ASSOCIATED CANADIAN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

"HOW DO SELECTED FACTORS APPEAR TO CONTRIBUTE TO HEALTHY CHURCH

BOARDS IN SMALL ATLANTIC BAPTIST CONVENTION CHURCHES?"

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FOR

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Drive through many Canadian small towns and rural communities and one of the most prominent features of the landscape are the varied, small, white clapboard church buildings with their steeples pointing heavenward. How many of them now stand boarded up or converted into barns, cottages, homes or craft businesses? Each of these edifices has a story to tell, a tale of faith and family, of commitment and dedication, of former days of glory when communities met to worship and pray. Many of the still remaining small churches are struggling to survive.

As Barna reports:

> Thousands of churches across America have deteriorated to the point where they are a ministry in theory only, a shell of what they had once been. In these churches, little if any outreach or inreach takes place. The name and buildings may insinuate a church is present, but lives are not touched in a significant, spiritual way by such artifacts. As long as these churches have a handful of faithful attenders and can afford some meeting space and a speaker, they remain in existence. They have, however, essentially completed their life as a church.[1]

The scene is very similar in Canada, as author, educator and rural parish pastor William R. Adamson reports in <u>Small Churches: Understanding and Encouraging Them</u>. "Small churches in

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[1] George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993), p. 22-23.

Canada these days are experiencing a great deal of pressure and difficulty."[2] After a survey of the various denominations across Canada, Adamson concludes that "it is surprising to learn how many small churches there are in Canada…I suspect that Canada may set some kind of a record for the number of small churches in this nation."[3] The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC), located in Canada's four Atlantic Provinces, is a denomination consisting of almost 500 churches. Over 70% of the affiliated congregations are small churches.[4] In a recent open letter to the convention churches, Dr. Peter Reid, Executive Minister for the denomination, indicated that they are in serious decline, both in terms of the average size of the churches as well as the number of congregations![5]

Is the "small" church in danger of extinction? Are the gloomy prophecies to be believed? More importantly, is there hope for the small church? What are the challenges and what is the best way forward, so that the small church can thrive and be used by God to extend His Kingdom in every corner of the globe?

Yes, small churches do face several challenges. In an era that celebrates church growth and mega congregations, the small church seems irrelevant, out of date with the times and old-fashioned. Furthermore, our communities are changing. Children leave home after high school and pursue life in the urban sprawl with the ensuing demise of the rural economy. Immigration

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[2] William R. Adamson, *Small Churches: Understanding and Encouraging Them* (Saskatoon, SK: Adam Enterprises, 1993), p. 6.

[3] Adamson, p. 15.

[4] For the purposes of this study, "small church" refers to a congregation with 100 or less in average Sunday morning worship attendance.

[5] http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/news_events/looking-to-the-future

and urbanization are having a definite impact on smaller communities. The economic realities seem stacked against the small church, whether in a rural setting or in a larger center.

Leith Anderson provides a succinct list of the transitions in our society that have affected the small church: globalization, urbanization, democratization, increased mobility, "coloring," graying, increased percentage of women in the workforce, pluralism, shifts in economic "segmentation," rise in "short-term commitments," decline in the work ethic, conservatism and cocooning. As well, these and other societal factors have given rise to larger churches and now even "mega-churches," leading to the reshaping of the pastoral role, the rise of multiple-pastor staffing and pastoral specialization.[6]

The challenges to small churches, however, are not just from the "outside." Using an analogy from the medical world, the human body exhibits varying degrees of health or dysfunction. The same principles can be applied to a church as a "spiritual body."[7] A congregation can evaluate their corporate life in terms of its relative health or dysfunction.[8] From this perspective, the issues facing the small church can be described as challenges that either moves them closer to or farther away from being healthier. As Dennis Bickers enumerates them, there are several issues potentially indicative of an unhealthy small church. His list includes:

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[6] Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change: An Arresting Look at the New Realities Confronting Churches and Parachurch Ministries* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1998), p. 21 – 59.

[7] The Apostle Paul's analogy of the church as the "Body of Christ" is used extensively in the New Testament. See Chapter 3 for more discussion about this analogy.

[8] Christian Schwartz in his *Natural Church Development (NCD)* material and others use this analogy to measure the relative health or dis-ease in a congregation. This is the challenge of how one can determine what a "healthy" church should look like. There have been numerous books written on the subject of the "healthy church." (see my bibliography)

conflict, focusing inward, cultural indifference, poor leadership, lack of vision and purpose, and poor self-esteem.[9]

Abe Funk, author of *Hope for the Small Church*, would concur with Bickers and suggests the following as indicators of an unhealthy small church: blind to the needs of others, unwilling to adapt to a changing community, spiritually lukewarm, fellowship ingrown, spiritual malnutrition, head knowledge versus heart knowledge, a leadership that lacks vision, purpose and direction, and ongoing, unresolved conflicts.[10]

Anthony Pappas similarly suggests that there are six challenges that face small churches today: traditionalism, "niceness," a "club" mentality, paralysis in the face of conflict, negative "scripts," and the cost of maintaining buildings.[11] Having served for most of the last thirty years as a small church pastor, this researcher would suggest that these lists underscore the majority of the internal challenges that small churches face today.

According to Lyle Schaller, "the normal size for a Protestant congregation on the North American continent is one that has fewer than forty people at worship on the typical Sunday morning."[12] Adamson's research would suggest a very similar situation in Canada.[13] This smallness of numbers, combined with the apparent lack of financial and human resources,

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[9] Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2006), p. 20.

[10] Abe Funk, *Hope for the Small Church: Revitalizing the Small Church through Leadership Development* (Belleville, ON: Essence Publishing, 2005), p. 27.

[11] Anthony G. Pappas, *Entering the World of the Small Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2000), p. 7 – 9.

[12] Lyle E. Schaller, *The Small Church IS Different* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1982), p. 9.

[13] Adamson, *Small Churches*, p. 6ff.

appears to be threatening the long term sustainability of many of these small congregations. In Atlantic Canada, of the approximately 500 CABC churches, 375 (or 72%) of them are under 100 in average Sunday morning public worship attendance and more than 49% are less than 50 in average attendance.[14]

The term "small church" often carries the connotation of it being a comparative statement; smaller than other larger and more viable congregations. Smallness in our culture is sometimes viewed negatively, as Steven E. Burt and Hazel A. Roper reflect in their book, *Raising Small Church Esteem*.

> When we use the word association technique in workshops with small congregations, the phrase "small church" invariably produces the following responses: limited human resources, faithful remnant, handful, too few doing too much, dependence on denomination, petty bickering, lack of privacy, money worries, inexperienced and entry-level clergy, limited programs, physical plant millstones, building upkeep difficulties, clergy turnover, and many more.[15]

Burt and Roper continue by explaining that the issue seems to be in the area of the church's "self-esteem," their lack of having a positive identity. Churches "*accept a self-image dictated by society and the dominant culture, an image thrust on them by peer pressure, an image reinforced by failure or depression.*"[16]

Furthermore, evaluating the health of a church based upon the number of bodies present on an average Sunday morning worship service may not be the best or most fair basis for

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[14] Figures compiled by Dr. Malcolm Beckett, director of the Atlantic Baptist Mission Board and referenced in his seminar on Natural Church Development, compiled in 2002.

[15] Burt, Steven E. and Hazel A. Roper, *Raising Small Church Esteem* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1992), p. v.

[16] Burt and Roper, p. vii.

evaluation. Small churches need to be evaluated on what they do well, not what they cannot do![17]

James L. Lowery Jr., a church researcher and consultant, reaches the following conclusion about small churches:

> The existence of a surprisingly large number of non-viable, small churches is a large fact of life in many denominations. And they can't be closed down! They survive, hang on by the fingernails, and do little else….[The small church] is a problem because it is not viable. It is too small, too poor, and too focused on its own institutional survival to be able to carry on meaningful worship, in depth pastoral ministry, and effective witness, service, and missionary work. In a phrase, it is *unable to be very Christian.*
>
> But the paradoxical thing about the same situation is that those small churches very often draw a constituency who *like a size too small* to be viable while they do not like its lack of ministry. And this constituency is on the whole *very loyal, very strong in attendance,* and *more avid in the sharing of time, talent, and focus.*[18]

Commenting on Lowery's conclusion, Ray continues, "If a small church cannot be closed, it must be capable of living, and the jury is still out on whether most of these "nonviable" churches have the ability to grow, expand and develop."[19] Carl Dudley would concur, "[the small church] does not fit the organizational model for management efficiency. It does not conform to the program expectations of 'something for everyone.' It does not provide expanding resources for professional compensation. It is not a 'success.'"[20] And yet, the overwhelming chorus repeated by all of these authors is that "*small churches are the right size – the right size for being faithful and effective churches.*"[21]

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[17] David R. Ray, *Small Churches are the Right Size* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 1982), p. xii.

[18] Quoted by Ray, *Small Churches are the Right Size* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 1982), p. xii – xiii.

[19] David R. Ray, p. xiii.

[20] Carl S. Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1978), p. 24.

[21] Ray, p. xiv.

Sullivan would concur with this assessment, indicating in his study of six major denominations that "group size may not be determined by the uniqueness of particular groups but by the characteristics, values and preferences of the general population. It would seem the factors that determine church size are actually factors in the general population rather than in group uniqueness."[22] In other words, small churches seem to be the norm, regardless of the denomination, geographical location or theological conviction.

Arlin Rothauge has developed an alternative approach to evaluating and understanding churches by using their size to understand how they relate to each other, the pastor, board and the community around them. The small church of 50 or less active members becomes "the family size" church with certain characteristics and attitudes. The church of 50 to 150 active members, he calls "the pastoral church," which has different characteristics then the family church, and so on.[23]

Roy Oswald, at the Alban Institute, has taken Rothauge's categories and elaborated on them in a very helpful article entitled, *"How to Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program, and Corporate Sized Churches."* Chart 1 at the end of this paper[24] offers a chart indicating the various nuances and perspectives, using size as an indication of the attitude of the congregation, the board and the church members. This kind of information could prove very helpful for small church pastors and leaders, providing a window through which they might

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[22] Bill M. Sullivan, *Understanding Church Size Based on Empirical Data*

[23] Arlin Rothauge, *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry,* (New York, NY: Episcopal Church Center, 1983), p. 79.

[24] Chart 1, "Sizing up a Congregation for New Member Ministry" by Arlin Rothauge (see above).

understand the way in which the small church thinks and how it differs from larger congregations.

"Small church" also seems to evoke a mental image of a miniature replica of the "real thing." That is that the larger church is the ideal, average or normal model and thus the small church is just a scaled down version and is either less successful, hasn't "grown enough" yet or is in some way unhealthy, inferior and lesser than its "larger," more successful, counterpart. Schaller insists that "a different perspective and a different set of criteria should be used in grading squash or pumpkins than would be used in judging a horse or appraising a large house." And, he argues, the same is true in evaluating the small church and the larger church.[25] The small church is different and should be evaluated based upon different criteria![26]

Finally, small churches must be evaluated theologically. Ruth A. Tucker quotes Michael Duncan, from his article entitled '*The Other Side of Paul*,' "It would almost seem as though Paul's early years produced little fruit… He had an incredible ministry, yes: but we must not read the current heresy of triumphalism back into his life."[27] Tucker continues, "This heresy includes the triumphalism sometimes associated with church growth – that which emphasizes size and numbers. But this was not the focus of Paul, who confided his hardships and struggles as much as his successes." The modern "church growth" movement with its apparent emphasis

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[25] Schaller, p. 13.

[26] The current discussion between the missional church movement and the church growth movement offers some great insights into the challenges of small churches. Missional literature pushes hard against the principles of church growth and speaks very affirmingly of the value of healthy small churches.

[27] Ruth A. Tucker, *Left Behind in a Megachurch World: How God Works through Ordinary Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), p. 67.

on growth at all costs, its' potential for baptizing the world's business models, and justifying the means because of the end results, has had a devastating effect on small churches.[28]

Understandably, pastors of small churches sometimes feel like second class leaders and sometimes are treated as second class leaders because they have not "grown" their church or have not graduated to a "big church" yet. For example, Samuel D. Rima admits that without even realizing it, his focus began to change. "Almost imperceptibly, my motives and desires began to subtly shift….. I was experiencing the onset of full-blown mega-church mania and I was growing increasingly miserable in ministry."[29]

In summary, the small church faces a multitude of challenges: transitions in society, potential negative self-esteem issues, concerns about its viability and sustainability, pressure to "measure up" to the perceived successes of the larger church, evaluations that are based on misunderstandings of the unique nature of the small church and a popular "church growth" theology that may actually denigrate or discourage small church ministry as a biblical model of God-honoring stewardship and witness.

"Everything rises and falls on leadership."[30] Therefore, given these challenges for the small church, both internal and external, this research will seek to explore how church leaders can navigate through these unique issues and what perceptions and strategies would be needed to lead an effective ministry in this complex environment. As Bickers puts it, "too many of our

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[28] I appreciate what Eugene Peterson has to say about this in his book, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 2 – 8.

[29] Samuel D. Rima, *Rethinking the Successful Church: Finding Serenity in God's Sovereignty* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), p. 11 – 14.

[30] John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People will Follow You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 225.

small churches…continue to drift around like ships without rudders because of poor leadership."[31] Bickers goes on to identify that the kind of leadership needed for effective change and transformation to occur in small churches is that of 'adaptive leadership.'[32] Barna laments:

> I have reached several conclusions regarding the future of the Christian Church in America. The central conclusion is that the American church is dying due to a lack of strong leadership. In this time of unprecedented opportunity and plentiful resources, the church is actually losing influence. The primary reason is the lack of leadership. Nothing is more important than leadership.[33]

One Canadian pastor and writer, Abe Funk concurs when he says, "I believe that many small churches can be revitalized through leadership development."[34] The real challenges are not the internal or external pressures but whether or not leadership can be developed that will maneuver through the storms, navigating courageously and successfully.

The question of effective leadership, within the structure of most small Atlantic Baptist Convention (CABC) churches, leads to the question of healthy governing boards. In the congregational governance model of many small CABC churches, the pastor is usually an ex-officio member (without voting privileges) of the governing board (variously called deacons, elders, the leadership team, etc.). The congregational vote determines the direction of the leadership and the board provides further input to the pastor in terms of the priorities and strategies for ministry. This researcher hypothesizes that healthy churches will have healthy

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[31] Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church,* p. 79.

[32] Dennis Bickers, *Intentional Ministry in a Not-So-Mega Church: Becoming a Missional Community* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2009), p. 39.

[33] George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People*. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1997), P. 18.

[34] Funk, p. 7.

leaders. A healthy leadership will beget a healthy church. Frank A. Thomas, in *Spiritual Maturity: Preserving Congregational Health and Balance*, contends that spiritually mature leadership functions in the Body in the same way that the immune system functions in the physical body, it "defends against pathological invaders that threaten the spiritual health of the organism."[35] Aubrey Malphurs, in *Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence,* maintains that

> …usually it is boards, rather than pastors, that lead churches. And if we believe along with Bill Hybels that the church is the hope of the world, and leadership is the hope of the church, then what are we doing to improve leadership at the board level?[36]

And so the issue of helping small churches to become healthy, effective churches leads to the challenge of developing a healthy church board. Dr. Lyle Schrag argues that "The Church Board is the prime spiritual community of the church."[37] He continues, "While that phrase may appear simple, the implications are many. One of the more relevant implications is that the manners, the accepted behavior of the Church Board members, set the standard of spiritual and ethical behavior for the entire church."[38] T. J. Addington, author of *High Impact Church Boards* says,

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[35] Frank A. Thomas, *Spiritual Maturity: Preserving Congregational Health and Balance* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), p. 1.

[36] Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), p. 7.

[37] Lyle Schrag, "The Board … The Prime Spiritual Community," an online article at http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/the-board-the-prime-spiritual-community

[38] Schrag, "The Board…. The Prime Spiritual Community."

"The higher the level of health of your board, the higher the missional effectiveness of your organization or church."[39]

B. Hypothesis and Presuppositions of Research Question

It is the hypothesis of this researcher that the relative health or dysfunction of the church board has a direct correlation to the overall health of the congregation at large. As discussed above, the congregation will not develop beyond the level of health and maturity of its own governing leadership. Based upon a study of the literature and upon developing a theological understanding of the importance of healthy leadership in congregational life and health, it is further hypothesized that as the leadership in a congregation grows in biblical maturity and health, the overall health and effectiveness of the church will increase accordingly. Bickers, Funk, Schaller, Pappas, Perkins, Schrag, Malphurs and Addington would all agree that the health of any organization is going to depend upon the health of its leadership. Within the context of congregational government, the governing board and their relationship to the pastor, their relative individual spiritual maturity, their ability to communicate effectively and to have healthy relationships within the board are all part of what makes up a healthy church board. The decision making process, the way the board is organized, even the way board members are chosen; all of these are possible, pertinent factors in developing a healthy church board.

As Charles M. Olsen says,

From a strategic standpoint, one who holds hope for the renewal of congregational life has to start somewhere. What better place to start than the board and its meetings. If those meetings and relationships are life giving rather than life

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[39] T. J. Addington, "Practices of Healthy Churches," blog article written July 3, 2009, http://leadingfromthesandbox.blogspot.com/2009/07/practices-of-healthy-boards.html

draining, the board can become a model of community and ministry for the whole church. As I see it, the level of commitment in a congregation will not rise above that of the set apart leaders.[40]

One important presupposition needs to be noted here: This research will use a model of what a healthy church looks like that has been developed by Dennis Bickers in his book, "*The Healthy Small Church.*"[41] Bickers suggests that there are six main characteristics of a "healthy small church":

(1) the church has a positive self-image

(2) shares a common vision that creates a sense of purpose and unity

(3) maintains community while still warmly welcoming new visitors

(4) practices the importance of faithful stewardship and financial support

(5) understands ministry to be the responsibility of all the members of the church

(6) encourages everyone to serve according to his or her spiritual gifts – not by seniority or guilt.

This research will be concerned about what the boards of healthy churches look and act like.

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[40] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1995), p., 9. Olsen offers a new approach to church board life that emphasizes the *spiritual* in all of the board activities, describing their task as "worshipful work."

[41] Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2006), p. 10.

C. Research Question

In light of the above challenges, this research will focus on the question: "How do selected factors appear to contribute to healthy church boards in small Atlantic Baptist Convention churches?"

D. Ministry Context for Studying this Problem

The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC) is a partnership of about 500 Baptist churches spread throughout the four Atlantic Provinces. Approximately 375 of these congregations are 100 or less in average Sunday morning worship service attendance.[42] The denomination has been emphasizing church health and has sponsored numerous events to encourage evangelism, leadership training and so on but the challenge remains.

This researcher has been part of the local association of Baptist Churches, the Westmorland Kent Baptist Association (WKBA), for the past 10 years, serving in various roles on the executive. Of the approximately 40 member churches, at least 30 of them would be classified as small churches. Over the past 10 years, many of these churches have experienced significant challenges, ranging from internal conflict to major financial struggles. The executive of the WKBA has sought various avenues to try to bring encouragement and affect change that would lead to improvement and renewed health for these churches. Leadership development has become the key ingredient in that process. Again, this researcher believes strongly that more intentional efforts at developing the leadership of the governing boards in particular would be a very wise strategy.

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[42] Figures compiled by Dr. Malcolm Beckett, director of the Atlantic Baptist Mission Board and referenced in his seminar on Natural Church Development, from a 2002 study.

This research would have relevance to hundreds of small churches both within the denomination and possibly thousands of other small churches across Canada and the United States. This research also seeks to offer a furthering of the conversation regarding the challenges that small churches face, especially in the area of board health, when little has been written about the problem. Seminaries, denominational leaders and church members, as well as pastors and church board members, would benefit from this dialogue.

