



Simplified, Accountable Structure (S.A.S.) Discernment Process

Simplified, Accountable Structure Overview

(taken from *Mission: Possible 3+* by Kay Kotan and Blake Bradford)

In the United Methodist Church, our polity has historically called for four administrative committees to care for the “business” of the church. Those four committees are the Trustees Committee, Finance Committee, Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and the Church Council. These committees usually consist of 6-12 people serving three-year rotating terms. In addition to these generalities, each committee has its particular nuances and requirements as outlined in our *UMC Book of Discipline* (book that constitutes the law, polity, and doctrine of the United Methodist Church). While the structure and numbers vary from church to church, the average congregation has somewhere between 25 to 75 members tied up in serving on these four administrative committees.

In the latest edition (2016) of the *Book of Discipline* ¶247.2, the church, with approval of the district superintendent, is provided the opportunity to restructure in order to be more missionally focused. While the *Book of Discipline* describes in great detail how the four administrative committees are formed, this latest paragraph is quite general and flexible in nature.

¶247.2 The charge conference, the district superintendent, and the pastor, when a pastor has been appointed (see ¶ 205.4), shall organize and administer the pastoral charge and churches according to the policies and plans herein set forth. When the membership size, program scope, mission resources, or other circumstances so require, the charge conference may, in consultation with and upon the approval of the district superintendent, modify the organizational plans, provided that the provisions of ¶ 243 are observed. Such other circumstances may include, but not be limited to, alternative models for the conception of a local church, such as coffee house ministries, mall ministries, outdoor ministries, retirement home ministries, restaurant ministries, and other emergent ways in which people can gather in God’s name to be the church.

To simplify church structure, the four separate administrative committees (trustees, finance, staff-parish relations, and church council) cease to exist as we know them, and they are replaced by one new Leadership Board which functions as all four committees. This new board consists of nine people with three year terms, is nominated by the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development and is voted on by either the

church or charge conference. Rather than holding four separate meetings of the four previous administrative committees, there is now one board meeting where the leaders are able to practice a healthier and more holistic approach with missional focus and direction. Technically, and in fulfillment with the requirements of the *Discipline*, all four committees still exist, but they exist as a single unified Leadership Board, with all of their responsibilities, qualifications, and authority of each administrative committee located in the simplified board.

When simplifying the structure, accountability must be a deeply integrated and highly accepted component of simplification. Without accountability, simplification is not recommended! When transitioning to accountable leadership, the new Leadership Board shifts from *managing* the church to *governing* the church. Accountable leadership changes not only the agenda, but also the conversations, focus, and priorities at the table.

The primary purposes and benefits of simplified, accountable leadership are:

- Removes bottlenecks in the decision-making process
- Systems, procedures, and policies in place that are flexible and adaptable
- More people released and available for ministry
- Leadership board responsible for church's faithfulness to The Great Commission (making disciples)
- Leadership Board aligns church resources to the mission and vision
- Guiding Principles in place for efficiency and permission-giving within healthy boundaries
- Leaders are held accountable at all levels
- Leadership Board is responsible for focusing on the areas of stewardship, strategic alignment, generative future-focus, and accountable leader
- Missional focus, priority, and alignment are non-negotiables

McPherson First UMC Current Organizational Structure

The church currently has four primary decision-making committees. There is an assumed work-flow and hierarchical structure based on the timing of meetings. (See separate document with full list of committees and current members).

Board of Trustees: 9 people, currently 7 people serving; meets the 1st Wednesday of the month so that any financial requests can go through Finance on the 3rd Wednesday of the month and then to Church Council on the 4th Wednesday of the month if further approval is needed. The Board of Trustees has oversight and care of all local church property, buildings, and equipment to further the mission of the church.

