadership-in-the-Church-of-the-NT-parts-12.Feb2016.pdf>
 - a. How appointed
 - b. Duties of
 - c. Terms of office
 - d. How decisions are made
 - e. How removed
2. Pastors/other staff
 - a. How appointed
 - b. Duties of
 - c. Terms of office
 - d. How removed
3. Ministry leaders (deacons)
 - a. How appointed
 - b. Duties of
 - c. Terms of office
 - d. How removed
4. Congregation
 - a. Items require congregational approval
 - b. How approval is expressed
 - c. By obvious majority

B. Organizational Chart



IV A Sample Church Governance & Policies Template <http://vision-ministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/A-SAMPLE-CHURCH-GOVERNANCE-POLICIES-TEMPLATE-Feb16-16.pdf>

A. Table of Contents

1. A Brief History of the Church (Our roots)
2. A Purpose Statement (Why the church exists)
3. Vision and Mission (Preferred future state)
4. Statement of Faith (What we believe)
5. Our Values(What makes us who we are)
6. Membership (How people join or leave the church)
7. Governance (How the church is managed)
8. Decision-making Process (How decisions are made and approved and executed)
 - a. As a Leadership Team
 - b. As a Church
9. Essential Financial Requirements
10. Abuse - Harassment Prevention Policy
11. Position Papers (The church's position on various issues)
12. Index of Appendices

B. Incorporation or Declaration of Trust

1. Churches can choose to incorporate or establish a declaration of trust before they register as charitable organizations. Increasingly incorporation is becoming the preferred option in Canada though it is not the only option.
2. For more information go to <http://vision-ministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/How-to-Incorporate-your-Church-or-Establish-a-Declaration-of-Trust.pdf>

C. If a church incorporates they must establish a board

1. The VMC model is that the members of the board, the directors of the board and the elders are the same people. When a church has elders to do spiritual work and a board to manage its financial and legal affairs, there can easily be confusion about which is ultimately responsible for the governance of the church. A one board approach avoids that potential for confusion; it is simple, inexpensive and workable.
2. If the church has a financially supported pastor, that pastor may be a member of the board, should be an elder but may not be a director of the board because he is financially supported by the church. (This is a requirement of the corporate system)
3. Two types of boards
 - a. Working Board
 - i The members of the board are involved in the spiritual leadership and ministry of the church as well providing its legal governing functions
 - ii This is most common for smaller churches, up to 3-400 people
 - b. Governing Board
 - i The members of the board are primarily committed to establishing the direction, mission and policies of the church. They delegate the day to day leadership of the church to the lead pastor and other staff. The members of the board will often serve as ministry volunteers within the church.
 - ii It is imperative that the board is populated with people capable and committed to their governance role and that the pastor be a gifted directional leader (This governance model will fail if the "right people are not in the right places")
4. The pastor is an employee of the board and is accountable to the board
 - a. The pastor is delegated by the board to be the directional leader of the church. He is the public leader of the church
 - b. This model reflects the truth that 'groups guide and govern, individuals lead'