E. Rationale and Purpose of this Ministry Project

This study seeks to reveal the key reasons that seem to help or hinder small CABC churches from developing healthy church boards and what relationship the health of the church board has to the overall health of the church. Through the interview process, this research will test the hypothesis proposed in the last section and provide deeper understanding of the selected factors and how they contribute to healthy church boards. As a result, the goal is to provide small church pastors and leaders greater insight into the potential processes that would help develop greater board health.

1. The value of research regarding healthy small church boards

This research will also help small church pastors and leaders in the following ways:

a. To understand the dynamics unique to small churches and the reasons why small churches behave the way that they do, especially why small church boards often act the way that they do.

b. To understand what a healthy small church board should look like and the connection between the relative health or dysfunction of the board and the health or dysfunction of the church as a whole.

c. To provide small church pastors and leaders with the theological understanding behind the importance of developing a healthy church board, the benefits, costs and processes involved.

d. To develop teaching materials that would explore even further the relationship between board health and congregational health and the unique challenges faced by the small church context in this particular area of ministry development.

    i.   To develop a survey to help small church leaders determine the relative health or dysfunction of their own board.

    ii. To develop a series of teachings/workshops that would help small church pastors and board members to move towards greater health by addressing the particular issues that are causing the dysfunction.

    iii. To develop coaching materials that would enable small church pastors and board members, denominational coaches and seminary professors, to mentor and facilitate education and awareness concerning the importance of healthy church boards in the small church environment.

e. To provide a context for further research and study that would help small church pastors, board members, as well as seminaries, and denominations, further understand the unique situation faced by the small church.

F. Definition of Terms

1. "Healthy church board"

Within this research, the phrase "**healthy church board**" comes out of a body of literature within ecclesial/theological research that would suggest the growth of a church is intricately connected to the relative "health" of a church. That is to say, "Like our bodies, a church can have a relatively minor problem that, if left unchecked, can begin to affect the entire system."[43] This researcher is further suggesting that the relative health of a congregation is based largely upon the health of the group that leads the congregation. Some possible factors that might have an impact on the health of a church board: [44]

   a.   ability to communicate effectively and clearly among board members

   b.   individual spiritual maturity of the board members

   c.   positive and healthy relationship between board members and between board and pastor

   d.   the process used to identify, train and release new board members

   e.   the process by which decisions are reached within the board

   f.   the level of agreement and unity of vision, purpose and values within the board

   g.   the process by which conflict is handled within the board

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[43] Bickers, *Healthy Small Church*, p. 19.

[44] T. J. Addington, Lyle Schrag, Larry Perkins, Aubrey Malphurs and others have each offered their lists of what a "healthy" church board looks and acts like. It will be part of this research to determine which of these health characteristics applies to small church boards and how a church board can move towards greater health.

A church board might be called the "board of elders," the "board of deacons," the "leadership team" or some other designation. The point is that the "church board" is the duly chosen, governing entity that provides oversight, direction and accountability to the pastor, staff and membership. Within the context of this study, we will be surveying congregations that are part of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC). As such, the governance model would be described as congregational, even though there would be more or less flexibility within that model depending upon the history, evolution and current situation of each local church.

2. "Small church"

Since the word "small" can be a very relative term, for the purposes of this study, a "small" church is a congregation of believers whose regular Sunday morning attendance (including adults and children of all ages) would average less than 100 people. We will not be distinguishing between country and town churches or rural, urban or suburban congregations.

3. Healthy Church.

In his book, "*Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*", Steinke defines "*a healthy congregation is one that actively and responsibly addresses or heals its disturbances, not one with an absence of troubles.*"[45] As mentioned above, Bickers provides a helpful list that we will be using as a kind of bench mark for our discussions, as well as in determining what churches will be a part of the study.[46]

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[45] Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1996), p. 10. (italics his)

[46] Bickers, *Healthy Small Church*.

G. Delimitations and Limitations of this Ministry Project

The focus of this study is not to determine what a healthy small *church* looks like, behaves like or how it can become healthy. Other studies look at the issue of church health, what makes a church healthy and what keeps a church from becoming healthy.[47] Instead, this study seeks to understand the relationship between a church's health and the health of the leadership group, the governing board, especially within the context of a small church situation. Similarly, it is not the purpose of this study to seek to discern why or how a church becomes unhealthy, other than how that might be related to the health or dysfunction of that church's board.

Ten to twelve healthy, small churches were chosen to be part of the survey. These churches were chosen based upon recommendations from the Regional Ministers of the CABC.

Using an appreciative inquiry approach with semi-standardized interviews, the project sought to gather insights and input from these small church leaders and pastors. The process involved interviewing and surveying pastors and church board members, from healthy, small Atlantic Baptist Churches. They were interviewed using a specific set of open-ended questions and a survey instrument designed for this study. The purpose was to seek to understand the attitudes, actions and beliefs of the pastor and the board about key aspects of healthy board practices. This information will provide a point of comparison between the literature and theological reflection with the realities and experiences of small CABC church pastors and leaders.

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[47] For example, Christian Schwartz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1996).

The results collected were used for comparison and contrasting purposes. While the sample studied is small, it is proposed that the chosen churches potentially represent the larger group because of the similar histories, geographical and cultural connectedness. However, as a case study, the information gathered will allow for further exploration of the possible connections between board health and church health. While every effort has been made to encourage honesty in their reflections and answers, as a self-reported survey, the results are only the thoughts of those interviewed.

H. The Health Factors Matrix: The Seven Selected Health Factors

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the literature survey:	From the theo-logical/ Biblical survey:	From the sociological interview and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
1.The ability to communicate effectively among board members				
2. The spiritual maturity of the individual board members				
3. Positive and healthy relationships among board members & pastor				
4. The process used to identify, train and release new board members				
5. The process by which decisions are reached as a board				
6. The level of agreement and unity of vision, purpose and values within the board				
7. The process by which conflict is handled within the board				

**Chapter Two – Literature Survey**

Key Question

How do selected factors appear to contribute to healthy church boards in small CABC churches?

The Purpose of this Chapter

The purpose of this chapter, first, is to survey the body of literature relating to board governance within the specific context of non-profit organizations, looking particularly at the church board. What are the current issues, trends and wisdom from those writing in this arena? Second, we will interact with the materials that have been written concerning the small church situation, looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, potential and the uniqueness of the small church. The final section of this chapter will be to provide a synthesis that takes the best information from the healthy church board material and discover what that looks like as it intersects the unique dynamics of the healthy small church.

A. Discovering the Characteristics of a Healthy Board

Enron. World Com. Two corporate giants that came crashing down in bankruptcy and scandal. Billions of dollars lost to investors that led to the US government responding with what is known as the 'Sarbanes-Oxley bill', requiring massive changes in the regulatory system. Even the New York Stock Exchange reacted with major alterations to their listing requirements. At the heart of these and a host of other corporate scandals was a board of directors at each organization

that allowed, either by design, by default or by neglect, the CEO's and other staff to defraud investors out of their investments.[94]

1. The Challenges of Governing

Is it possible that there are similar challenges and potential risks for the governing boards of nonprofit organizations, especially local churches? What are the reasons for board ineffectiveness? Can an organization lose its focus, become ineffective or not reach its full potential because of the lack of attention and care from its governing board?

T. J. Addington asserts:

Those in the business world are familiar with the term ROI (return on investment). Successful business depends on the ROI. If the return on investment is not healthy, the business declines rather than grows.

I believe church boards need to pay great attention to another return: "return on mission," or "ROM." Christ has granted you opportunity, resources, fruit, and a unique ministry to touch your community, your region, and the world. So, what is your ROM?[95]

Both the business community and the church are in need of improving the effectiveness and value of boards. Anyone who has been involved in volunteering on a board has experienced the challenges that boards face in seeking to do their work and do it well.

2. Barriers to developing a healthy board

It is not as simple as saying that we need to improve the effectiveness of governing boards. There are a variety of reasons, some more difficult to overcome than others, to the dysfunction of

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[94] Referenced by David A. Nadler, "Preface," in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006) p. x. See also a concise article in the online Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enron_scandal

[95] T. J. Addington, *High Impact Church Boards: How to Develop Healthy, Intentional, and Empowered Church Leaders* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), p.15.

boards. In this section we will catalog and detail as many of the hindrances to board health as could be discovered from the survey of the literature available.

a. Flawed board processes

John Carver, well known author and "creator" of the "policy governance model" for board work, expresses his concerns:

> It takes no scholar to find the problems. Simple, random observation of a few nonprofit and public boards will expose many of the normal shortcomings. Nonprofit and public boards stumble regularly and visibly. Individual board members and executives have often felt that one specific act or another is silly or empty. They rarely say so, however, for the charade has a commanding history, eliciting an almost conspiratorial agreement not to notice organizational fatuousness…
>   The problem is not that a group or an individual *occasionally* slips into poor practice, but that intelligent, caring individuals regularly exhibit procedures of governance that are deeply flawed. Certain common practices are such obvious drains on board effectiveness that one does not need a sophisticated model to recognize them.[96]

This would certainly seem to be a fair evaluation of a number of our local church boards as well. Over the last 30 years as a pastor, this researcher has witnessed church boards make some incredibly poor decisions, knee jerk reactions and even start outright conflicts, sometimes based on very trivial concerns or on selfish, personal agendas.

Several authors report that, in the recent history of the work of many governing boards, the situation has been marred with ineffectiveness and that ineptitude and conflict seemed almost commonplace. For some reason, it seems that well-meaning, successful people, when placed within the structure and culture of a governing board of an organization, tend to become less

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[96] John Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference, Second Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997), p. 8.

effective, less intelligent even! Charles C. Ryrie, well known Systematic theologian from Dallas

Theological Seminary comments on his own experience of board involvement:

> During a short break in a board meeting I was attending some years ago, one of
> the other board members turned to me and asked what I did to relieve the boredom
> of that meeting. Mind you, this was an annual meeting and one would expect that
> a number of important matters would be up for serious discussion. But it was
> boring – no question about it. I don't recall my reply, but I recall his. He said that,
> since he was a pastor, he was spending the time memorizing the middle verses of
> hymns![97]

David A. Nadler shares a similar account, from a secular, corporate board perspective:

> "A really good board is one that only reduces the efficiency of the company by 20
> percent." That pretty well sums up the low esteem in which boards have been held
> over the years. It certainly captures the disdain harbored by many CEO's who
> viewed their boards as inconsequential at best, and at worst, meddlesome
> obstacles to the efficient exercise of executive power. The possibility that boards
> might actually contribute some element of value just didn't factor into the
> equation."[98]

b. Watch dog/ gate keeper mentality

It seems from the literature that governing boards, for the most part, have not had a

positive or glorious history. Peter Drucker contends that "all nonprofit boards have one thing in

common. They do not work."[99] In fact, boards have often been viewed as the watchdog group,

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[97] Charles C. Ryrie, *Nailing Down a Board: Serving Effectively on the Not-for-Profit Board* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), p. 11.

[98] David A. Nadler and Mark B. Nadler, "A Blueprint for Building Better Boards," in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), p. 3.

[99] As quoted by Frederic L. Laughlin and Robert C. Andringa, *Good Governance for Nonprofits: Developing Principles and Policies for an Effective Board* (New York, NY: Amacom, 2007), p. 1.

guarding the organization from the harm that might possibly be inflicted by the CEO. Or they have acted as the gatekeepers, guarding the organization from any change that might upset the status quo.[100]

c. Acting as conflict referees

d. Special interest lobbying

Malcolm Warford explains this challenge, along with a comment pointing a possible way forward:

> For too long trusteeship has been viewed as the work of custodians whose primary task is the maintenance of the organization as it is or has been. We have often gone forward by looking through the rearview mirror. Conversely, we just as often have seen trusteeship as the work of referees who sort out conflicts and step in when harmony falls too far out of balance. Trustees have often presided as a court of last resort without acknowledging or accepting responsibility for the overall well-being of the organization.

> Another existing image of trusteeship is that of a lobbyist who represents a constituency or interest group. In this sense, the board is understood as a kind of parliament or a general assembly in which particular claims on the institution are made. What often happens in this arrangement is that some demands are met but everyone loses sight of the whole in the process. The organization is lost in its particularities and no connections are made so that its center or core may be understood, supported, and advocated.

> When trustees view themselves as custodians, referees, or lobbyists, they give up the most important task of trusteeship, which is responsibility for the vision of the organization. Though trustees cannot arbitrarily make decisions about that vision, they are fundamentally responsible for seeing the vision is articulated and that it informs all operations of the organization. The vision should shape the institution's mission and its programs. Ultimately, trustees are the only group in

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[100] A helpful book that details how non-profit boards can work well and have a positive influence in governance is Jim Brown's *The Imperfect Board Member: Discovering the Seven Disciplines of Governance Excellence.* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006) which uses the fictional story of a business owner who volunteers on a local non-profit community group's board.

an institution who have primary responsibility for seeing that the vision does not get lost in the details of daily life.[101]

e. A culture of bureaucracy and control

Warford indicates that vision is an important part of the solution but first, we need to understand that these issues are not the only ones that can cause problems. Boards can develop their own unique culture and over time, these attitudes can even become toxic. T. J. Addington offers his thoughts on how this develops:

> I would argue that two defining characteristics of church cultures are bureaucracy and control. These are often fueled by a third characteristic: mistrust. Together, these three dysfunctions disempower at every level, preventing church cultures from freely carrying out responsibility…. Whether intentional or not, these dysfunctions hinder the health of the church, the happiness factor of those involved, and the ministry effectiveness. Is it any wonder so many churches find themselves ineffective, with frustrated staff members, board members, and volunteers who simply leave for other churches where they are empowered to minister? The net loss to ministry is huge.[102]

f. An attitude of mistrust

Bureaucracy, control and mistrust, these in addition to the challenges of working against the status quo, lobby groups and conflict management. No wonder boards are viewed as ineffective, at best, draining an organization's ability to success. "Ministry is not a commodity

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[101] Malcolm L. Warford, "Stewards of Hope: The Work of Trustees" in Thomas P. Holland and David C. Hester, editors, *Building Effective Boards for Religious Organizations: A Handbook for Trustees, Presidents, and Church Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 6.

[102] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 160 - 161.

we control, but a responsibility of obedient discipleship for every believer."[103] Addington points

to the cycle that develops and hints at a possible route that would break the downward spiral:

> Often it is the third characteristic that leads to disempowerment: the dysfunction of mistrust – whether subtle or overt. Congregations mistrust boards… boards mistrust senior pastors… Mistrust breeds control. Control feeds mistrust. It is an unhealthy cycle….Sometimes the root of the mistrust is plain: sinful attitudes. Often, however, it is the result of poor governance, management, or communication practices.[104]

How does a board break through this downward cycle of mistrust and control? Addington

hints at the answer by pointing to "poor governance, management or communication practices"

as part of the problem. And so, along with getting a better understanding to the importance of

vision, we will come back to these three areas in the section on solutions and healthy functioning

boards.

Larry Perkins, commenting on the issue of "control" in church cultures, offers a helpful

caveat:

> I would also suggest that every church has a culture of control, however it may be described, named, or designed. When the controlling elements are working properly, they work together to sustain the health of the church (e.g. control that protects against false teaching; control that enables risk management; control that keeps the focus on mission achievement). The question is how a church board can exercise appropriate and helpful control so that people in the congregation have opportunity to fulfill their divine calling as believers as part of a particular faith community.[105]

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[103] Larry Perkins, *"36. Review Article # 2: T. J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards (2006),"* online article published in churchboardchair.ca, a website dedicated to "competent chairmanship supporting healthy churches, http://www.churchboardchair.ca/review-article-2-t-j-addington-high-impact-church-boards-2006/

[104] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 162.

[105] Perkins, "Review Article # 2: T. J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards" online article

g. **"Over specialization"**

h. **Board members identifying too closely with their position**

Charles M. Olsen, in his work with church boards, highlights several other issues that relate to this spiral:

> The bureaucratic model is supposed to be marked by specialization and efficiency. Unfortunately, overspecialization actually blocks efficiency.
>
> Bureaucracy stymies a church board in a second way: in the identification people have with their positions. He is Mr. Evangelism or Trustee. She is Ms. Educator. People find affirmation and gain visibility via their positions in specialty areas, then emotionally feed on status. We have not discovered enough healthy ways to affirm and celebrate people in our church systems. An unhealthy bureaucratic system serves that need very well.[106]

And so the typical board often is riddled with a variety of complexities: mistrust, control issues, bureaucracy, lobbying, etc. Is it any wonder why governing boards are sometimes viewed with disdain? Olsen continues to describe well the situation that often develops in unhealthy, dysfunctional board cultures:

> The issue of power surfaces when a board is placed in an advisory role. Each member receives some satisfaction from being selected to sit in on deliberations that affect the church. But only those willing to accept and go along with the power alignment will remain members of the board…
>
> The culture of the board becomes characterized by negotiation – transactions that involve compromises, trade-offs, and accommodations. The board is forced into a delicate balancing act to keep the peace – while fostering the overall mission of the church. At times the peace is strained and even broken. Conflict management may then consume the energies of the board.[107]

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[106] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1995), p. 36.

[107] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 34 – 35.

i. Structural inadequacies

We have been listing the various challenges that seem to hinder a governing board from effective, healthy board work. However, it is not only attitudes and behaviors that stymie the board. Structure can also provide the impetus for stopping the effective energies of a board. Take for example, an almost hallowed resource for carrying on 'business' at most board meetings: "Robert's Rules of Order."

> *Robert's Rules of Order* may protect us from one another. Yet I have observed that people use the "Rules" to get their own needs met – to have fights, display their knowledge, massage their egos, vent their anger, test their opinions, punish their opponents, cover their fears, and hide from anything personal.
>
> The parliamentary method assumes that no community base exists from which to interact and decide. There are appropriate places for its use – even in church boards. But it is not the foundation on which discernment is built. Prayerful discernment slows down the verbal and aggressive members, while seeking the wisdom of the silent ones. Prayerful discernment lays aside ego-driven "convictions" and relinquishes corporate self-will. It seeks to see things whole, through the eyes of God.[108]

Olsen is correctly pointing out that structures, however well meaning, are nothing more than vehicles for individuals to operate within. If the relationship between board members, or the culture of the board itself, is unhealthy, dysfunctional or strained, no amount of structural fencing will stop the dysfunction from seeping through. Max De Pree expresses this well: "Structure is important, but what is much more important – in fact, critical – is the willingness and ability of the people involved to establish and maintain amiable and productive relationships. … It is the quality of our relationships that really counts."[109]

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[108] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 94.

[109] Max De Pree, *Called to Serve: Creating and Nurturing The Effective Volunteer Board* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 32.

Addington would agree:

It is my conclusion that after bad theology, poor relationships are the next greatest contributor to deadly DNA in the body. It is not surprising that some of the most unhealthy genetics congregations face are in the area of relationships – building and maintaining healthy relationships require a great deal of energy.[110]

j. A voluntarism that negates taking responsibility

John Carver explains another important factor that tends to debilitate boards:

Boards of nonprofit and some public organizations think of themselves primarily as volunteers. This identity adds little and potentially costs a great deal. Responsibility, authority, job design, and demands of a board are not affected by being paid or unpaid. Beyond strengthening the sense of public service, being a *voluntary* board is irrelevant to governance and its attendant burden on accountability. On the other hand, some connotations of voluntarism can *detract* from the board's job, severely reducing its ability to lead.