SPRC (Staff-Parish Relations): 9 people, currently 7 people serving; meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month; any financial considerations or further approvals could go to Finance and Church Council later in the month. The SPRC encourages, strengthens, nurtures, supports, and respects the pastor(s) and staff and their families. They confer

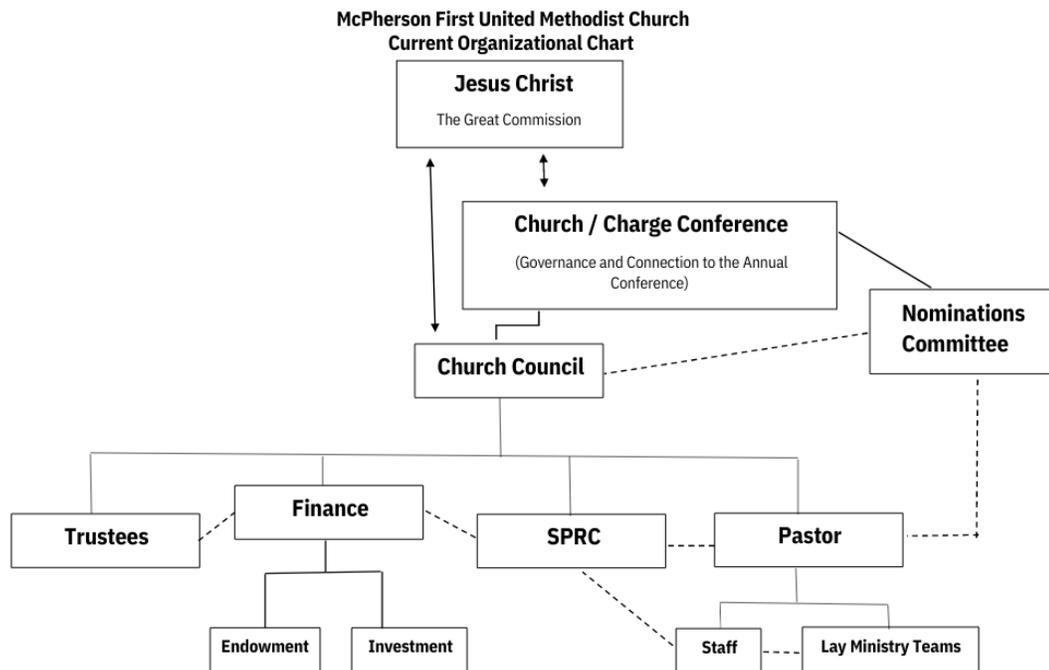
regularly about the personnel conditions and issues that affect the congregation's total ministry, including healthy life-work balance.

Finance: 8 people; meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month to review financials and any recommendations / requests from Trustees and SPRC; any recommendations needing further approval would go to Church Council on the 4th Wednesday of the month. The Finance Committee compiles a budget for supporting the mission and vision of the church and is responsible for developing and carrying out plans to raise enough income to support the budget that has been approved.

Church Council: 17 people; meets the 4th Wednesday of the month. The Church Council oversees the administration and ministry of the congregation. The team determines God's call to the congregation for ministry that is transformative.

Nominations & Lay Leadership: 5 people; meets in the fall to nominate people to serve on committees

- Currently have 33 (non-duplicated) people serving on these committees not including the pastoral staff
- Membership of 763 and Average Worship Attendance of 200
- 16.5% of active members in elected leadership (using average worship attendance)
- 6 leaders currently serve on more than one committee (Church Council Chair, Trustees Chair, Finance Chair, SPRC Chair, Lay Leader, and Treasurer)
- Approximately 120 adults, youth, and kids are signed up for active ministry roles through the SERVE Book



Why move from the current structure to the Simplified, Accountable Structure?

Motivating Factors:

- Efficiency: fewer pastor, staff, leader hours spent in administrative meetings and less redundancy discussion
- Engagement: More leaders can put their spiritual gifts to work in ministry, not in meetings.
- Empowerment: Ministry teams are given management authority while Leadership Board provides governance authority
- Alignment: Alignment with the mission and vision is about being faithful to our purpose – we begin pulling in the same direction instead of working in silos
- Accountability: must include accountability in the simplified model
- Missional Focus: move from internal focus of being served to external focus of making disciples – “unleashing laity for missional leadership”
- Adaptability: creating solutions and experiments where no roadmap or recipe is available yet; being nimble in the midst of rapid cultural change

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Current Structure:
 - We have a lot of engaged congregation members currently serving on leadership teams and ministry teams. People are able to engage / serve in a variety of ways.
- S.A.S. Structure:
 - Enhanced stewardship of our member’s time and talents – our congregation members yearn to serve God, the church, and the community but are reluctant to serve on a committee because they have either (a) served their time on committees or (b) have full-time jobs and young children.
 - They have a lot of passion for ministry and helping the community but not necessarily in serving as committee members. This would free them up to do more hands-on ministry.