Volunteers are a tradition of American life, offering many skills, insights, and hours in a commendable expression of helpfulness. Volunteers help get a job done without compensation. For an existing organization, that usually means helping the staff, inasmuch as staff is engaged in the actual work. Governing boards, however, do not exist to help staff, but to own the business – often in trust for some larger ownership. If anyone is helping, it is the staff. Volunteers on governing boards are expressing an *ownership interest* rather than a *helpfulness interest.* Owning the business conveys a power that cannot be responsibly grasped so long as board members think they are there to help. Power not used is power defaulted on and, ultimately, power irresponsibly used. It is destructive to confuse helpfulness with ownership. By emphasizing their volunteer status, boards risk weakening their effectiveness.[111]

k. Human limitations

Why are boards often viewed as ineffective and not worth the headaches? We have outlined several key challenges that many boards face. However, there needs to be a balanced perspective. Jan Masaoka and Mike Allison, in an online article entitled "Why Boards Don't Govern," provide a more "human" side to this question:

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[110] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 83.

[111] Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, p. 14 – 15.

…boards have some inherent limitations in their ability to govern, including lack of time, lack of familiarity with the field, and lack of material stake. These limitations have been supplemented by the [non-profit] sector's nearly exclusive emphasis on the board's supporting role and by a human tendency to avoid conflict. A first step towards an effective board is acknowledgment of the paradox, and the need to perform both functions [supporting and governing] equally well.[112]

l. Wearing "two hats" while serving on the board

Along this same line, John Pellowe suggests another reason for board ineffectiveness: "Board members have two relationships with the church at the same time: they are both directors and beneficiaries."[113] This is an often overlooked aspect that is particular to church boards. A similar issue exists when church staff serve on the board, whether paid or volunteer. There needs to be a clear separation between the two different roles. [114] Kaiser goes so far as to 'legislate' that staff, even volunteers, cannot serve on the governing board of a church.[115]

m. An insurmountable task?

As we have seen, there are a variety of reasons, the sum of which creates a complex picture that could be viewed as insurmountable. T. J. Addington, in his online blog, describes the four "giants" that church boards face: fear, comfort, change and conflict. Comparing the complex

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[112] Jan Masaoka and Mike Allison, "Why Boards Don't Govern, Part 1," an online article from Board Café, a blog at CompassPoint Nonprofit Services website http://www.compasspoint.org/boardcafe/details.php?id=19

[113] John Pellowe, "The unique challenges of church boards," an article published online by the Canadian Council of Christian Charities at http://www.cccc.org/blogs/john/2010/03/18/the-unique-challenges-of-church-boards/

[114] See Larry Perkins, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards," "In smaller churches where board members also are leading ministries, they need to remember which "hat" they are wearing when they are at a board meeting. If they are reporting on their ministry responsibility, then they are not doing this as a board member, but as a ministry leader. In most cases they should be reporting about their ministry responsibilities under the leadership of the senior pastor."

[115] John Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose: Accountable Leadership (*Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), p. 117ff.

issues that boards face to those faced by the twelve spies that were sent out by Moses to prepare for invading the Promise Land, Addington reminds us:

> Courageous, wise and missional leaders are hard to find. But that is what is needed in the church. Good leaders know there are giants that they will face as they lead, just as Caleb and Joshua did - they saw the same formidable people that the other ten saw. The difference between Joshua, Caleb and the other ten spies is that they also understood that if they followed God where He was leading them that they would prevail.[116]

3. The Biblical Basis for Governing Boards

Do we really need boards? Don't they just complicate and confuse the issues? Wouldn't a strong leader do fine without a board? Dr. Charles C. Ryrie offers three biblical justifications for boards or board-like entities.[117] First, there is the example of the New Testament, as evidenced by the clear Biblical teaching concerning the need for elders and deacons in the organizational structure of the local churches. Second, several Biblical proverbs give clear reasons why boards are necessary: wisdom comes from godly counsel. One says, "Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory" (Prov. 11:14). Another, "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed (Prov. 14:22). Third, there is the need for accountability. Ryrie cites the example of the Apostle Paul's handling of the money collected for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem. It "…shows his sensitivity to accountability. He himself did not handle it, but delegated the matter to three 'trustees.' … they would see that everything was done openly and above board."[118]

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[116] T. J. Addington, "Giants Church Leaders Face," online blog article at
http://leadingfromthesandbox.blogspot.com/2008/10/giants-church-leaders-face.html

[117] Ryrie, *Nailing Down a Board,* p. 18 – 23.

[118] Ryrie, *Nailing Down a Board,* p. 22.

Aubrey Malphurs contends that "God gives the local church much freedom to decide on whether to have a governing board, empower it, and determine what it will do. Biblical wisdom seems to favor such a board and should dictate how that board can best serve each church…"[119] Addington would agree: "…there is nothing sacred about the leadership structures of most churches. Governance structures, apart from what is clearly prescribed in the New Testament, are simply tools that should empower people and facilitate ministry."[120] We will take up the theological and biblical concerns in the next chapter. The point here is that boards can provide much benefit to the organization it serves.

4. The Characteristics of a Healthy Board

We have discussed the challenges boards face, the reasons for their ineffectiveness and the fact that boards could and should have a positive and beneficial role in the life of an organization. What does a healthy board look like? How does a board deal with the challenges to effective board work? First, we will look at what a healthy board looks like and then we will look at how healthy board members look, act and think.

a. Healthy boards are spiritually mature

Aubrey Malphurs, in *Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence* says: "The importance of a spiritually healthy governing board can't be overstated. It's imperative not only that board members be spiritually healthy, but that they function in a

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[119] Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), p. 36.

[120] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 182.

healthy way."[121] Too often, church boards are made up of members who bring business acumen, educational or other experiences that will benefit the board's work. It is not that this is wrong in itself. Rather, the work of a church's governing board is first and foremost a "spiritual" work. As Olsen says, the board members are "set apart to seek God's will for the church and its ministry in the world."[122] Schrag, to this same point, says, "…*The Church Board is the prime spiritual community of the church.*" [123]

Olsen remarks, "I heard a high level of frustration and even disillusionment among laypeople with their experience on church boards, much of it due to lack of a 'missing' element – spirituality. New members expected that a church-board term would provide an opportunity to develop and deepen their faith. Too often they encountered 'business as usual.'"[124]

If a church board is to be a healthy, effective board, they must first of all understand themselves as a spiritual entity, even though some of the work that they will do may seem mundane and even "unspiritual." Warford contends, in fact, that the primary work of the board is to be "stewards of hope," trustees or board members must see themselves as constantly being concerned about

> "…the central commitments that nurture the life of the entire community. In the theological community, this center is defined by the image of Jesus Christ as the

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[121] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 55

[122] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 10.

[123] Lyle Schrag, "The Board … The Prime Spiritual Community," an online blog article at
   http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/the-board-the-prime-spiritual-community; italics are part of the
   quote.

[124] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. x.

servant of God who calls us to embody a ministry of service in the world. Trustees are stewards of the hope of this calling (Eph. 4:4)."[125]

Olsen, in his work in bringing renewal to mainline churches would agree:

From a strategic standpoint, one who holds hope for the renewal of congregational life has to start somewhere. What better place to start than the board and its meetings! If those meetings and relationships are life giving rather than life draining, the board can become a model of community and ministry for the whole church. As I see it, the level of commitment in a congregation will not rise above that of the set apart leaders. The sense of community and care for one another will not rise above that of the consistory. The stewardship practices will not rise above those of the council. The prayer life will not rise above that of the board. The capacity to reflect biblically and theologically will not rise above that of the vestry. The willingness to take a prophetic position will not rise above that of the deacons. The hope and excitement for the future will not rise above that of the session.[126]

That this is the most critical of factors for becoming a healthy effective board seems unanimous among the various authors. Addington would also agree, pointing out that the "sobering truth is that few congregations rise above the spiritual level of their leaders. The higher their passion for Jesus, the higher their congregation's passion will be. In the end, without a passion for Christ, they have missed the whole point of the Christian life and their leadership roles."[127]

Dr. Larry Perkins, in discussing the "spiritual ministry of the chairperson" of the governing board, reminds us that:

A church board's primary goal is to ensure that the mission and vision of the church are carried forward in full conformity with its values. The board in this sense is critical to the health of the faith community and all its work then has to be considered as spiritual work. The chairperson is the key person who works

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[125] Malcolm L. Warford, "Stewards of Hope: The Work of Trustees" in Thomas P. Holland and David C. Hester, editors, *Building Effective Boards for Religious Organizations: A Handbook for Trustees, Presidents, and Church Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 22.

[126] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 9.

[127] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 31.

alongside of the lead pastor to keep this spiritual focus always before the board. His or her own example will be a critical means by which to emphasize this spiritual centeredness.[128]

"Spiritual centeredness" is an excellent description for a healthy, effective church board. Leaders who view their work as "stewards of hope," working from the perspective of passionate followers of Jesus.[129] We will come back to the "how to" of developing this spiritual centeredness later in our discussion. What are the other key factors that make a healthy, effective board?

Malphurs suggests that there are at least four characteristics of healthy boards: "They work together as a team; they display courage; they trust and respect one another; they know how to deal with disagreements."[130]

b. Healthy boards work as a team

As Holland points out, "Most boards are composed of strong and capable individuals who have not integrated their skills into strong teams. They appear to share the popular cultural assumption that a board is but an occasional assembly of capable individuals rather than essentially a group."[131] This issue is mentioned by several authors as a key issue. Olsen comments:

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[128] Larry Perkins, "The Spiritual Ministry of the Chairperson," an online blog article at http://www.churchboardchair.ca/the-spiritual-ministry-of-the-chairperson/

[129] Addington devotes an entire chapter to this one aspect: leadership is spiritual ministry. The first 'dimension' in his 'six-dimensional' leadership is about "ensuring spiritual power" (p. 38 – 53).

[130] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 55.

[131] Thomas P. Holland, "The Duties and Responsibilities of Boards of Religious Organizations" in Thomas P. Holland and David C. Hester, editors, *Building Effective Boards for Religious Organizations: A Handbook for Trustees, Presidents, and Church Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 39.

The collective board is not to see itself as a coordinating cabinet or an advisory group but as the people of God in community. The group is the body of Christ, with members having varying gifts, wisdom, and functions. As such the group's life is formed by scripture, prayer, silent waiting, witnessing, and serving. Members are on a journey tougher that may take them on paths to the wilderness, into the arenas of ambiguity and conflict, or to pleasant meadows of discovery, satisfaction, and delight.

The meeting will no longer be seen as a gathering of individual people with business to transact, but as a functioning of the body with all its patterns, disciplines, and ministries.[132]

David and Mark Nadler, in *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance*, argue that "…there has always been a school of thought that individual directors could act as resources, providing value on an ad hoc basis. What's new is the idea that the board, effectively constituted as a high-performance team, can provide ongoing collective value that's far greater than the sum of its individual parts."[133]

The United Way, in their "Project Blueprint" research, points out the need for boards to develop the aspect of teamwork by "building and playing"[134] together. As well, the Banff Leadership Training Center highlights the importance of teamwork as a key component to board effectiveness.[135] Biery highlights the importance of teamwork in his list of "desirable board member attributes under policy governance."[136] Board members need to be good at team

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[132] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 10.

[133] David A. Nadler and Mark B. Nadler, "A Blueprint for Building Better Boards," in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), p. 9.

[134] Referenced by Lyle Schrag, "Catalog of Core Competencies" chart (see appendix 9)

[135] Also referenced by Lyle Schrag, "Catalog of Core Competencies" chart (see appendix 9)

[136] R. M. Biery, "Desirable Board Member Attributes Under Policy Governance," an article published online by The BroadBaker Group Ltd., a firm specializing in board training in governance, at http://www.broadbaker.com/Desirablebdattrbts.htm.

dynamics and group skills, in particular 'emotional intelligence.'[137] Under this subheading, Biery especially mentions the importance of being "trustworthy (loyalty coupled with integrity) and willing to live by the rules (the board's rules)."[138]

Addington suggests that "strong leadership groups are those that develop community among themselves."[139] It is this sense of community, of team spirit and camaraderie, that will help a board move beyond through the challenges and complexities that we've describe earlier and push through to greater effectiveness.

Larry Perkins, in addressing the work of the board, says,

In everything that the church board does, it must see itself primarily as a key ministry team in the church. All of its work is ministry and if the board loses sight of this reality, it loses its ability to serve Christ and the congregation in a healthy way. Further, this reality enables the board members to keep their focus and motivation at a high capacity, because ministry is always the goal and desired outcome, no matter what is on the agenda.[140]

Patrick Lencioni, in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, indicates that "trust" is the number one challenge in building an effective team. He lists eight characteristics that are possible indications of mistrust:[141]

1. Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another

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[137] Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (Toronto, ON: Bantam, 1995) is an excellent resource.

[138] R. M. Biery, "Desirable Board Member Attributes Under Policy Governance," p. 1. Biery adds: "not likely to be a maverick, for example, abusing power. This is different than an individual capable of courageous dissent within the scope of board discussion. That is desirable.)," p. 1.

[139] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 47.

[140] Perkins, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards"

[141] Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2002), p. 197.

2. Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback

3. Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility

4. Jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others without attempting to clarify them

5. Fail to recognize and tap into one another's skills and experiences

6. Waste time and energy managing their behaviors for effect

7. Hold grudges

8. Dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together

c. Healthy boards display courage

Larry Osborne, in his book *Growing Your Church Through Training and Motivation*: "The mark of a healthy board is courage. When a tough decision has to be made, people aren't afraid to make it. They realize that's what they've been called to do. In contrast, dysfunctional boards often are dominated by fear. They find it safer to say no and to maintain the status quo."[142]

Again, in light of the challenges boards face, just to become effective in their work, let alone to move forward and govern, making decisions regarding vision, direction and the future of the organization, will take what Lyle Schrag describes as "spiritual courage."[143] As Malphurs reminds us: "Healthy boards aren't afraid to make the tough decisions. When making such a

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[142] Marshall Shelley, *Growing Your Church Through Motivation and Training* (Ada, MI: Bethany House, 1997), page unknown, as quoted by Lyle Schrag in "Key Board Traits" an online blog article at http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/key-board-traits

[143] Lyle Schrag, "Key Board Traits" in online blog article at http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/key-board-traits

decision, it's their job to sift through the facts, examine the options, be aware of any biblical directives, and make the best decision possible."[144]

"Courage is fear that has said its prayers."[145] Courage is not the absence of fear but the decision to obey God, do the right thing, stick to your guns, in spite of the fear that one feels. A healthy board is a board that has courage. It will take spiritual courage to face the challenges that the typical board faces, first to become healthy and effective and then to govern well.

Lencioni advises teams that "they must have the courage and confidence to call out sensitive issues and force team members to work through them. This requires a degree of objectivity during meetings and a commitment to staying with the conflict until it is resolved."[146]

d. Healthy boards trust and respect one another

In order for a board to do its work effectively and efficiently, not only will it need to develop as a team and learn to act courageously, the team will need to earn trust and respect from and for each other. Lyle Schrag asserts that "there must be an environment of trust. One of the marks of a healthy board is that people are empowered with freedom to fulfill their ministry. It's true that trust is a quantity that has to be earned."[147] This is not just the kind of trust whereby board members trust each other to show up on time for meetings or that they will take serious their responsibilities. As Ken DeMaere points out in an excellent online teaching article for the Western District of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, "Trust is the confidence among team

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[144] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 57.

[145] Attributed to Karl Barth by John Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), p. 37.

[146] Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable,* p. 205.

[147] Lyle Schrag, "Key Board Traits" in online blog article at http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/key-board-traits

members that their peers' intentions are good, and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group."[148]

Trust is an essential building block for an effective board but will be earned only as each member on the board is willing to work at developing that trust. This is because trust is a relational quality. A board chair cannot command trust between board members. However, as Olsen shares, there are ways to build trust. One way to strengthen the relationship bonds between board members is by "telling stories," because:

> Stories build community. Pity the council that has no time for personal stories. They ignore and shut out a vital source of life. They try to govern by "the facts" without listening to the inner experience and feelings of their colleagues. Without a foundation of community, the work of a board will be severely crippled.[149]

e. Healthy boards develop healthy interpersonal relationships

Larry Perkins, in his online blog article *"Relationships are Everything"* explains just how critical this quality is:

> In the world of Church Boards ***relationships are everything***. Almost every question asked centered on some aspect of relationship — board to pastor, board member to board member, board member to ministry staff. Every practice presented served to enable good relationships to flourish. Good policies nurture good relationships and provide pathways to use when they need to be repaired. When relationships break down, church boards become dysfunctional and board members lose the joy that their service normally generates.[150]

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[148] Ken DeMaere , "Principles of Group Vs. Team" found online at the Western District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance website resources section, http://www.cmawdo.org/admin/files/packages/Principles%20of%20Group%20vs%20Team.pdf

[149] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 55.

[150] Larry Perkins, "Relationships are Everything," online blog article at http://www.churchboardchair.ca/relationships-are-everything; bold italics in original article.

The area of healthy, trusting, respect filled relationships is deemed critical by many of the authors writing on board governance issues.[151] Addington goes so far as to offer a "covenant of healthy relationships"[152] as an important decision that a board would need come into agreement together over. He further contends that the kind of relationships modeled by the board will set the example for the rest of the congregation. "Congregations that are relating poorly are often merely following the example of church leaders who do not live by godly principles."[153]

After three years of research, Robert P. Chait, Barbara E. Taylor and Thomas P. Holland, report in their book, *The Effective Board of Trustees,* that "there are specific characteristics and behaviors that distinguish strong boards from weak boards." They went on to classify these characteristics into six distinct dimensions of effective trusteeship. These six dimensions enabled a board to work effectively as a group. Each dimension becomes an area of competence for a board to work towards. The third area is that of the "interpersonal" dimension, where "The board nurtures the development of trustees *as a group,* attends to the board's *collective* welfare, and fosters of sense of cohesiveness." Chait and the team suggest three specific actions that enhance the interpersonal dimension of a board: intentionality in creating a sense of inclusiveness among the board, developing group goals and recognizing group achievements, and identifying and

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[151] David A. Nadler, "The Role of Leaders in Shaping Board Culture," in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), p. 117 – 118. Nadler expands on mutual trust and respect in the board room, indicating that this would translate into: "confidentiality inside the room, solidarity outside; respect for expertise and diverse opinions; and active and respectful listening." (p. 118)

[152] See Appendix 1 for three samples of Board Member Covenants, pages 218 – 220.

[153] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 84.

cultivating leadership within the board.[154] This 'competency' spills over from interpersonal relationships to teamwork that we have already mentioned earlier.

Olsen also speaks to the challenges of developing healthy relationships and a team spirit on a board and refers to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's work, *Life Together*, as an important resource for boards to access when working towards that cohesiveness that is required for effective teamwork. Olsen offers a chart as a way to visualize the various phases and the movement towards a healthy team dynamic.[155]

f. Healthy boards know how to manage conflict

Conflict management is a huge topic and could easily be the sole focus of research, especially how effective boards manage conflict, both within the organization as well as within the board, how they can create an environment that allows for positive, constructive conflict and how to develop a board culture that knows how to be proactive in handling disagreements before they become crises.

g. Healthy boards are composed of healthy board members

Who should serve on the board? How are members chosen for board service? What are the qualifications for healthy board members? How are board members selected, trained and monitored?

Beverly A. Behan recommends that "the key to effective board composition is ensuring that the people gathered around the board table can leverage their experience to contribute in

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[154] Robert P. Chait, Barbara E. Taylor and Thomas P. Holland, *The Effective Board of Trustees* (Westport, CT: American Council on Education/Oryx Press, 1993), p. 2 – 3.

[155] Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 150. See Appendix 2, page 221.

meaningful ways, to understand the issues, ask the right questions, demand the right information, and make the best possible decisions."[156]

The challenge with Behan's advice however, leads back to one of the issues mentioned earlier: the board needs to be a governing board, not a "representational democracy" of some kind, ensuring that all of the various constituents or factions are represented. If taken from another perspective, though, Behan's advice is still valuable. She continues to explain that there needs to be an "alignment of composition with the work to be done and the working dynamic the board wants to create and maintain."[157] Board members need to be considered on the basis three important competencies: (1) their individual skills and experience, (2) individual attributes, and (3) representational factors (demographic and geographic diversity).

i. Characteristics of healthy board members

What individual attributes must a board member exhibit in order to provide value to a board? The literature is overwhelming clear that paying attention to the selection of the right candidates is a critical process for developing a healthy board.

1. Healthy board members are spiritually healthy

From a faith based perspective, most authors would argue that the first and most important competency is that of spirituality. One cannot serve well on a church board without being spiritually qualified, spiritually attuned, or in the words of T. J. Addington: "having the power

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[156] Beverly A. Behan, "Board Composition," in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), p. 29.

[157] Behan, "Board Composition", p. 29.

turned on."[158]   Malphurs is specific: "…it's imperative that governing boards be spiritually qualified, because the church's work is spiritual ministry. Since most boards, when they act corporately, have great power to direct the affairs of the church, the members must be spiritually qualified."[159]

2. Healthy board members have discernment

Larry Perkins asks why Addington has not included in his list of character qualities the area of *discernment* in the leader's profile. [160] I agree. "Smart leaders believe only half of what they hear. Discerning leaders know *which* half to believe."[161] We've already noted that board work is spiritual work and it is reasonable that a key piece in spiritual work would seem to be that of discernment. Having at least some board members then, who have the spiritual gift of discernment, would be advantageous.

> A primary task of church boards it the hard work of discernment. Prayerful discernment is one of four practices in our model for the integration of spirituality and administration…. We like to be in control and in charge. But discernment is hard to program. The mystery takes us into an uncertain wilderness. But we must be willing to enter that wilderness to encounter God's will and ours. There is no easy way around it.[162]

3. Healthy board members have "kingdom vision"

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[158] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 52.

[159] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 46.

[160] Perkins, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards"

[161] Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, p. 44.

[162] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 41.

Lyle Schrag believes that "kingdom vision"[163] is another important quality that board members need to possess. He explains:

> I love the story used by Dr. David Horita to describe an episode from his ministry where he was given an assignment from his Church Board to draft the Church vision statement. Being the clearly defined leader, he accepted the task – but on the condition that the board participate in the work as a team. He made a list of everything that the church could be, and asked the board members to identify their top choice.
>
> It was a humbling discovery when they found that there was no common agreement in their choices. Even more humbling was the discovery of how their choices revealed their own personal agendas, what they personally needed their church to be. David asked them to repeat the exercise again, only this time with a simple addition: What did their church need to be *for others*?
>
> Adding those two words made quite a difference. Once they were able to "*set themselves aside*" they discovered, together, a common vision of what God had in mind for them.[164]

To have vision, in the leadership sense of the word, is to have "a picture of the future that produces passion"[165] or as George Barna says: Vision is "a clear mental portrait of a preferable future,"[166] and armed with this kind of perspective would seem very beneficial for many board members.[167]

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[163] Lyle Schrag, "Key Board Traits" online blog article at http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/key-board-traits

[164] As quoted by Lyle Schrag, "Key Board Traits" online blog article at http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/key-board-traits

[165] Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), p. 32.

[166] George Barna, editor, *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), p. 47.

[167] Addington has a helpful section in *High Impact Church Boards* as to what vision means and its importance in the life of a board (P. 135 – 145).

4. Healthy board members can communicate well

There are other qualities that would prove to be helpful for serving on a church board. Larry Perkins suggests that "the ability to communicate well with the stakeholders surely has to be one of these leadership dimensions."[168] The ability to communicate not only with stakeholders but with each other, with the congregation, with the larger community, yes, this is an important quality to look for in potential board members. Communication is definitely key to good leadership:

> Developing excellent communication skills is absolutely essential to effective leadership. The leader must be able to share knowledge and ideas to transmit a sense of urgency and enthusiasm to others. If a leader can't get a message across clearly and motivate others to act on it, then having a message doesn't even matter.[169]

5. Healthy board members have intentionality

Intentionality could be another important quality to expect of board members. As Melinda Mains points out, "Boards define the strategic priorities facing a congregation and make these issues the focus of their energy."[170] Addington expresses his conviction that board members need to "clarify four critical leadership concerns:" Who are we? Why do we exist? Where are we going? And how will we get there?[171] Answering these questions and taking this process seriously is at the heart of intentionality. "Great ministry does not happen by accident. Church

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[168] Perkins, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards"

[169] Gilbert Amelio, President and CEO of National Semiconductor Corp., as quoted by Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader,* p. 23.

[170] Melinda Mains, "Creating an Effective Church Board," an online article from the Disciples of Christ denominational website resource section, http://www.disciplesworldmagazine.com/node/7075, p. 4.

[171] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards*, p. 102.

health is not a random condition. It is a result of a disciplined commitment to become everything we can be with the resources God has given us."[172]

6. Healthy board members are `biased toward action``

Closely related to intentionality would be the leadership quality of being "biased toward action."[173] Bill Hybels would call this "drive" in his list of the five qualities that he looks for in emerging leaders. Healthy board members should be "action-oriented" people that are comfortable taking initiative.[174] "A board that wants to progress from ceremony and ritual to real work must create an action-oriented culture. Effective boards show little tolerance for meandering discussions sporadically punctuated by irrelevant questions."[175]

7. Healthy board members are able to gather resources

Perkins highlights yet another dimension for church boards to consider when looking for effective board members: resource gathering and preservation. "We can have great plans and wonderful leadership energy, but if the resources cannot be found to support the vision, then what truly can happen?[176] Having board members who have the ability to find and encourage others to invest in the kingdom work would seem a helpful plus. As Mains says, "Boards ensure that the church has the financial and human resources needed for its work. As stewards and

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[172] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards*, p. 103.

[173] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards*, p. 25 – 26.

[174] Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, p. 129

[175] David A. Nadler, "The Role of Leaders in Shaping Board Culture," in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), p. 117.

[176] Perkins, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards"

prudent managers, they ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to support the ministry."[177]

h. Healthy boards are strategic in recruiting and training new board members

Once a board has developed their own list of qualities and qualifications for board members, the process of selecting new members would be the next logical step. It would be difficult to recruit new people to serve on a board without having this list, along with a clearly written set of expectations of what would be asked of these new recruits. Personally interviewing possible candidates is an important step in selecting new board members. Include questions such as" "Why would you consider being on this board?" or "What are two or three key attributes that make someone a really good board member? Why are those qualities important?"[178]

i. Healthy boards proactively screen potential new board members

Another opportunity that would allow the board to creatively view potential board members is to give them the opportunity to sit in on one or several board meetings. This can provide important insight for both the individual and the board.[179] Existing board members should always be "on the lookout" for potential new board members.[180] Take time as a board to brain storm together and build a list of possible candidates that fit the necessary criteria as

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[177] Mains, "Creating an Effective Church Board," p. 2.

[178] Behan, "Board Composition", p. 38.

[179] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 51;

[180] Ryrie, *Nailing Down a Board,* p. 29; Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 50; Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 29.

potential, emerging board members.[181] In the context of a local church, this "emerging leaders"[182] list could also prove helpful in developing leadership at multiple levels, not just for the work of the governing board.

"Every board should understand the difference between its current makeup and its ideal composition – and use every appointment to close the gap."[183] This is an excellent piece of advice for boards wanting to continue to improve on their performance. Using the list of potential board candidates, and combining it with this forward perspective on 'closing the gap' would definitely provide an ever stronger board.

i. Healthy potential new board members ask important questions before joining

New board members need to ask their own questions as well. Ryrie includes a whole chapter entitled, "Before You Say 'Yes'," in his small book on board work. Asking for a copy of the articles of incorporation, by laws, purpose statements, governing structure, as well as audited financial statements, and other pertinent documents will give an overview and a sense of context of where the organization is in their history and community.[184] Consideration ought to be given to the amount of time expected for board members, whether the mission of this organization is something you wholeheartedly believe in and what potential risks you might be liable for as a

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[181] Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, p. 131.

[182] In using the term "emerging leaders," we are referring to leaders who are new, developing or potential leaders in a church/ministry context, not leaders of the "emerging/emergent" church movement.

[183] David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, "Conclusion: Recommendations for Building Better Boards" in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), p. 275.

[184] Ryrie, *Nailing Down a Board*, p. 44 – 47.

board member.[185] Given the challenges and responsibilities that fall to board members, especially in times of crisis, potential board members need to do their due diligence before joining any board.[186]

j. Healthy boards provide an intentional orientation and assimilation process for new board members

Once a board has chosen the individuals that will serve as new board members (using the criteria previously discussed) and once these new members have a clear understanding as to what is expected of them, there needs to be an intentional transition and assimilation process for them.[187]

> Board orientation is crucial. All new board members should be educated on what governance is and the role of a director. It is vital that they understand the conflicting roles they have as director, beneficiary and perhaps even program volunteer. Help your directors to be good governors right from the start.[188]

One of the failures of boards has been to assume that new members will know intuitively what to do or else the "default position" will be to allow the status quo to continue to reign. As Behan says, it "requires a more thoughtful and thorough integration" and "it needs to be done more quickly. An accelerated learning curve can give board members the knowledge and comfort level they need to quickly start contributing to board discussions and deliberations."[189] It is the role of the board chairperson to ensure that new members receive the kind of orientation

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[185] Behan, "Board Composition", p. 39 – 42.

[186] Behan, "Board Composition", p. 39.

[187] See Appendix 7: Board Member Orientation

[188] Pellowe, "The unique challenges of church boards," p. 3.

[189] Behan, "Board Composition", p. 42 – 43.

that will ensure a smooth transition as well as allow for a successful and beneficial experience for both the board and the new member. Larry Perkins suggests that:

> Orienting new members to a church board offers a wonderful opportunity for a chairperson to encourage, celebrate and mentor. If a new board member starts well, with good information, an understanding of basic process, and assurance that he or she can fulfill this role by the Holy Spirit's help, then the board as a whole will be blessed. As well, your role as board chair will be easier. So investing a couple of hours with new board members is time well spent for a host of reasons.[190]

k. Healthy boards provide ongoing board training and leadership development

Malphurs argues that "a major reason so many boards are struggling in their leadership is that neither established board members nor new board members have been trained."[191] The North American Baptist Conference Leadership Center issued an article entitled, "The Transition from Leading to Developing Leaders: A Change of Ministry Philosophy," which spells out a strategic process to encourage local churches to develop emerging leaders.

> Most of those in church leadership – both pastoral and lay – are skilled in *leading* but typically have invested little time or attention to *developing leaders*. As a result, it is often a scramble to find gifted, skilled and experienced leaders to expand ministries or provide truly effective leadership for needed new programs.[192]

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[190] Larry Perkins, "The Chair and New Board Member Orientation," online article published at
http://www.churchboardchair.ca/the-chair-and-new-board-member-orientation/

[191] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 117.

[192] Unknown author, ""The Transition from Leading to Developing Leaders: A change of Ministry Philosophy," online article published by the North American Baptist Conference, on the Alberta Baptist Association website,
http://nab.ca/aba/LeadershipDevelopment/Focus3Part1/assessing%20leadership%20development%20cult ure.pdf

In an online resource article entitled "Board Development," the Alberta Baptist Association encourages their member churches to develop a strategy for leadership development as a top priority. The document begins with the following observations:

1. No one model of leadership development is all-effective and universally transferable.

2. Effective leadership development is engaged on all levels of ministry.

3. Leadership development is not optional.

4. Leadership development is a long-term priority.[193]

Indeed, as the article goes on to point out, most board members are ill-equipped and lack clarity in their understanding, but yet have a desire to be effective and want to learn how to lead well.[194] That would seem to indicate that the situation is ripe for resources that would encourage, inform and equip board members. To that end, Dr. Lyle Schrag, at the "Fellowship Center for Leadership Development," has developed a "Best Practices for Church Boards" workshop. The workshop offers training for church boards as a team, covering such topics as helping develop greater clarity as to how a board functions, how to increase board effectiveness, how to develop and improve board health and church health.[195] The workshop deals with three specific

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[193] Author unknown, "Board Development," online article in the resource – governance section of the Alberta Baptist Association website, http://www.nab.ca/aba/ChurchEnrichment/Governance/Board%20Development.pdf

[194] Author unknown, "Board Development," online article.

[195] Lyle Schrag, "Best Practices for Church Boards: Basic Workshop," online outline advertising upcoming board workshop, sponsored by the Fellowship Center for Leadership Development, http://www.nbseminary.ca/church-health/fcld/best-practices/bp_basic

questions: "what's a church board to BE, what's a church board to DO and how does a board Do It."[196]

Malphurs suggests that there are "four critical core developmental competencies – character, knowledge, skills and emotions."[197] Schrag has compiled a chart indicating three core capacities: redemptive ministry, strategic leadership and fiduciary stewardship.[198] Addington refers to three areas that "demand our attention" in developing "high impact" boards: healthy leaders, intentional leaders and empowered leaders. There is clearly an overlap as these and other authors analyze the situation that boards are in and work to provide solutions.

Clearly, Malphurs' four core competencies of character, knowledge, skills and emotions, if put in a matrix, would work well alongside of Schrag's three capacities that relate more to function than competencies. Schrag has done an excellent job in mapping this out on a matrix, breaking each capacity down into the core competencies and then further delineating the key issues at stake and the corresponding training component for each.[199]

It is clear from the literature that the board has a major responsibility to increase its own capacity to lead by developing its members through ongoing training. It is also clear that it is not just developing better administrative or problem solving skills that are needed. As Malphurs indicates, there is also the need for character development ("soul work"), intellectual knowledge

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[196] Schrag, "Best Practices" workshop outline.

[197] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 117.

[198] Schrag, "Core Competencies for Church Boards," as found in Appendix 9

[199] See Appendix 9.

("head work"), and emotional competence ("heart work").[200] In fact, the bulk of Malphurs' book, *Leading Leaders*, would serve as an excellent manual for board training in these areas.

l. Healthy boards know what their primary responsibilities are:

What are the responsibilities of a board? As Schrag has put it, "What's a church board to BE? What's a church board to DO? How's a board to do it?"[201]

Board work can be broken down into several distinct areas, depending upon the perspective of the various authors. This section will discuss the primary responsibilities of the board are, as well as look as other secondary or occasional functions of a board.

The primary responsibilities of the governing board should be:

i.   Praying - ensuring that the "power is on"[202]

ii. Discerning the church's mission, vision and values

iii. Strategic planning – based on the church's unique mission, vision and values

iv. Defining ministry initiatives – derived from the strategic plan out of an atmosphere of prayer and intentional discernment

v.   Ensuring the church's health through caring, teaching, equipping, unleashing and protecting

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[200] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders*, p. 118 – 123.

[201] Lyle Schrag, "Best Practices" workshop outline

[202] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 52.

vi. Evaluating ministry and maintaining accountability: both in terms of "return on mission," (including ministry programs and senior pastor performance), as well as fiduciary and legal issues

vii. Assessing risk and managing crises[203]

i. Praying – ensuring that the "power is on"[204]

One aspect of board work that is often overlooked, especially when bylaws and constitutions are written and board policies are fleshed out from secular sources, is the importance of prayer. Addington highlights this important board process by using the phrase "working with the power on."[205] This corresponds with the earlier discussion about board members having spiritual maturity as an importance characteristic or personal quality. "Ensuring spiritual power"[206] is the first and most important work of the board. Allowing the ministry of the Holy Spirit to permeate every aspect of board discussions, planning and interaction is critical.

Praying is more than just a perfunctory ritual to begin and end board meetings with. Connecting with the Source of life and staying intimately tied to the wisdom, grace and power of God is "job one" for a board that wants to be healthy and effective.

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[203] Perkins, in an online article, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards," critiques Addington and suggests that he would add 3 more responsibilities than what Addington lists in his book: risk management, evaluation of the pastor and other staff and evaluation of ministry programs.

[204] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 52.

[205] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards*, p. 37 – 53.

[206] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards*, p. 38.

ii. Discerning the church's mission, vision and values

Mission answers the question, "Why do we exist?" and clarifies the direction that the church is going. The second mandate of the governing board is to determine the reason why the church exists. "Vagueness on mission leads to a diffusion of ministry effectiveness and competing, sometimes contradictory, directional pulls. The greater clarity we have for *why* we exist, the more focused our ministry energies can be."[207]

The mission is the "main thing" that God has called the church to be and to do. When the mission is clear, leaders know what is expected of them and what direction they need to go in. Clarity of mission also allows for accountability and effective evaluation. It is difficult to be accountable when there is no clear destination in view.

> The mission of the local church becomes part of "God's big plan" as Olsen describes it:
>
> The prophets saw the *shalom* of God and recognized its implications for living righteous lives before God and just and compassionate lives before their neighbors. Jesus saw the kingdom of God – a wise and loving rule of God. Paul saw God uniting everything in Jesus Christ. This was God's big plan! The board that can get the big picture of God's will for humanity and this world will have a more accurate reading on God's will for the church or for the individual board members.[208]

This leads to the second part of this process and that is discerning God's vision for the church. Whereas "mission" defines the Biblical and timeless mandate that God has given to the church, the "vision" of the church is the answer to "What is God's dream for our church?" or "Where will our church be in five years?"[209]

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[207] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 121.

[208] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 41.

[209] Another great question regarding vision: "If God were able to do everything that he could do, over the next five years, what would our church look like then?"

While mission is going to be defined narrowly in terms of the church's understanding of Scripture, vision is going to be culturally specific, connected to the church's past and describes the "preferred future" for the congregation. Much like a set of blueprints for building a home, vision allows leaders to plan, work and pray with clarity and enthusiasm. It is a working document that has the unique genetic code of the church embedded in it.[210]

As Malphurs clarifies for us,

A ministry's mission is a statement of where it is going; whereas, its vision is a picture or snapshot of the same. Primarily the mission affects planning the organizations future, while the vision affects the communication of that future. A mission statement is short – no longer than a sentence. However, a vision statement is long – from one paragraph to as many as twenty or thirty pages. The purpose of the mission is to inform people as to where the ministry is going. The purpose of vision is to inspire them to get there.[211]

The third and final piece of this puzzle is discerning the core values. Sometimes overlooked, values signal the church's "bottom line. They dictate what it stands for, what truly matters, what is worthwhile and desirous."[212] Values are "the constant, passionate, Biblical, core beliefs that drive the ministry of the church."[213] They exist, whether recognized or not. In fact, it is often the differing but "hidden" or unstated values that create conflict between leaders. Knowing, communicating and working in alignment with one's core values can be a powerful and effective force in ministry. "This is the key to leadership credibility. Leaders shape people's

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[210] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards*, p. 136 -137.

[211] Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), p. 33.

[212] Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), p. 18.

[213] Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership*, p. 34.

values, and they directly instill those values best through what they do more than through what they say."[214]

Healthy church boards, working together with the senior pastor, prayerfully discern the mission, vision and values of the church. This unique mix of values, vision and mission focus could be called the organization's "DNA."[215] The process of discovery ought to be an intentional, thoughtful and sensitive approach that engages the congregation and works creatively to encourage involvement and "buy-in" at every level.

iii. Strategic planning – based on the church's unique mission, vision and values

Should the board be involved in strategic planning? Nadler says yes, it is part of the value add that a board brings to an organization. Addington would agree. Once the board has determined the values of the organization, built the vision and mission statements, it then needs to develop the strategic plan that will accomplish the mission.

Olsen points out a challenge, however, that ought to be considered:

The culture of strategic planning assumes that we can create our own future. Theologically there is reason to believe that the future comes as a gift from God that we are to discover, participate in, and celebrate. Sometimes our plans can even turn into a new form of "works righteousness." We fool ourselves into thinking that we can design the future and make it happen, we have proven to ourselves and others that we are right and good and Christian. But, as Bonhoeffer says, God will not allow us to live in a "wish dream." The only basis for true community is the grace of Christ that comes as God's gift.[216]

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[214] Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership*, p. 24.