Weaknesses:

- Current Structure:
 - Multiple meetings with different levels of approval drag the process out, makes it confusing on who holds the final approval, and act as gatekeepers to preventing ministry from happening
 - A meeting every week prevents pastoral leadership and other key leaders from engaging more fully in youth and children’s ministry

- S.A.S. Structure:
 - There are some who think more people need to be part of the decision-making process i.e. nine people may be too few
 - There are some who have been engaged with the way things have been working so why change
 - Will need to be clear about how the change does not eliminate the responsibilities of the four committees and that there will be ministry teams that continue to work i.e. building maintenance team

Opportunities:

- Current Structure:
 - It takes awhile for new ideas to be executed if they require approval from more than one committee especially if they require funding
 - Church Council does not currently do a lot of strategic direction setting beyond setting goals and outcomes; the process is often disjointed between the different committees
- S.A.S. Structure:
 - Opportunity for more people to be engaged in direct ministry teams
 - Opportunity for the congregation to understand the leadership structure of the church and how decisions get made
 - More nimble, efficient decision-making
 - Shift from doing structure driven to mission driven
 - Increased transparency in decision-making
 - Increased opportunities to “grow deep, grow wide, grow joy” as a leadership team; could have meeting time for intentional study, discernment, and community-building
 - Fewer overall meetings that are more engaging
 - Opportunity to communicate that we have open meetings
 - Special meetings can be called in between regularly scheduled meeting to make more agile decisions

Threats:

- Current Structure:
 - Process is not nimble enough to make changes in today’s society
 - Multiple decision-making bodies that are not on the same page as far as vision / mission leads to bottlenecks in approval to financing ministry
- S.A.S. Structure:
 - One decision-making body focused on vision /mission will be able to make strategic decisions using all of the resources of the church (personnel, building, finances, etc) to further the ministry of the church
 - More nimble in responding to needs
 - A board of chairs that retains silos with fewer workers

Our “Why” Statement:

As we continue to live into our mission as a servant church, we seek to grow deeper in our relationship with God, wider in our relationships with the community, and more joyful through intergenerational worship. A simplified accountability structure would allow our decision-making body to focus on mission alignment, provide transparency and accountability for how decisions are made, allow for agile decision-making, and unleash / free up the congregation to be in hands-on ministry in the church and community.

Timeline

Completed:

- January – May 2022: Initial Discernment Steps
 - Included strategic parties, listening sessions and church council conversations
- May 2022: Church Council voted to pursue a discernment process for the S.A.S. model
- June 14, 2022: Consultation with District Superintendent
- June 2022: Contact S.A.S. Certified Coach

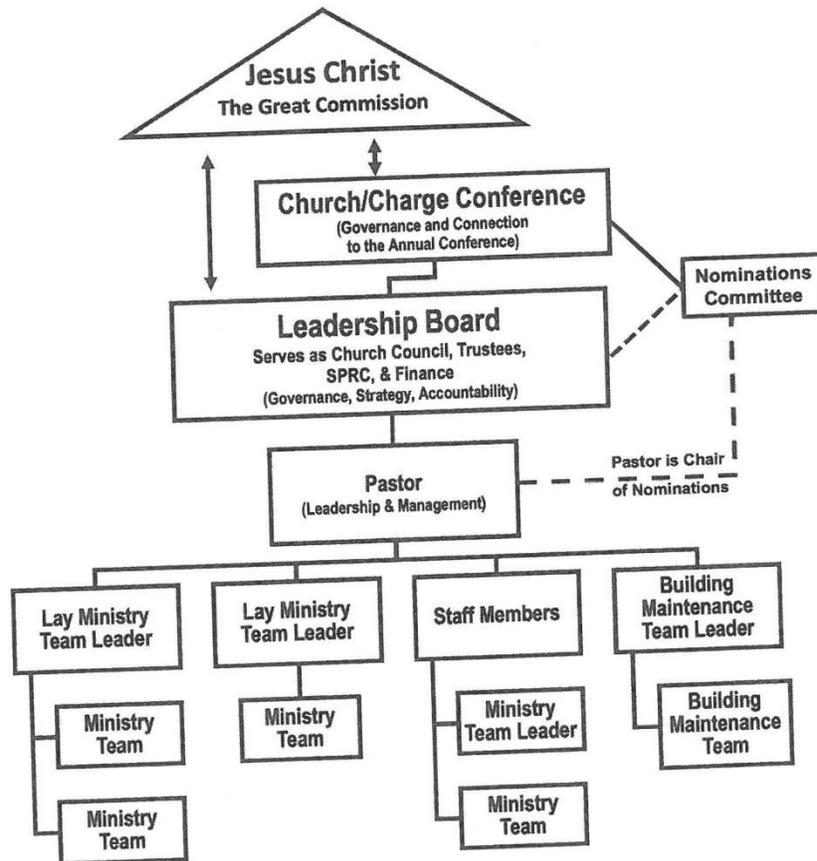
In process:

- June / September 2022: S.A.S. Discernment Team Work (communication and information plan)

In future:

- September 2022: Letter to District Superintendent for approval of proposed plan
- October 2022: Congregational Vote
- October / November 2022: Nominations Work
- November 2022: Charge Conference Elections
- January 2023: New Leadership Board Begins Service
- 2023: New Leadership Board develops a Leadership Covenant to outline expectations of the members of the Leadership Board, Guiding Principles to empower ministries with healthy boundaries, and an Accountable Leadership Cycle to maintain alignment and accountability.

What will the structure look like?



McPherson First UMC Proposed Organizational Structure

- Nine Member Leadership Board incorporates all the administrative responsibilities of the Church Council, Trustees, SPRC, & Finance
- Lay Ministry Teams are now equipped and empowered to lead hands-on ministry. Ministry teams can change as needed and do not need to be nominated annually by church conference. Possible examples include:
 - Building Maintenance Team
 - Food & Diaper Ministry Team
 - Welcome & Hospitality Ministry Team
 - SERVE Day Planning Team
 - Memorial Team
 - Investments and Endowment Team
 - Prayer Team
 - Congregational Care Team
- Family of staff members cannot serve on the Leadership Board
- Members of the same household cannot serve together on Leadership Board

- Pastors serve on Leadership Board with voice, no vote (not one of the nine members)
- Treasurer serves on Leadership Board as unpaid staff with voice, no vote (not one of the nine members)
- Anyone in the congregation is welcome to attend meetings with no voice, no vote
- Governance structure includes a separate Nominations & Leadership Development Team for the purpose of finding and equipping people to serve on the Leadership Board
- Leadership Board will publish a statement in the Enews after every meeting of items covered and decisions made

Additional Options for Consideration:

The primary options to consider explore how the certain roles will function in the new Leadership Board structure. Currently, the Lay Leader, Lay Member to Annual Conference, United Methodist Men President, and United Women of Faith President are members of the current Church Council with voice and vote. With a nine member Leadership Board, we must consider how they will relate to the board. In addition, it is possible to have a youth representative. However, persons under the age of 18 cannot serve on the Trustees. Options related to these roles are presented below.

Option 1: Nine Member Leadership Board with additional members with voice / no vote

- Nine members have voice and vote; they are generalists and not specialists in certain areas
- Lay Leader, Lay Member to Annual Conference, United Methodist Men representative, United Women of Faith representative, and youth representative are additional “members” with voice, no vote

Option 2: Nine Member Leadership Board with dual roles

- Nine members have voice and vote
- Lay Leader, Lay Member to Annual Conference, United Methodist Men representative, and United Women of Faith representative are dual roles that the existing nine members will hold – they have voice and vote
- The dual roles of members may cause them to wear a specialist hat in discussions which is not recommended
- Youth representative with voice, no vote (youth under 18 years of age cannot vote on Trustee matters)

Option 3: Nine Member Leadership Board with no additional members or reps

- Nine members have voice and vote
- Lay Leader and Lay Member to Annual Conference would be roles held by one or two of the nine members

- United Methodist Men representative, United Women of Faith representative, and youth would not have representatives on the board. They could request to be on a board agenda to provide updates or annual reports to the board regarding their ministry areas

Other considerations:

- Can the Lay Leader and Lay Members to Annual Conference be staff or related to staff? Can they serve on the Leadership Board with voice, no vote?