[215] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 77.

[216] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 38.

Boards need to proceed with caution and much discernment. Strategic planning is an important part of the process of governance but must be done prayerfully and with a clear understanding that "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps"[217] Olsen's concern encourages us to ensure that we continue to discern the mind and will of God.

On the other hand, to not develop a strategic plan is to "plan to fail". As Proverbs says, "The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty."[218]

iv. Defining ministry initiatives – derived from the strategic plan out of an atmosphere of prayer and intentional discernment

"A ministry initiative is an action step that will take significant time, money, energy, or congregational buy-in over a one- to three-year period, resulting in a major move toward a preferred future."[220] Ministry initiatives are the links between the strategic plan and the day to day ministry operation. These initiatives translate the mission, vision and values, through the strategic plan into specific actions. Creating the ministry initiatives that would fulfill the mission, vision and values is very much the mandate of the board.

Just as a construction company utilizes the blueprints provided to them to guide their actions in building a new home, so too the strategic plan guides the development of annual ministry initiatives. Addington suggests that ministry leaders ask themselves: "If we can only do three to five truly significant things this year, and at this time in our ministry, which ones will

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[217] Proverbs 16:9

[218] Proverbs 21:5

[220] Addington, p. 147.

move us closer to our preferred future? Framing the question this way forces leaders to prioritize their options based on their chosen future and the stage of ministry in which they find themselves."[221]

v. Ensuring the church's health through caring, teaching, equipping, unleashing and protecting

At this point it would be possible to say that there is no difference between a church board and any other non-profit or corporation board. Effective boards ensure that the mission is clear, the vision is focused and the values are in line. Effective boards work hard to create a strategic plan and specific annual initiatives to ensure the success of the organization. But the church isn't just another organization. The church is the visible expression of the body of Christ. The church's mission is one with eternal consequences. It is at this point that an effective, healthy church board recognizes that difference!

As Reggie McNeal reminds us:

The church is not the destination; the kingdom is the destination. Jesus does not say, "Thy church come." He spends 40 days before His ascension teaching about the kingdom. Acts closes with the kingdom. Jesus uses "church" twice, but "kingdom" 90 times. When the kingdom breaks out, things change. People's lives get radically re-altered; their entire worlds get re-ordered.[222]

McNeal has not mentioned, however, that Jesus also said, "I will build my church." Jesus died to redeem a people for himself. The church is His body, created to demonstrate to a lost and lonely world what life in the kingdom of God is like.

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[221] Addington, p. 151.

[222] Reggie McNeal, quoted in an online blog, found athttp://guymuse.blogspot.com/2008/04/reggie-mcneal-quotes.html

If the church is not involved in transformational ministry, building larger buildings, having more people at church services and collecting more money does not mean ministry success! It is the responsibility of the board to ensure that the church is being obedient to the Great Commission by yielding fruit. As Addington says, "Strategy is important. Leadership is crucial. But strategy and leadership without the power of God will not yield the eternal fruit that Christ has called the church to experience."[223] An effective, healthy board ensures that people are being cared for, taught the Word, equipped for ministry, unleashed to serve and protected from false doctrine and disunity in the body.

The board ensures that these five areas of spiritual growth are taking place through their monitoring and fulfillment of the mission and vision of the church.

vi. Evaluating ministry and maintaining accountability: both in terms of "return on mission," (including ministry programs and senior pastor performance), as well as fiduciary and legal issues

There are two kinds of evaluation that are necessary for effective governing boards to be involved in. The first is the ongoing monitoring of the advancement of the mission and vision of the church. If in fact the board believes that they have discerned clearly and accurately the plans that God has called them to fulfill and if they are serious about being found faithful as a church family in the accomplishing of that vision, then being responsible to compare the plans (the blueprint) with the progress to date (the construction job as it now sits) is critical to success.

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[223] Addington, p. 55.

The board is responsible to the congregation to ensure that the mission is being fulfilled and that the vision is moving forward, in line with the core values of the church. Regular checkups and annual reviews to determine the progress to date are necessary. If done in a spirit of love and grace, these reviews can also encourage and inspire both board and staff, as they together see the hand of God blessing the work of the ministry.

The second area is that of performance evaluation which is an important concern that seems to be overlooked by many boards. Sometimes this oversight is due to the fact that the board does not have a clear, written description of what is expected of the senior pastor or of the board. Other times it is due to the fact that evaluation is a difficult and challenging responsibility. This is especially true of church boards, where the ethos seems to be one of being 'nice' and getting along with everyone.

The positive benefits, however, of a careful, honest and forthright evaluation are many. For the pastor, having a clear set of policies from which to develop ministry and knowing that there will be regular, fair and ongoing accountability, is healthy and life giving. It is being held accountable when there have been no clear guidelines or job description that is destructive and frustrating. Conflict ensues when people are held to account that have not had clear, written guidelines as to what their responsibilities were.

And when a board holds itself accountable and builds in processes that allow for healthy inspection and introspection, this too creates a positive, life giving and empowering forward momentum to the board. The maxim that warns us that "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it" rings true when boards are unable or unwilling to develop accountability into their board work.

Accountability is perhaps one of the most important and yet misunderstood responsibilities of a board. A governing board is responsible to hold the organization and the staff, as well as themselves as a board, accountable for ensuring that the vision of the organization is fulfilled and the mission accomplished. Malphurs would call this "monitoring," in that the board needs to oversee ministry to ensure that the church's spiritual condition improves, that biblical doctrine is faithfully taught, that the overall direction of the ministry does not drift and that the pastor's leadership performance is evaluated.[224]

From a legal, fiduciary perspective, the board is also accountable for the financial aspects of the organization. We will not dwell on this area here. Boards may or may not understand this well and ought to be the subject of more research. It is, however, an important area of concern to a healthy, well-functioning board.

viii.   Assessing risk and managing crises[225]

David and Mark Nadler have suggested that there are four "critical areas where the board is uniquely positioned to add significant value to the overall quality of an organization's governance." These areas are corporate strategy, CEO performance evaluation, executive succession and risk assessment/crisis management.[226] We have already covered the first two areas and since this research is specifically targeted to small Atlantic Baptist Convention

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[224] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders*, p. 67 – 70.

[225] Perkins, in an online article, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards," critiques Addington and suggests that he would add 3 more responsibilities to what Addington lists in his book: risk management, evaluation of the pastor and other staff and evaluation of ministry programs.

[226] David A. Nadler and Mark B. Nadler, "A Blueprint for Building Better Boards," in David A. Nadler, Beverly A. Behan and Mark B. Nadler, editors, *Building Better Boards: A Blueprint for Effective Governance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), p. 13 – 14.

churches, the issue of "executive succession" does not apply. Most senior pastors in congregationally governed churches do not have any input into who their successor will be.[227]

This leaves the area of risk management, which can be defined as "The identification, analysis, assessment, control, and avoidance, minimization, or elimination of unacceptable risks."[228] Crisis management can be defined as a "Set of procedures applied in handling, containment, and resolution of an emergency in planned and coordinated steps."[229] These are areas that seem to be overlooked by most church boards. Given the fact that we live in an increasingly "litigation prone" culture, further research needs to be made to properly understand and deal with these topics.[230] As such this researcher has decided that it is outside of the scope of this present paper.[231]

m. Healthy boards are committed to and continually working toward improving as a board

At the beginning of this paper several challenges were listed that made boards ineffective. One of the issues is that of a lack of trust or a "control" problem, whereby the board does not trust the CEO/executive director and so on. Each organization has its own individual "culture" which is the unique mixture of its history, values, vision and structure. Having a board culture

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[227] However, it is an interesting concept and one that could be researched further at another time.

[228] Definition taken from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/risk-management.html

[229] Definition taken from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/crisis-management.html

[230] One helpful resource, although not written specifically for the small church, is Dick L. Kranendonk, *Serving as a Board Member: Protecting Yourself From Legal Liability While Serving Charities, Revised Edition* (Belleville, ON: Essence Publishing, 2002).

[231] At the time of writing, the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches is undergoing a major change in structure because of a serious concern for legal liability issues. Every member church has been encouraged to legally incorporate and the denomination as a whole has just completed a lengthy process of incorporating as well.

that is positive, empowering and healthy is very important. As Nadler and Nadler remind us: "The processes employed by board leaders have to model the culture they hope to create. You can't mandate a culture of engagement…The culture the board wants to create has to be reflected by, and consistent with, the processes it uses to achieve that goal."[232] It cannot be "do as I say, not as I do" for healthy boards. Developing a healthy board culture will take time, energy, commitment and dedication. Most importantly, it will take prayer.

n. Healthy boards organize themselves for effective ministry as a board

How then does a board "function" or conduct its business, in such a way as to facilitate all of the things that we have discussed above? The process that is followed by the board will either empower the board to be faithful and effective in carrying out their work or the process will hinder, frustrate and discourage the board, creating dysfunction and ineffectiveness. Malphurs lists eleven different board process problems that are typical among dysfunctional boards[233]:

1. limited meeting time
2. trivial agenda items
3. inconsistent decision making
4. unclear lines of authority
5. adverse board interference
6. unclear board expectations
7. low esprit de corps
8. cultural conditioning
9. poor planning

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[232] Nadler and Nadler, "A Blueprint," p. 26.

[233] Malphurs, Leading *Leaders*, p. 17 – 19.

10. too many participants

11. focus on the past

Each board will need to organize themselves by choosing a chairperson, a vice-chairman and secretary. It is the responsibility of the board chairperson to ensure that these issues are taken in hand and solutions worked through, to enable the board to function well.[234] The role of the board chair cannot be overestimated.

o. Healthy boards understand the importance of a well prepared meeting agenda

One of the most important and often one of the least understood aspects of preparing for an effective, healthy board meeting is the preparation and design of the agenda. The agenda should be prepared conjointly as both pastor and board chair work together to ensure that the agenda deals with the important issues and concerns and does not get bogged down in minutiae.[235]

i. The value of using a "consent agenda" as a board

At every board meeting, at least a few items come to the agenda that do not need any discussion or debate either because they are routine procedures or already have unanimous consent. A consent agenda allows the board to approve all these items together without

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[234] Larry Perkins, "Defining Terms: # 1- Governance and the Role of the Church Board Chair," online article published at churchboardchair.ca, a website dedicated to "competent chairmanship supporting healthy churches," http://www.churchboardchair.ca/47-defining-terms-1-governance-and-the-role-of-the-church-board-chair/

[235] Jim Brown, *The Imperfect Board Member: Discovering the Seven Disciplines of Governance Excellence* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), provides excellent, helpful advice regarding the practices of a healthy board. Larry Perkins' online resource for board chairs, found at www.churchboardchair.ca is also a wonderful source of information in this regard.

discussion or individual motions. Depending upon the organization, this can free up anywhere from a few minutes to a half hour for more substantial discussion.

Typical consent agenda items are routine, procedural decisions, and decisions that are likely to be noncontroversial. Examples include:

Routine, standard, non-controversial, and self-explanatory are adjectives that well describe consent agenda items. The following are some examples.

- Committee and previous board meeting minutes

- Office reports

- Routine correspondence

- Minor changes in a procedure (E-mail is added as an acceptable method of communication to announce a change in a meeting schedule)

- Routine revisions of a policy (Changes in dates or dollar amounts due to changes in laws)

- Updating documents (Address change for the main office)

- Standard contracts that are used regularly (Confirmation of using the traditional in-house contract with a new vendor)

- Confirmation of conventional actions that are required in the bylaws (Signatory authority for a bank account or acceptance of gifts)

A consent agenda can only work if the reports and other matters for the meeting agenda are known in advance and distributed with agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting. A typical procedure is as follows:

1. When preparing the meeting agenda, the chairperson determines whether an item belongs on the consent agenda.

2. The chairperson prepares a numbered list of the consent items as part of, or as an attachment to the meeting agenda.

3. The list and supporting documents are included in the board's agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting.

4. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair asks members what items they wish to be removed from the consent agenda and discussed individually.

5. If any member requests that an item be removed from the consent agenda, it must be removed. Members may request that an item be removed for any reason.

6. Once it has been removed, the chair can decide whether to take up the matter immediately or place it on the regular meeting agenda.

7. When there are no more items to be removed, the chair or secretary reads out the numbers of the remaining consent items. Then the chair states: "If there is no objection, these items will be adopted." After pausing for any objections, the chair states "As there are no objections, these items are adopted." It is not necessary to ask for a show of hands.

8. When preparing the minutes, the Secretary includes the full text of the resolutions, reports or recommendations that were adopted as part of the consent agenda.

In order to start using a consent agenda, the board should first adopt a rule of order allowing for the consent agenda process. It is important to make sure that all directors know what items belong on the agenda and how to move items to and from the consent agenda. For this reason, instruction on using the consent agenda should be part of the board orientation program.[236]

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[236] Nathan Garber & Associates, online article, "*FAQ: what is a consent agenda and how will it make our meetings go faster?*" *at* http://garberconsulting.com/FAQ.htm#consentAgenda. Another great resource is the non-

q. Healthy boards use four healthy, empowering processes to govern wisely:

In addition to the governing board having a clear set of responsibilities that it must take seriously as its' mandate and reason for existence, the board also has a variety of ways by which the board will process or work through these issues and challenges. Some parts of the board's work will require different means by which they reach their conclusions and decisions. For example, deciding to call a new pastor will require more time, energy, concentrated prayer and discernment than the decision to choose a color for painting the men's washroom! Olson describes what he calls "board processes," four unique activities which give insight into the "how" of the work of the board.[237]

i. History giving and story telling

"Personal faith journeys are told or touched upon. Members identify and reflect upon experiences of the church in which God is recognized as an active player. The group considers a "master story" from the biblical tradition. They offer prayers of thanksgiving or confession that grow out of the stories. A particular issue before the board prompts the study of a relevant scripture."[238]

Olsen illustrates this particular board process with examples from a variety of churches that were able to compare their own story as a congregation with a specific Biblical story (Olsen calls this 'story weaving'). Through this practice insight and deeper understanding

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profit board website, Boardsource, in an article entitled "What is a consent agenda or consent calendar?" at http://www.boardsource.org/Spotlight.asp?ID=116.365

[237] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders,* p. xi.

[238] Olsen, p. 17.

ii. Biblical and theological reflection

Olsen illustrates this practice throughout his book by giving a series of case studies. The challenge is to help a church board to think in terms of Biblical analogies and Scriptural accounts to such an extent that they will begin to see themselves and their story within the framework of the larger story of Scripture. The task of the board is to then reflect on how these new insights help them to reframe their situation and how they might respond given the new information.

"The collective board is not to see itself as a coordinating cabinet or an advisory group but as the people of God in community."[239] Discerning the direction that God would have them go or determining the best solution to a given situation comes within the context of "theological reflection," as the board seeks to function as followers of Christ and not just "business owners." Again, as Olsen challenges us: this "is a new task for leaders. Its process has been absent from many board rooms. Since the quest for meaning is the hallmark of leadership and since people are set apart for leadership on church boards, creating gracious space for biblical-theological reflection in the agenda of boards is essential – not optional."[240]

iii. Prayerful discernment

"Of the four practices in our model, discernment is the most difficult to grasp. It cannot be reduced to a simple procedure. The Quakers have worked at it faithfully for three hundred years, and they say they don't have it down pat yet!"[241]

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[239] Olsen, p. 10.

[240] Olsen, p. 80.

[241] Olsen, p. 87.

Discernment here is not to be equated with "consensus decision making," it is not a political process; it is not a logical, rational, ordered discipline that "leads deductively to inescapable conclusions. Rather, it is to "see the movement of God, perhaps only in the dust kicked up by the wind. It is to see from God's perspective. If this is so, then the discernment process is one of uncovering the decision – not of making it."[242] Discernment is a patient process that doesn't neatly fit into our existing concept of board meetings but needs to!

More needs to be said about this process and the value that it could have for a church board. This research is recommending that this is in itself a topic for further consideration.

iv. "Visioning" the future

The fourth process, as described by Olsen, is related to the other practices of story weaving, biblical-theological reflection and prayer discernment. This process is similar to our earlier discussion about developing the vision that God has for the church. The distinction that needs to be made, however, is in the process and the attitude that the board holds. Vision can be viewed as simply a political process whereby the board determines what the majority want and then head in that direction. Or vision can be understood as so much more, it is asking the dangerous but all important question: "if God were to do ALL that he wants to do in and through the life of this church over the next five years, and if resources were not a limiting factor, what would God do?"

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[242] Olsen, p. 87 – 88.

q. Healthy boards choose a model of board governance that fits their context well

It is not just understanding the proper functions of a board that are going to develop healthy boards. It is important that the board understand and choose the best model or governance style that would work best within their specific context. Admittedly, some church boards will not have a lot of latitude in this area due to denominational structures or theological convictions.

i. Eight Models of Board Governance

There are a variety of models in the business community, in the non-profit sector and in the ecclesiastical realm, as to how a governing board operates. A survey of the literature reveals at least eight different models: the Operational Model, the Collective Model, the Management Model, the Constituent Representational Model, the Traditional Model, the Results-based Model, the Policy Governance (Carver) Model and the Advisory Board Model. In addition to these, within the various church structures and depending upon the denominational affiliation, there are numerous theological convictions and historical factors regarding governing systems that affect how the governing board would operate: Presbyterian, rule by elder, congregational, and so on.[243]

1. Operational Model: The board manages, governs and performs the work of the organization.

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[243] This is not to say that certain church governing models are better than others but that the fine nuances of developing a healthy church governing board are going to be affected by the various ecclesiastical situations, theologies and historical traditions.

2. Collective Model: The board and staff operate as a single team when making decisions about governance and the work of the organization. Board members may work with either or both service operations or management functions.

3. Management Model: The board manages operations through functional committees that may or may not have a staff coordinator.

4. Constituent Representational Model: An approach used by publicly elected officials. Federations or other constituency-elected boards have the primary responsibility of balancing the interests of their constituents with the best interests of the organization.

5. Traditional Model: The board governs and oversees operations through committees established along functional lines (finance, human resources, programs) but delegates the management functions to the executive director.

6. Results-based Model: The executive director is a non-voting member of the board, carries substantial influence over policy making, and is viewed as a full partner with the board. Committees, organized around board responsibilities and lead planning, would guide governance, and monitor and audit performance of the board, executive director and organization.

7. Policy Governance (Carver) Model: The board governs through policies that establish organizational aims (ends), governance approaches, and management limitations. These policies also should define the relationship of the board with the executive director. The executive director has broad freedom to determine the means that will be used to achieve organizational aims.

8. Advisory Board Model: A board selected and dominated by the executive director. This board provides prima facie legitimacy to the organization but governs only in a nominal sense. Board members provide advice and may rubber-stamp the executive director's recommendations.

ii. Questions that need to be addressed in choosing a governance model to use:

1. **The Biblical/theological challenge**

There are several challenges that need to be addressed when evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each of these governance models. First, there is the biblical and theological question. Does this fit within a scriptural framework? Addington has made it clear that there is much room for interpretation as to how to organize and operate a governing board. Scripture does not speak directly to the issue of the type or style of governance or how boards are to operate.[244] However, there still needs to be discussion and discernment as to whether the particular model of governance can be used within the structure of a community of faith, especially within a small church context.

2. **The practicality challenge**

A second question would be the question of practicality: will this model work within a small church environment and culture? For example, Carver's policy governance model works quite well in some non-profit organizations, mission boards and denominational structures but when you are working with 25 – 30 people in a small church situation, the important distinctions between the governing board and the staff would be difficult to maintain.

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[244] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 182.

Much has been made of late in several Christian organizations about moving to the "Policy Governance" model (also known as the Carver model). John Kaiser has taken this approach and brought it into the church as a viable means of developing a better governance structure.[246] While there is much to commend this approach, the complexities and intricacies of developing all of the documents and protocol for this governing structure make it a less desirable option for most small churches. Simply put, small churches have limited staff and most people who have the time and ability to volunteer will more than likely wear several "hats" at the same time. This is highly discouraged within the policy governance perspective, as those serving on the board cannot in any way be involved in the staff function, either as paid or volunteer staff.

3. The cultural suitability challenge

A third question would be that of "cultural fit or suitability." Does the governance model dovetail or fit within the existing culture of the congregation? Would the decision making processes and protocols necessary for that specific governance structure be suitable for that particular church family? In many small churches, change is difficult, painful and suspect. The governance model will need to be one that can be adapted fairly well within the existing culture.

r. Healthy boards know how to "retire" board members with grace and dignity

The earlier discussion highlighted the importance of boards being intentional about how they choose new board members and then the importance of providing orientation and ongoing training. This is the `front door` so to speak. It is equally important that there be a clear and intentional process about the `back door` as it were. In some small churches, the invitation to

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[246] John Edmund Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose: Accountable Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006).

consider serving as an elder or deacon, is understood to be a lifetime commitment. In many Baptist churches, for example, deacons are chosen to serve for life. Even after a deacon retires from active ministry service due to age or infirmity, some Baptist churches refer to them as deacons emeritus!

There ought to be a clear, intentional and agreed upon process for ending or retiring from the work of the board.[247] A board member carries no authority apart from serving as a part of the team. Outside of board meetings the board members are beneficiaries of the organization. One person cannot speak for the whole group, unless the whole board has already decided to give that individual authority to speak on their behalf.[248]

5. Summary

In summary, the challenges that boards face are primarily attitudes and the resulting behaviors that stem from these attitudes: issues of trust/mistrust, freedom/control and empowerment/bureaucracy. In the small church, these issues are exacerbated by institutional structures, constitutions and by laws that act more as a road block than as guard rails. There is a great amount of confusion as to the proper and appropriate roles and responsibilities for the pastor and the board members. This confusion is sometimes heightened when board members forget which "hat" they are wearing. In the small church, relationships can sometimes become complicated by lack of quality communication.

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[247] See Charles Ryrie in "Nailing Down a Board" for more advice on how to retire a board member gracefully.

[248] This has been called "speaking with one voice." This is a critically important understanding that enables healthy church boards to function effectively as a team.

We have learned from this literature survey that boards need to first and foremost be "spiritual." The board needs to understand that, while the discussions may be about finances, photocopiers or fixing the bathroom sink, they are in fact the "prime spiritual community." Their relationships with each other and the pastor, their example in having true servant's hearts, their attitudes towards each other, these attitudes and behaviors have an enormous affect on the larger congregation.

A really effective board views themselves as a team, working together with intentionality, setting and achieving goals as a team and then celebrating their successes together. The board that leads well will cultivate leadership within the board and will lead with courage and wisdom, not for the sake of personal gain or from selfish agendas. Trust and respect for each other will be the cornerstone of healthy relationships among the board members. The chairperson understands that they themselves are an important "point person" in the developing of a board culture of inter-personal health, courageous leadership and prayerful intentionality. Conflict management/resolution and "fierce conversations" will be normal activities for them as they move forward as a team, united in mission, vision and values.

For the small church, board member selection based on a previously agreed upon, carefully, prayerfully honed list of board member qualifications, will be a major step forward. Board member orientation, which is the responsibility of the board chair and the pastor working together, will ensure ongoing and increasing health and life giving vitality to the board. Ongoing

training and development of the existing board needs to be a priority, especially in the areas of

character development, intellectual improvement and emotional wellness.[249]

A summarized list of the responsibilities of the board would include:

1. Praying - ensuring that the "power is on"

2. Discerning the church's mission, vision and values

3. Strategic planning – based on the church's unique mission, vision and values

4. Defining ministry initiatives – derived from the strategic plan out of an atmosphere of prayer and intentional discernment

5. Ensuring the church's health through caring, teaching, equipping, unleashing and protecting

6. Evaluating ministry and maintaining accountability

7. Assessing risk and managing crises

The board will go about their activities using:

1. history giving and storytelling

2. biblical and theological reflection

3. prayerful discernment

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[249] Recent materials that discuss and develop an understanding of "emotional health" (one's EQ) such as Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003) are helpful resources in this area.

4. by "visioning" the future

The question that this research is seeking to answer is "how do selected factors appear to contribute to healthy church boards in small Atlantic Baptist Convention churches?" We have looked at what healthy boards look like, and specifically what a healthy church board should look and act like, so now let us turn our attention to the small church. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the small church? What does a small church look like, how does it behave and what are the unique characteristics and qualities that would help us to determine whether it was a "healthy" small church?

B. Discovering the Characteristics of a Healthy Small Church

Some would argue that the small church is on the brink of extinction, that it cannot survive the trends of globalization, urbanization, economic upheavals and the many other changes to our society. Others, however, are more optimistic. The fact of the matter seems to be, as we begin to delineate the strengths and weaknesses of the small church, that the very qualities that lend strength, tenacity and resilience to the small church can also become their very weaknesses. One's perspective becomes an important piece in a careful and honest evaluation of the status of the small church in today's world.[250] If there were a bias to be noted in this research it is that bigger isn't necessarily better. Success isn't the only goal. In fact, it might not be a goal at all, if

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[250] Anthony G. Pappas, *Entering the World of the Small Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2000), p. 11 – 12; Lyle Schaller, *The Small Church IS Different!* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1982), p. 9 – 10.

success is equated with measurements of size, stature or significance. Faithfulness, good stewardship, and spiritual integrity might be more appropriate measurements to consider.[251]

1. The Small Church – It is Unique!

While there may be disagreement among the various authors as to the challenges and the best solutions that the small church faces, there is seemingly unanimous agreement that the small church is unique. As Lyle Schaller says, "The small church is different!"[252] Carl Dudley points out,

> Most small churches are different. They have two unique characteristics which I believe offer insight into their dynamics as a church. First, they are a special kind of primary group. Small churches are a single-cell organization in which every member expects to know, or to know about, every other member. Second, they are culture-carrying congregations, who bring their identity from the past. These two elements provide the unusual strength within the small church. They also offer the most resistance to those who seek to help the small church to grow, or change, or disappear.[253]

That 'the small church is different' may seem an obvious statement but too often small churches are compared with larger or more successful churches without thought as to whether the comparisons are biblically based, fair or accurate.[254] What are the positives of a small church? What are the benefits to individuals as well as the communities in which the small

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[251] Ruth A. Tucker, *Left Behind in a Megachurch World: How God Works through Ordinary Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), p. 70, 108, 140.

[252] Schaller, *The Small Church IS Different*, p. 15.

[253] Carl S. Dudley, *Unique Dynamics of the Small Church* (Washington, CD: The Alban Institute, 1977), p. 6 – 7. Underlined text in the original text.

[254] Several authors speak to the issue of comparisons and standards of success that are neither biblical nor accurate.

churches seek to minister? To borrow a phrase, God must like the small church because he has "made so many of them!"

a. The strengths of the small church

Dennis Bickers offers the following list of benefits of the small church: people experience community in small churches; people have an opportunity to serve and use their gifts; small churches communicate quickly when problems arise; people share common experiences; people are more important than programs or performances; and the surrounding community benefits from the presence of the church. [255]

The key to the uniqueness of the small church, as Dudley mentions above, is to be found in the fact that the small church is a "primary group."

> Like the primary group, the small church develops and confirms the ideals of individuals in the context of its own character and strength. Like the primary family group, the small church offers intimacy and reassurance among those who can be trusted. Like the extended family, many small churches have a territorial identity with a particular place…. In this caring group, people who claim a common heritage can share the rhythm of the seasons, and the silence of life's transitions.[256]

In a high tech, increasingly de-personalized world, the small church offers friendship, intimacy, caring and a personal touch. In an ever changing world, the small church provides stability, solace and rest. Not everyone may desire to be in the kind of close knit, intimate and

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[255] Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), p. 13 – 18.

[256] Carl S. Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1978), p. 33.

caring relationships that the small church offers but for those who do, the small church can be a refuge and safe haven.

As veteran small church pastor and leadership trainer Abe Funk states:

Small churches are tough. They are built around family and friendship relationships. They are more concerned about people than about excellence. They are primarily voluntary organizations. The grapevine can be used as an asset. They are intergenerational. They have a place for everyone. Meetings tend to be dominated by social activities. Boards tend to do less in favour of including everyone.[257]

Several authors have also pointed out that the vast majority of churches in North America are in fact small churches. The average size congregation, according to Schaller, has fewer than 40 in average Sunday morning attendance.[258] Recent research also indicates that small churches are evenly spread across denominational lines as well as geography.[259]

Given the benefits and the positive characteristics of the small church, David Ray argues that "small churches are the right size for being effective channels of the word of God."[260]

b. The weaknesses of the small church

As has been mentioned above, the very qualities and characteristics that make the small church so valuable may also her biggest challenges. Most specifically, the fact that the small church is a single cell, primary group, is one of the greatest challenges. As one Canadian pastor

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[257] Abe Funk, *Hope for the Small Church: Revitalizing the Small Church through Leadership Development* (Belleville, ON: Essence Publishing, 2005), p. 20.

[258] Schaller, *The Small Church IS Different*, p. 9.

[259] Bill M. Sullivan, *"Understanding Church Size Based on Empirical Data"* online article at the Nazarene Church official website, http://www.nazarene.org/files/docs/Understandingchurchsizesullivan2007.pdf

[260] David R. Ray, *Small Churches are the Right Size* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 1982), taken from the back cover.

and theological trainer notes: "One weakness of the small church is the temptation to become exclusive. The small fellowship of people, acting like an extended family, may resist the entry and acceptance of new people."[261] This issue is by far the most challenging weakness for the small church. Dudley points out that "the small church cannot grow in membership size without giving up its most precious appeal, its intimacy."[262] McIntosh has coined the phrase "stretched cell" to describe the situation in a church that has grown from the single cell, family dominated congregation but isn't quite yet a "large" church with multiple cells.[263]

"Another weakness frequently found in the small church is a 'monopoly of power.' Three or four people have become 'legitimatizers' or 'power brokers' and so give most of the leadership and make most of the basic decisions for the congregation."[264] Stories of stonewalling, back-room politicking and church fights are all too well known. The "big frog in the little pond" syndrome can be more clearly understood against the backdrop of the "tribe" defending itself from outside influences perceived to be a threat to the stability and safety of the group.[265] McIntosh in *One Size Doesn't Fit All* argues that one key difference between the small church and the medium size church is related to who is in the leadership circle. If leadership is not allowed to develop outside of the small church's "controlling family," the small church may

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[261] William R. Adamson, *Small Churches: Understanding and Encouraging Them* (Saskatoon, SK: Adam Enterprises, 1993), p. 38.

[262] Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective,* p. 49.

[263] Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1999), p. 43 – 46.

[264] Adamson, *Small Churches*, p. 39 – 40.

[265] Pappas, *Entering the World of the Small Church,* p. 19 – 22.

grow to become a "stretched cell" but will probably not be able to grow beyond that level to become a larger, multi-celled congregation.[266]

Burt and Roper report their list of negatives gathered from participants at small church workshops:

> When we use the word association technique in workshops with small congregations, the phrase "small church" invariably produces the following responses: limited human resources, faithful remnant, handful, too few doing too much, dependence on denomination, petty bickering, lack of privacy, money worries, inexperienced and entry-level clergy, limited programs, physical plant millstones, building upkeep difficulties, clergy turnover and many more. It becomes clear very quickly that these folks are keenly aware of the "negative" side of the small church.[267]

It is no wonder, then, that morale is often a problem in small churches.[268] In fact, it is more than just morale; Burt and Roper argue that small churches "develop a poor self-image with its attendant lack of self-esteem. *They accept a self-image dictated by society and the dominant culture, an image thrust on them by peer pressure, an image reinforced by failure or depression.*"[269]

Anthony Pappas lists six challenges for small churches: traditionalism, "niceness," a "club" mentality, paralysis in the face of conflict, negative "scripts," and the cost of maintaining aging buildings.[270] (Some of these issues stem from the primary group or tribal mentality while others

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[266] Gary McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All,* p. 43 – 46.

[267] Steven A. Burt and Hazel A. Roper, *Raising Small Church* Esteem (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1992), p. v.

[268] Adamson, *Small Churches*, p. 44.

[269] Burt and Roper, *Raising Small Church* Esteem, p. vii.

[270] Pappas, *Entering the World of the Small Church*, p. 7 – 9.

come as a result of the church declining in size and age. A distinction ought to be made between small churches that have once been larger, more "successful" churches and those who have "always" been small.[271] Very different strategies are needed to help "Old First Church" deal with the decline from 800 members to 50 members due to the change in the community around it, as opposed to the church that is 150 years old and has never grown beyond 50 people.)

Bickers offers the following list of challenges that small churches face: many suffer from serious self-esteem issues; most of them lack any common vision except for survival; resources are usually limited; too much is frequently expected of the pastor; and leadership is in the hands of a few people who may or may not be spiritually qualified to lead. [272]

It seems clear from the overview that the small church has significant issues to deal with. It is not within the scope of this paper to tackle all of these issues. The focus of this project is to determine what positive effect developing a healthy church board on the health of the overall congregation. Again, it is the hypothesis of this researcher that many of the issues and challenges that the small church face internally could be dealt with if there was a strong, effective, healthy governing board serving the congregation. As Daman reiterates, understanding the unique characteristics of the small church, especially as it relates to decision making and the leadership function, will go a long way to developing healthy small churches:

> Whereas much of what is written about church leadership follows a managerial model, small churches operate under a family model of leadership in which relationships form the fabric of the community and organization. Just as leadership is vastly different in a family owned and operated business compared

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[271] Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective,* p. 40.

[272] Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church*, p. 9.

to a Fortune 500 corporation, the roles and responsibilities of leaders in a small church are perceived much differently than in a megachurch. This is not to say that one is better than the other, but each is appropriate in its own context, and leaders in both situations can learn much from each other. If pastors and board members want to be effective leaders, however, they must understand the criteria by which their congregation judges and views their leadership. Failure to do so will result in unnecessary misunderstandings, bringing frustration and hurt to the pastor, the board, and the congregation.[273]

The small church, Dudley argues, "does not fit the organizational model for management efficiency. It does not conform to the program expectations of 'something for everyone.' It does not provide expanding resources for professional compensation. It is not a 'success.'"[274] Given the propensity of many to compare the small church to its larger cousin and in a culture that worships "success," the small church is indeed often viewed with disdain. But understanding its unique character and perspective should give room for much improvement.

Addington offers his thoughts as to what happens when two of the more prevalent issues in the small church are joined by a third destructive force:

> I would argue that two defining characteristics of church cultures are bureaucracy and control. These are often fueled by a third characteristic: mistrust. Together, these three dysfunctions disempower at every level, preventing church cultures from freely carrying out responsibility…. Whether intentional or not, these dysfunctions hinder the health of the church, the happiness factor of those involved, and the ministry effectiveness. Is it any wonder so many churches find themselves ineffective, with frustrated staff members, board members, and volunteers who simply leave for other churches where they are empowered to minister? The net loss to ministry is huge.[275]

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[273] Daman, *Leading the Small Church*, p. 213. See also Chart 2, `Daman`s comparison of `managerial` model with `family` model of leadership, pg. 212.

[274] Dudley, *Making the Small Church Effective*, p. 24.

[275] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 160 - 161.

c. The opportunities available to the small church

While there are certainly strengths and weaknesses in the small church, there are also wonderful opportunities that exist! I think Daman is on the right track when he suggests that, "In a small church, we pastors earn the right to be heard, not by our communication skills, but by our relationships with the people in the congregation."[276] The opportunity of building real, lasting, healthy relationships with people, both in the congregation as well as in the larger community, is huge! The world around the small church is hungry and thirsty for life giving relationships.

The small church has a wide open door, an opportunity to impact individuals and families, whole communities, with the joy and peace of the gospel. As Jesus said, "the fields are ripe for harvest."[277] In an ever changing, increasingly fear filled and confusing world, the small church has the blessing of coming along side of people, rich and poor and offering what the small church does best: be a family.

Daman also notes that "One of the benefits of ministering in a small church is that sermons can be interactive…the congregation can become active participants in the communication process."[278] In a congregation of a few thousand or even a few hundred, a little boy could not appropriately ask the pastor, during the message, to further explain a statement. But in a small church, with 30 or 40 gathered together, that same little boy could ask a question and help not only to bring understanding for himself but the other 39 who were too afraid or too embarrassed

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[276] Glenn C. Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), p. 186.

[277] John 4:35b

[278] Daman, *Leading the Small Church*, p. 188.

to ask! Done well, the small church, even during a Sunday morning service, can provide the opportunity for teaching and discipleship that would be virtually impossible in a larger setting.

Further to this point, Daman says, "In our small churches, most people come because they want to hear what God has communicated to them, not because they want to be entertained through drama and inspiring music. In our small churches, the worship service still revolves around the message."[279] What a great opportunity exists, then, for the small church pastor. Prayerfully planning and developing a worship experience that encourages and allows for people to meet with God, to hear from Him, to feel safe to listen and to pray and to give and to share together!

d. The threats to the survival of the small church

One of the threats to the small church's survival that was mentioned earlier was that of urbanization. Indeed many smaller communities are being emptied out as the 'young' move to the city for education, work and a more 'interesting' lifestyle. However, it is also true that, in many communities, people are moving out of the urban sprawl, looking for a slower pace and a quieter life. There are those who have chosen to live more simply, whatever that might look like. Again, this is a great opportunity for the small church. Identifying and targeting newcomers to a community, offering to provide assistance and friendship in any number of ways, could be a major source of both evangelism and Christian service. In Canada, immigration is now a major source of population growth and is not isolated to the major urban areas. The challenge for the small church will be for the leadership (and the entire church family in most cases) to hear from

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[279] Daman, *Leading the Small Church*, p. 188 – 189.

God about his heart for lost people and to develop a strategy that would intentionally reach out to new residents.

In some regions, the sparse population base may provide opportunities for small churches to form strategic alliances with other community groups, other churches (even other denominations!) that would enhance their ministry presence in the community. Dennis Bickers has written extensively on the opportunities that are available to the "bivocational" pastor. In situations where the congregation cannot "fully fund" a pastor's salary, the pastor earns a living from some other means of employment and then serves the church, alongside of or in addition to that. Bickers himself spent twenty years serving a small church as a bivocational pastor and writes positively of the benefits of that sort of ministry model.[280] Not every person may have either the inclination, ability or calling to serve in such a capacity but again, the opportunity is there and needs to be prayerfully considered by some small churches.

2. **The characteristics of a *healthy* small church**

Having discussed the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the small church, we now need to ask the question: what are the characteristics of a small church that is a *healthy* small church? The intent of this question is *not* to ask, what can you do to make a small church grow or how can you "fix" the small church? Rather, we need to redefine "success" from a biblical standpoint. As Schaller points out, we need to judge the small church on its own terms

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[280] Dennis Bickers, *The Bivocational Pastor: Two Jobs, One Ministry.* Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2004.

and its own merits.[281] Pappas provides a starting point for a fresh evaluation of the small church and offers a different kind of definition for a healthy small church:

> Small churches become part of God's redemptive activity when they live out their divine calling. Small churches that have an infectious joy have a future. Joy is one of the primary gifts of the Holy Spirit. Not a happiness based on entertainment or even positive circumstances, but a fundamental delight to be alive, to be in fellowship, to serve other people, to be in God's family. It does not take visitors very long to sense whether they will be uplifted or depressed in a particular small church, and thus whether they will stick around. The small church that is a conduit for the joy of the Lord will be a blessing to real people.[282]

a. Bickers' list of seven characteristics

From Bickers' perspective, a healthy small church has some definite and specific characteristics.[283]   A healthy small church (1) has a positive self-image, (2) shares a common vision that creates a sense of purpose and unity, (3) maintains community while still warmly welcoming new visitors, (4) practices the importance of faithful stewardship and financial support, (5) understands ministry to be the responsibility of all the members of the church and (6) encourages everyone to serve according to his or her spiritual gifts – not by seniority or guilt.

b. Callahan's list of twelve characteristics

Callahan provides twelve central characteristics of strong, healthy small congregations:[284]

1. Specific, concrete missional objectives

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[281] Schaller, p. 13.

[282] Pappas, *Entering the World of the Small Church*, p. 138 – 139.

[283] Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church*, p. 10.

[284] Kennon L. Callahan, *Small, Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths and Health for Your Congregation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 22.

2. Pastoral and lay visitation

3. Corporate, dynamic worship

4. Significant relational groupings

5. Strong leadership resources

6. Sold decision making

7. Several programs and activities

8. Open accessibility

9. High visibility

10. Adequate land and parking

11. Adequate space and facilities

12. Solid financial resources

The emphasis, it seems, in Bickers' definition is on attitude and character qualities, rather than numbers and programming. In Callahan's list, there are a number of items that are too geographically specific. I would disagree with several on his list. For example, "high visibility" is not something that can always be achieved, especially given the financial and human resources of many small churches. The church building could be located out in a rural community, far from any busy highways, sometimes not even visible by the rest of the community but this does not mean that the church would not or could not become or be a healthy, vibrant congregation!

c. Natural Church Development

Christian Schwartz has also developed a list of health characteristics, although not specifically for the small church. His research has been extensive, involving many denominations, all different size churches in a large number of countries. The resulting data led

him to conclude that there were eight quality characteristics that would help or impede a church`s growth.

The eight quality characteristics are:

1. Empowering leadership

2. Gift-oriented ministry

3. Passionate spirituality

4. Functional structures

5. Inspiring worship services

6. Holistic small groups

7. Need-oriented evangelism

8. Loving relationships

Schwartz would suggest that it is the combination of the noun and the adjective describing that noun that makes all of the difference for the health and vitality of the church. Every church has leadership but is it empowering? Every church has structures that they have created to function, but are they in fact functional or do they hinder effective ministry? And so it would go with each of the eight characteristics.

d. Conclusion: The Ten Characteristics of a *Healthy Small* Church

Taking each author's list of health characteristics, comparing and contrasting them and then looking for commonalities and distinctives, there seems to be ten key areas that should be

included in a list of "health" characteristics for a small church to be considered to be a "healthy" small church:[285]

1. Courageous, visionary & empowering leadership

2. A compelling mission, a clear vision and common core values

3. Gift based, every member ministry

4. Need oriented evangelism

5. Loving relationships within caring small groups

6. Inspiring worship

7. Passionate spirituality

8. Faithful stewardship

9. Positive self image

10. Functional structures

3. Healthy church board functioning within the context of a healthy small church =

A healthy *small church* board

First, we have sought to discover from our survey of the literature on what a healthy board should look and act like, then we continued by discovering what the characteristics of a healthy small church should be. Now, we will take these two areas of discovery and combine them to determine what the characteristics of a healthy board should look like within the context of a healthy small church. Healthy board meets healthy small church and the result is a healthy small church board.

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[285] See Chart 3 – Healthy Small Church Characteristics Comparison Grid, pg, 213.

a. Healthy small church boards develop healthy leaders/board members

It is a primary conclusion of this research that a healthy small church must have or develop a healthy, visionary, spiritually-minded group of leaders. Without such the church will not retain its health for long. If the church is "unhealthy" or dysfunctional, developing healthy leadership should be "job one" for the church to ever become healthy.

b. Healthy small church board member characteristics:

Based upon our research then, these then should be considered the key characteristics of healthy church board members within a *small* church context:[286]

1. Has spiritual maturity: godly character, passion for Jesus, displays humility, extends hope, loves people genuinely, motivated and active in evangelism and has discernment.

2. Exhibits leadership qualities: Has "kingdom vision;" influences others positively; exhibits a bias towards action; leads willingly, boldly and with intentionality

3. Has the ability to communicate well: with board, church members and other stakeholders

4. Is in alignment with vision, mission, values & strategy and in doctrinal agreement

5. Is a team player: Respects and trusts board members and the pastor

6. Is a lifelong learner, reliable and teachable

7. Is already involved members of the church

8. Is non-traditional/future focused

9. Has their spouse's support

10. Is capable in resource gathering

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[286] See Chart 4 – Contrast and comparison of characteristics of healthy board members, p. 214.

c. Healthy small church boards function in unique ways within the context/culture of the small church

As we have discussed, the small church is unique and the church board will have unique challenges to that situation. It is important, therefore, that any discussion on the qualities and characteristics of a healthy small church board include this sense of uniqueness as part of the mix. Glenn C. Daman has written extensively in the area of the small church and brings a clear and careful sense of the small church's uniqueness to his writings. In a recent online article entitled "The Board in the Small Church Context" discusses what he calls the distinctives of the small church.[289]

d. Healthy small church boards understand the unique challenges of leading within the small church

In an online article entitled "The Distinctive Functions of the Small Church Board," Glenn C. Daman lists six statements that provide insight into the unique perspective that small church board members and pastors need to have regarding the functioning of a healthy church board in that context. As Daman points out:

> "A brief perusal of the various books available dealing with the role and function of the church board reveals that most of them have been written by those involved in a large church context. While there is much that we can learn from their experience, for many of the principles are transferrable to the small church, it is important that we realize that there are uniqueness's to the small church and how the board functions. It is necessary, as we lead the church, that we understand these distinctives and that we learn to minister in the context of them in order to be effective as leaders of the church. The failure to understand these differences will

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[289] Glenn C. Daman, "The Board in the Small Church Context," found online at
  http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-small-church-board/the-board-in-the-small.html

result in frustration as people have different expectations. This is especially true as more and more urban people move into rural areas but do not have an understanding of how the small church operates. Because of this, they have different expectations of themselves, the church and the board. Many times these expectations come in conflict with the small church culture."[290]

Damans lists five distinctives and explains each one. We will state the basic point and then interact with each of them, in turn:

1. **The small church has a limited pool of qualified individuals.**

This is a very important point to keep in mind. Carver's "policy governance" model and Kaiser's "accountable leadership" model are not practical in a church of 25 people! This is one of the challenges in many small churches. However, leadership must be careful to not give in to cynicism or apathy, just because there are few candidates for leadership. When we turn to the biblical and theological survey, we will see that this issue will be brought up again.

2. **The small church requires people who are willing rather than people who are trained.**

This point, as well, comes from someone who has obviously been involved in the life of the small church. But there needs to be caution to not give in to an attitude that "anything goes" or that quality doesn't matter. Encouraging a high (but not impossible) standard and helping leaders move forward and grow is going to be an important strategy for small church leaders, especially if they desire to move the church towards greater health and spiritual vitality.

3. **The small church provides on the job training.**

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[290] Daman, "The Distinctive Functions of the Small Church Board," an online article found at http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-small-church-board/distinctive-functions-of.html

Daman is recognizing the importance of connecting his first two statements of reality in the small church with a strategy of how to increase health and yet not block "untrained" leadership from getting involved. Not every small church provides on the job training. As we have noted earlier, the danger to assume that board members are ready to take responsibility without proper and thoughtful orientation could lead to continuing dysfunction on the board.

4. The small church sees the board position as a heritage.

As we have noted earlier in our literature survey, this is definitely a reality in many small churches. The deadly trio of "bureaucracy, control and mistrust" will kill a church even while programs and Sunday morning services continue to happen each week. However, wise church boards will work at developing an understanding of the nature of board work as a sacred trust and as a heritage from the Lord, not one necessarily belonging to the prominent family in the church!

5. The small church selects its boards through congregational appointment.

This is a definite reality for many small churches, especially those that are congregational in polity. Congregational appointment does not necessarily mean that the church board cannot speak into the process. A small church pastor and leadership, working prayerfully and strategically can encourage and recommend new board members that will enhance the health of the board. As Addington as astutely observed: *"… congregationalism does not mean everyone in the congregation has an equal voice….[and] congregationalism does not mean all members have a voice on all matters."*[291] Yes, the small church has sometimes developed a culture of

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[291] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 185 – 186.

oligarchic or even aristocratic rule but again, if the pastor and leadership desire to move towards greater health in this area, there are appropriate actions that can overcome this challenge. This point will be reviewed further in the next chapter with our Biblical and theological survey.

e. Daman's seven distinctive functions of a small church board[292]

1. *The small church board is multi-task oriented.*

As those who have been involved in small church ministry know all too well, the church board will also be Sunday school teachers, youth leaders and quite often will wear several different hats in the organization. As we have discussed earlier, it is very important that board members remember "which hat" they are wearing when serving on the board.

2. *The small church board must be involved.*

"Because the small church functions by having a people who are willing to do a number of different tasks, the same is required for the leadership. The board member must not only set the example by being involved in other ministries as well, but people expect them to do so. If they are not involved then people will question their commitment which will undermine their influence within the church."[293]

3. *The small church board has limited time available.*

As a corollary statement to the first two, and given the cultural context that we live in, life is busy and in the small church especially, time is in short supply. Board members, as we have already noted, serve in multiple responsibilities. "The challenge for the board is to not get bogged down in the minutia of the ministry. While they provide oversight to all the ministries

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[292] Daman, "The Distinctive Functions of the Small Church Board."

[293] Daman, "Distinctive Functions."

that must make sure to focus upon spiritual leadership and not get focused only upon organizational leadership."[294]

4. *The small church board must be family oriented.*

Given the single celled, primary group perspective of the small church, the board's authority is that of being "family leaders." As Daman remarks,

> "They are not an executive board, rather they are family leaders. As family leaders we lead more by our example and influence than position and authority. Rather than being "elder ruled," where the board makes all the decision, in a family it functions more as "elder led" where the board leads the congregation through recommendations and counsel."[295]

5. *The small church board operates by consensus rather than votes.*

Given this family type of relational connecting, decision making needs to be more relational as well. A healthy small church board that has a servant-empowered leadership perspective will choose to move in the direction of operating by consensus.

6. *The small church board must remain unified.*

Daman points out a key ingredient that is often overlooked in the transitioning of a small church that chooses to develop a healthier environment.

> "Because the small church functions as a family, and they see the board as the leaders of the family, it is critical that the board remain unified, especially when the church is going through difficult times. While there is the need for open and honest (and yes sometimes heated) discussion within the board meeting itself, yet the board should always remain unified in its position within the church. Once a decision is made, then everyone should be supportive of that decision regardless of whether or not they felt it was the right one."[296]

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[294] Daman, "Distinctive Functions."

[295] Daman, "Distinctive Functions."

[296] Daman, "Distinctive Functions."

7. *The small church board determines the overall health of the church.*

Daman sums up our findings regarding the importance of the small church board in developing healthy small churches:

> *The small church board determines the overall health of the church.* In the large church, the health of the church is largely determined by the spiritual health and vision of the pastor and the staff. They are seen to be the leaders of the church and they will have the greatest impact on the overall health of the congregation. While the board certainly influences the church, their impact is lessened by the fact that they are not involved in the day-to-day operation of the church and the people see the pastor and staff as the primary leaders. In the small church the board plays a far more critical role. Because the pastors in smaller churches have a shorter tenure, the people tend to look to the board to be the ones to provide the leadership of the church. If the board is unhealthy, marked by division, spiritual shortsightedness, or immaturity, then the congregation will demonstrate the same spiritual weaknesses. Consequently, it is important that the board continually examine itself to make sure that it is demonstrating godliness in their conduct, searching scriptures in their decisions and following the spiritual instruction of the pastor. If the church is not healthy, then the board usually has no further to look than itself.[297]

C. Conclusion

From this survey of the current literature both of governing boards and the healthy small church, we have sought to discover how selected factors contributed to the health of governing boards of small Atlantic Baptist Churches. It is clear that all seven of the factors proposed do in fact play an important role in the overall health of a small church board. We have also discovered from this same survey that healthy small church boards will lift the level of health and vitality of a small church.

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[297] Glenn C. Daman, "Distinctive Functions of the Small Church Board," an online article found at
http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-small-church-board/distinctive-functions-of.html

D. The Health Factors Matrix: Adding the Lens from Current Literature

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
1.The ability to communicate effectively among board members	*Healthy boards communicate well *Healthy boards know their primary responsibilities *Healthy boards organize for effective ministry *Healthy boards use four empowering processes to govern well			
2. The spiritual maturity of the individual board members	*Healthy boards recognize the importance of having spiritually healthy board members *Healthy board members are spiritually mature, have godly character, passion for Jesus, genuinely love people, have discernment and are motivated and active in evangelism			

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
3. Positive and healthy relationships among board members & pastor	*Healthy boards trust and respect each other *Healthy boards develop healthy interpersonal relationships			
4. The process used to identify, train and release new board members	*Healthy boards are strategic in recruiting, they know the characteristics of healthy board members, they proactively screen potential new members *Healthy boards are intentional about orientation and assimilation of new board members			
5. The process by which decisions are reached as a board	*Healthy boards display courage in decision making			

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
6. The level of agreement and unity of vision, purpose and values within the board	*Healthy boards work well as a team *Healthy boards choose new members that are in alignment with the vision, mission, values, strategy and doctrine of the church *Healthy boards choose new board members that are already active in the life and ministry of the church			
7. The process by which conflict is handled within the board	*Healthy boards know how to manage conflict *Healthy boards display courage *Healthy boards have a bias towards action, leads willingly, boldly and with intentionality			

Chapter 3- Theological and Biblical Foundations

- *Key Question and Purpose*

The question that is at the heart of this research is this: ""How do selected factors appear to contribute to healthy church boards in small Atlantic Baptist Convention churches?" We will now turn our attention to the Biblical text to seek to discover what guidance and counsel we can find that will provide a solid theological foundation upon which to build a healthy church board.

A. The Heart of the Matter

The issue at hand is really about leadership. In order for any local church to be healthy there will need to be healthy leaders. As has already been discussed, the congregation's health is by and large a direct result of the health of the leadership that governs that congregation. John Maxwell maintains that "leadership is influence, nothing more and nothing less."[298] Certainly leaders are people who influence others, either for success or failure. A healthy church board ought to have a solid Biblical basis upon which to base its leadership. This chapter will seek to develop a solid theological foundation that can inform leaders as to why and how they can influence others towards greater spiritual health.

B. Four Major Old Testament Leaders

The Bible contains a variety of historical narratives that illustrate both healthy and dysfunctional leaders. Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David: each of these Old Testament characters stand out in our minds as strong, godly leaders. The Scripture is also careful to paint a realistic

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[298] John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 20.

picture of each of these men, not glossing over their faults and failures, but presenting them as men who each experienced the grace and mercy of God in their lives, all the while serving and leading others, and constantly learning how to lead better. We are going to look at four specific accounts to discover truths about leadership and how these truths can inform and guide our understanding, especially as it relates to developing healthy church boards. There are several didactic sections, in the teachings and ministry of Jesus, in the writings of the Apostles Paul and Peter, which will also offer more light on our present topic.

1. **Moses: Choosing Leadership Based on God's Principles (Exodus 18: 17 – 26)**

First, we turn to the narrative account, found in Exodus 18:17 - 26, where Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, comes to Moses with some practical advice concerning a situation that Jethro has personally witnessed taking place. The context for this story is the forty year wilderness wandering. Moses has been used by God to lead the Israelite nation out of slavery in Egypt and towards the Promised Land. They have just defeated the Amalekites and Jethro, Moses father-in-law, along with Moses' wife and two sons, have just been reunited with him. They have spent time worshiping together and are enjoying their reunion.

"The next day…," the Scripture says, "Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening." (vs. 13) Jethro watches this throughout the day and then asks Moses, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" (vs. 14) He has watched as Moses has patiently listened to and then talked with scores of people, each person looking for an answer to a specific problem. As Moses explains to Jethro, "[It is] because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute it is brought to me, and I

decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." (vs. 16) Moses was doing what he knew and loved to do: shepherding the people whom God had entrusted to his care.

However, Jethro points out that "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out." (vs. 17 – 18) The group of people that left Egypt under Moses' leadership numbered in the hundreds of thousands, maybe even larger.[299] Moses was skilled at providing the leadership that organized the people in preparing and leaving Egypt, as well as having the personal training and experiences both in the desert where they would be travelling and the courts of Egypt from which they had just left. However, it seems that Moses did not have much understanding in the area of organizational management or in the ability to delegate and share the burden of leadership with a team of trained and qualified leaders.

To Moses credit as well as a clear indication of his emotional maturity and his sense of personal worth, he does not seem offended by Jethro's comments nor does he seem to be threatened by this apparent challenge to his leadership and authority. Given the fact that Jethro was a Midianite and not a fellow Israelite also speaks to Moses ability to accept constructive criticism concerning his leadership. "Moses' character is reflected in both his willingness to accept the counsel of another religious leader in implementing a new approach to governing the people, and his delegation of authority to responsible men within the community."[300]

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[299] Exodus 12:37 indicates that there were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. If each man has a wife and just 3 children, that would equate to over 2 million people!

[300] Roy L. Honeycutt Jr., *Exodus*, Volume 1 (revised) in The Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1969), p. 389.

Jethro continues to explain the reason for his concern: "The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone." (vs. 18) Moses' father-in-law is genuinely concerned for both Moses and the Israelite people. We do not know and the text does not indicate if this situation had been going on for very long but it is clear that if it did continue for any length of time, Moses would burn out from exhaustion and the people would end up in frustration and eventually conflict. The situation was definitely ripe for problems to develop.

The solution that Jethro suggests is for Moses to choose leaders that he can train to work with him, delegating some of the responsibilities and spreading the work load out. Jethro's phrase, "Listen to me now and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you" sounds very similar to words of the apostles in the conclusion of the first church council debate in Acts 15:28, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…"

> "Jethro thus specifies that Moses' selection of helpers is to be with great care (almost with reliance upon a visionary perception), from the whole of Israel, and is to include only men who are able, firm, and honest and "who have reverence for God." The men thus chosen are then to be made leaders over divisions of people, specified on a numerical basis but with no further criteria, and they are to serve on a continuing basis as those to whom the people may bring their less complex problems of interpretations of the covenantal directions. When the more difficult problems come up, these leaders are to bring them to Moses for guidance, a guidance for which Moses, as the people's representative, could consult Yahweh."[301]

There are several themes that emerge from this narrative. Delegation and team work, careful selection of leaders, the importance of organization and planning, the training and

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[301] John I. Durham, *Exodus*, in the Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 3, General editors: David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Old Testament Editor: John D. W. Watts (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), p. 250.

development of leaders, working from your strengths and understanding that being the leader might mean recognizing someone else's perspective as wisdom from God: all of these are highlighted in this account.

One recurring theme throughout many of the Biblical texts that speak to the issue of leadership is that of the careful selection of leaders. Having a clear list of character traits and personal skills required provides the basis for careful and wise evaluation of potential leadership candidates.

> "There were four characteristics for men who would share judicial responsibility with Moses. First, they were to be *able men.* Able (*chayil*) most often means strength, usually physical. It is used of mighty men of valor, heroic men (cf. Josh. 1:14; Judg. 6:12; 1 Kings 11:28), and also of a force or army (14:4, 9, 17, 28). The word also connotes ability or efficiency, often involving moral worth (Prov. 12:4; 31:10; Ruth 3:11). However, of 244 usages in the Old Testament only 13 refer to "ability," 30 refer to wealth, and all others refer to strength and to a force or army.
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> Septuagint translators understood the word to mean strong, mighty, or powerful (*dunatos*). Either heroic men, or men of strength, is a good translation.
>
> Second, men to whom authority is delegated must be those who *fear God*, a phrase fraught with overtones of reverence, awe, wonder, dedication, religious commitment.
>
> Third, men chosen are to be *trustworthy* (literally, men of truth). *'Emeth* means firmness, faithfulness, or truth. It is used of reliability, as a "sure way" (Gen. 24:48); stability or continuance (Isa. 39:8; Esther 9:30; Jer. 33:6); faithfulness or reliability (Neh. 7:2; 1 Kings 2:4). Basically, "dependability: sums up the essence of its meaning. The noun (*'emeth*) came from the verb *'aman*, meaning confirm or support. Derivatives of the verb are foster father (Num. 11:12), foster mother (Ruth 4:16), pillars or supporters of the door (2 Kings 18:16). The verb came to mean "believe" in the sense of depend upon. Hence, whoever or whatever is *'emeth* is dependable. You can lean upon him for support, as the door does upon the doorpost or a child upon its foster parent.
>
> Fourth, the final prerequisite for those to assist Moses was the repudiation of the bribe. The dishonest judge and witness were constant sources of irritation in

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Israel, and they were the special object of prophetic wrath. Moses' assistants must *hate a bribe*."[302]

It is this precise issue of character that seems to be one of the main points behind the story of the young shepherd boy, David, and the secret anointing of him as the next king of Israel. Careful consideration must be given in the selection of capable and wise leaders.

2. David: Choosing Leadership Based on God's Perspective (1 Samuel 16: 1 – 13)

But before we look at this, let's set the context for this covert operation. Samuel has served God faithfully for decades as a godly and righteous leader of the nation of Israel.[303] Finally, the pressure from the Israelites[304] and God's permission[305] to choose a king leads Samuel to a young, timid Saul.[306] Saul is chosen as the first king of Israel.[307] Saul is tall and handsome, valiant in battle and a charismatic leader.[308] The nation rallies behind their new king. However, it becomes clear that Saul has a fatal flaw, an Achilles' heel as it were. Saul thinks quite highly of himself and is prone to disobey the word and will of God.[309] Finally, Saul is rejected as king by God[310] and Samuel's heart is broken[311] as he sees Saul slide into paranoia and spiritual confusion.

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[302]Honeycutt, *Exodus*, p. 388.

[303] 1 Samuel 12:1 – 5

[304] 1 Samuel 8:4 - 10

[305] 1 Samuel 8:7 - 9

[306] 1 Samuel 9

[307] 1 Samuel 11:14 – 15

[308] 1 Samuel 9: 1- 2

[309] 1 Samuel 13:13-14; 15:1 – 9

God speaks to Samuel and sends him to anoint the next king of Israel, in a covert operation, because of Samuel's fear of Saul. Samuel uses the ruse of wanting to offer sacrifices with the family of Jesse, David's father.[312] When Samuel arrives at Jesse's home he asks to meet each of his sons.

As the eldest of the eight sons, Eliab steps forward and Samuel thinks to himself, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord." (vs. 6) However, the Spirit of God says to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (vs. 7)

It is this issue of outward appearance versus the heart of a person, one's external persona as over against one's internal character qualities. It is easy, maybe too easy, to judge a person's leadership abilities and potential on the basis of their looks and mannerisms, their clothes or their physical features. This was apparently for the situation with Samuel. It is clear that he was still grieving over Saul's rejection as king. God had to speak to Samuel, saying "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel?" (vs. 1) Blaikie conjectures that Samuel's grief may also be over the concerns for a potential civil war and that rejecting Saul also meant rejecting the young Jonathan as successor to the throne as well.[313] Whatever the reason,

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[310] 1 Samuel 15:10 – 29

[311] 1 Samuel 16:1

[312] 1 Samuel 16: 1 – 5

[313] W. G. Blaikie, *The First Book of Samuel,* reprinted 1978 (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1887), p. 253.

Samuel apparently hasn't learned from the sad decisions of Saul to be more careful in coming to quick conclusions about a person's fitness for leadership on the basis of exterior qualities only.

Eventually, after going through the seven sons of Jesse and not finding that the Spirit of God is confirming any one of them to Samuel's spirit as the next king, he asks Jesse if he has any other sons. (vs. 11) Jesse sends for the youngest who is still outside tending the sheep. David eventually enters the room and may even have come in still smelling of sheep! At that moment the Spirit of the Lord prompts Samuel, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." (vs. 12) And so Samuel anoints David with oil in the presence of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord comes on David with power. (vs. 13)

It is this last part of the story that offers to us another clue in the leadership puzzle. David has been chosen by God, not by a popularity vote or by virtue of birth, education or physical prowess. Not only does God know the heart, God is the King and he will choose for himself the one that he wants to represent him as the next ruler. It is this issue that begins another narrative account in the life of Moses.

3. Joshua: Choosing Leadership Based on God's Call (Numbers 27: 12 – 23)

The story is told in Numbers 27:12 – 23 of Joshua being selected as the successor to Moses' leadership of the nation of Israel as they are about to enter the Promised Land. The context of this account is like a hinge point, a transition in the life of the young nation. They are nearing the end of the 40 years of wilderness wandering. Moses has been denied entrance to the Promised Land because of disobedience and arrogance in an earlier matter.[314]

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[314] Numbers 20:1 - 13

It is the Lord who initiates the conversation and directs Moses to go up onto a mountain range where he could see the land that was about to be given to the Israelites. (vs. 12) Moses expresses his concern to God that another person needs to be chosen to lead the people "to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." (vs. 17) Moses knows that it is up to the Lord to choose and appoint the right person. It is not up to Moses to try to figure out who his successor will be. Moses shows his mature leadership senses in that, while he is being punished and removed from leadership himself, he still shows concern that the nation continue to have godly leadership. His wording also indicates his understanding of leadership as being shepherding and the tendency of the people to go astray without good leadership.

God tells Moses to "take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit" and to lay hands on him, commissioning him as Moses' successor. Notice that there is a recurring theme throughout these narratives: it is the power of the Spirit that enables these men to fulfill their duties as leaders. Leadership is not an inherent gift but rather a result of reliance upon the Spirit of God, the outworking of the often secret, inward working of the Spirit.

It should also be noted that, while Joshua was divinely chosen, he is also someone who had proven himself over time and through a variety of experiences, to be a capable, discerning and wise leader. Joshua had served Moses for over forty years as his personal aide[315], as a military captain[316] and as one of the leaders in the community.[317] It had been Joshua who had gone with

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[315] Exodus 24:13; 33:11

[316] Exodus 17:10ff

[317] Exodus 32:17

the other eleven spies to check out the land of Canaan.[318] And it was only Joshua and Caleb who believed that God would protect them and enable them to be victorious over the much larger and stronger tribes inhabiting the land of Canaan, while the other ten spies rebelled and brought fear and unbelief into the camp.[319] Joshua and Caleb became the only two men that survived the forty years of desert wandering to enter and enjoy the Promised Land.[320]

4. **The "Future" King: Choosing Leadership Based on God's Criteria (Deuteronomy 17: 14 – 20)**

The issue of a person's character and the careful selection of leadership are so important that Moses is led by God to speak specifically and particularly about that early on in the life of the young nation of Israel. While they are still in the desert and are being given the Ten Commandments and the civil and religious laws that will govern and protect them as a nation, Moses speaks to the entire nation about what to do when the time comes and they decide to choose a king. Moses anticipates a time when the people would decide to ask for a king. Some commentators have read into this text the later emotion that Samuel felt when Israel actually rebels against the Lord by demanding a king "like all of the other nations."[321] However, the text of Deuteronomy 17 itself does not seem to have any such negative emotion. Rather, as Dr. Block explains, the text is neutral concerning the issue of kingship.[322] The point of the passage is rather

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[318] Numbers 13

[319] Numbers 14:6 – 9

[320] That is to say the only two men who were twenty years old or more at the time of the Exodus from Egypt.

[321] 1 Samuel 8:5

[322] Taken from class notes with Dr. Daniel Block during the course, "DMN 916: Spiritual Leadership in the Old Testament."

to highlight the need for wisdom in choosing a king, the process by which that should happen and the prohibitions that are deemed important concerning kingship and how to ensure that any king would serve God and the people well for many generations.

As Craigie points out:

"As a theocratic state, Israel's only true king was the Lord, and there was a sense in which it would seem presumptuous for a man to assume the title; the legislation given here makes certain that the king would remain aware both of his human status as a man among his brethren, and also of his status in relation to the kingship of God."[323]

Moses begins with this statement, "when you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us…" (vs. 14) Moses' concern is that when this happens at some point in the future, the nation needs to be prepared for it. Rather than challenging whether or not they should have a king or not and regardless of what that choice might say about the spiritual condition of the nation or the reasoning behind the choice, Moses wants to ensure that embedded in the national psyche is a solid theological framework from which to work. There will need to be clear and careful thinking as to how to go about choosing their national leader. Moses makes clear to them to "be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses." (vs. 15) The point seems to be that "… the office of the king would not be dependent on either popularity or military strength; it would be filled by a man approved by God."[324] Kline makes an important point, in relation to the other nations surrounding Israel, "[It is] the divine choice of a king to sit

[323] Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* in The New International Commentary on the Old Testament series, general editors: R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 253.

[324] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 254.

on the throne of Yahweh … He was to be a fellow covenant servant…   In some of these [pagan nations] the king was a god; in Israel, God was King."[325]

As well, the individual chosen to be king needed to be "from among your own brothers." They were not to choose "a foreigner, one who is not a brother Israelite." (vs. 15) Any person chosen to serve as the national leader of Israel needed to be part of the covenant of Israel. This prohibition seems to be "designed to preserve the integrity of the Israelite religion; none but a true Israelite could live within the legislation contained in verses 18 – 20."[326]

There were some very specific prohibitions placed upon the king, according to Moses, and one positive overarching consideration as well. The three prohibitions: the king is not to make the people return to Egypt in order to increase horses (vs. 16), he is forbidden to increase for himself wives (vs. 17), and he is not to accumulate excessive personal wealth (vs. 17). These prohibitions offer insight into the temptations and challenges that most leaders normally contend with.

These three prohibitions point out three areas of potential weakness in leaders and the propensity for leaders to fail as a result of these challenges. The first prohibition speaks to the desire of a leader to amass a military force, which is the point behind the need for horses. In a young nation that had few resources and whose army at this point would be made up of foot soldiers, having horses meant strength in battle with chariots and superior "fire power" so to speak.

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[325] Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy, Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 98.

[326] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 255.

However, there is also another layer of concern here. The nation is young and has just fled from the tyranny of slavery in Egypt. Moses' concern is not just the horses but the decision to enter into a kind of trade agreement with Egypt whereby the two governments would trade manpower for horsepower. "The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself *or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them…*" (vs. 16) To further emphasize his point, the sentence ends with "…for the Lord has told you, 'You are not to go back that way again.'" (vs. 16)

The second prohibition concerns the affections of the king's heart. "He must not take many wives or his heart will be led astray." (vs. 17) Only God knows how many great leaders have been ruined by their own lustful desires and have given in to the temptations that come from mixing power and sex. Later on in Israel's history, King David will succumb to the temptation and bring much pain and judgment on himself, his entire family and the nation as a whole. His son Solomon will go on to seemingly ignore this prohibition in his actions, as he marries women from many foreign cultures in a bid to consolidate his political power.

The third area of concern for Moses is in the personal financial life of the leader. "He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold." (vs. 17) As Craigie points out, "The accumulation of wealth would tend to give the king excessive personal power, so that he would become separated from his brethren…"[327] As Kalland notes, "The accumulation of ever larger amounts of silver and gold would also tend toward reliance on riches rather than on the Lord."[328]

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[327] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 256.

[328] Earl S. Kalland, Deuteronomy, in The Expositors Bible Commentary series, Volume 3; general editor: Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992)p. 117.

The nations surrounding Israel would have a powerful pull, as their later history proves, and so Moses wants to ensure that the nation stays true to its roots and its theological center: the sovereign God is their one and only King. The final condition that was placed upon any future king was a positive command: "…he is to write for himself[329] on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are the Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law…" (vs. 18 – 19)

> "The role of the *book* in the life of the king is of importance for understanding the full dimensions of Israel's faith. In the early part of Moses' address, he recalled for his audience the events of past history; on the basis of the experience of God in history (one form of revelation), the Israelites drew strength for the future. But the revelation of the word of God, written down for successive generations, was also a source of strength. Both the acts of God and the words of God were recorded; but while the former gave evidence of the living reality of their God, it was the latter that provided in detail the guidance and wisdom for daily living, in the first place for the king."[330]

Requiring the king to be a student of the Word was to ensure that his strength and wisdom would be informed and shaped by the God that he served. As Joshua is later commanded by God as he is called to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land, following Moses' death: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your moth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."[331]

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[329] Meaning that the king was personally responsible to see that he had this document, not that he had to literally copy it over in his own handwriting.

[330] Craigie, *Deuteronomy,* p. 257.

[331] Joshua 1:8

5. Summary of Themes Emerging from Selected OT Narratives

These four Old Testament narratives provide a powerful background from which to draw several important thoughts, especially as they relate to our discussion about healthy church boards. The first consideration is in the area of choosing capable and faithful leaders. Care and attention must be given to this important step in the process of building healthy and effective governing boards. In addition, leaders need to be chosen, not on the basis of their perceived strengths and abilities, but on the basis of a clear sense of a call of God on their lives. This call will demonstrate itself in a person's behavior and attitude. Faithfulness, spiritual maturity, proven track record and having a servant heart: these are key qualities that need to be demonstrated in a potential leader or board member.

Secondly, the importance of understanding that all authority is derived authority. The king is called and chosen to serve as a representative of God. The king has no authority of his own. Paul echoes this reminder: all power and authority are derived, from God, He is in charge.[332] We err greatly if we forget our "place" as leaders.

C. Survey of Selected New Testament Texts

It is precisely this last point that provides us with an understanding of the problems that Jesus encounters in the context of the nation of Israel under Roman occupation in the first century AD. There are two different groups that Jesus taught and interacted with in relation to developing a correct understanding of leadership and authority. He spends much time training his disciples, the Twelve in particular, but he also challenges the religious leadership of his day. The

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[332] Romans 13:1

constant friction between Jesus and the religious leaders begins with a wrong assumption on their part: the Pharisees and other religious leaders believed that they had a "right" to lead by virtue of their birth, their ancestry and their attention to maintaining religious rituals and duties.[333]

1. The Seven "Woes:" Jesus' Warnings to Leaders (Matthew 23)

The first passage is Matthew chapter 23[334], which records for us Jesus' strongly worded rebuke of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. "Woe to you…" begins each of seven criticisms that Jesus levels at the leaders. The basis, however, of this criticism is that they "sit in Moses' seat." (vs. 2) They are the duly authorized successors of Moses, they have the right to make decisions, pass judgment, and dictate the laws to the people of Israel. Jesus says to the crowds and to his disciples, "So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." (vs. 3) Herein lays the problem: issues of integrity, character, inner strength and honesty.

These leaders "tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them." (vs. 4) They will "travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, [they] make him twice as much a son of hell as [they] are." (vs. 15) Leadership is servant hood, leadership that is truly "sitting in Moses' seat" is taking care of the flock of God, being a shepherd to Israel as Moses, Joshua, and David had been. The Pharisees had read "the book", as Moses had instructed the future kings to do, but had become

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[333] John 8:31 - 41

[334] See also the parallel passages in Mark 12 and Luke 20.

deceived by their power and prestige into believing that what they were doing was pleasing to God.[335]

Jesus goes to great lengths to develop and explain the issues that he sees the religious leaders of his day ignoring or falling prey to. Jesus blasts these leaders for their hypocrisy and duplicity. Dr. Ken Blue, in *"Healing Spiritual Abuse,"* argues that "if we turn Jesus' negative comments about abusive leaders [from Matt. 23] into positive statements, we have a start on defining leadership that is healthy and nonabusive."[336] Jesus points out a number of areas that are of deep concern to him, so much so that he repeats the phrase "Woe to you, teachers of the law…" seven times. Each time Jesus describes a leadership quality that is lacking and challenges them to repentance and a change of behaviour. Ken Blue offers this list as the positive reflection of Jesus' concerns:

1. **Healthy leaders lead by servant leadership**, shunning for themselves authority and power based upon position and office.

2. **Healthy leaders lift burdens off of people**, directing their followers to Jesus Christ for rest and for "yokes" that are light and fit well.

3. **Healthy leaders spend no time or energy on their own image**; they live simply and transparently before people. They say what they mean and mean what they say.

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[335] John 5:39 - 40

[336] Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse: How to Break Free from Bad Church Experiences* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), p. 139.

4. **Healthy leaders stand ready to jettison religious protocol** when it conflicts with real human need. They major on majors.

5. **Healthy leaders swing wide the doors of the kingdom of God**, proclaiming that it is all free to us by grace through faith in the King.

6. **Healthy leaders know God's free forgiveness and lavish acceptance** through Christ and so are able to love, accept and serve others from that position of strength.[337]

On an earlier occasion Jesus had tangled with the Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law over a seemingly insignificant issue: the washing of hands before eating[338]. Of course, in our present day, we understand the importance of washing to eradicate germs and prevent disease. However, the religious leaders of Jesus' day had become confused over what matters were important and what were trivial. It almost seems if they were unable to hold to various levels of priority or importance.

"You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." (vs. 8) With this statement Jesus challenges leaders to have very careful discernment about what is important. "Mission drift" represents a serious danger that leaders need to pay attention to. Mission drift means that over time the initial passion and clarity with regard to the mission of the church fades and becomes fuzzy and unfocused. If leaders are not careful, the activities of the organization become muddled and confused. The church can begin to think that it exists for its own benefit. Church members can become confused and not want to serve the marginalized or

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[337] Ken Blue, p. 139 – 140.

[338] Mark 7:1 - 23

less desirable of society in Jesus' name. People can begin to think that they own the church and that it exists to serve them and to make them comfortable and entertained! They can become very much like the Pharisees had become in Jesus day.

On another occasion, when Jesus challenged them about keeping perspective in these things, he said, "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."[339] Jesus was not suggesting that tithing and honouring God with their first fruits wasn't important. He didn't say "You should have forgotten tithing and only practiced justice." Jesus was challenging the Pharisees to pay attention to what is important. Don't get confused about priorities. Know and lead from your core values. Leadership requires maintaining careful discernment and a prayerful caution to keep the main thing the main thing.

But it isn't just the religious leaders that Jesus struggles with to challenge and help reshape their perspective on leadership. Jesus' own disciples have also bought in to the cultural understanding of the day regarding leadership. As Eugene Peterson points out, there were several negative options available and vying for the attention and affection of the disciples.[340]

2. The Heart of Kingdom Leadership: Servanthood (Matthew 20:20 – 28)

One of the most important and clearest references in the New Testament to issues of leadership is found in Jesus' teaching following the request by the mother of James and John.

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[339] Matthew 23:23

[340] Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 191 – 264. Peterson contrasts the way of Jesus with that of Herod (political power), Caiaphas (religious power) and Josephus (revolution and zealotry).

She comes to him to ask "a favour of him. 'What is it you want?' he asked. She said, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.'"[341] After responding to her that she doesn't know what she is asking and that there is a tremendous 'cost' to this request ("can you drink this cup?"), he assures her that it isn't up to him to decide who gets what place. This then leads to the other ten disciples being 'indignant' with the two brothers. And so, Jesus calls them together and says,

> "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."[342]

Servant leadership – Jesus explains to his closest followers that His kingdom would have a vastly different kind of leadership culture than that of the world system. It would be leadership based on servanthood. Jesus knew full well the kind of leadership that existed in His day, both in the political realm as well as in the synagogues and religious structures. Leadership, Jesus says, would not be positional, "the seat of Moses," as he will later call it.[343] This statement is key in our discussion about healthy church board leadership.

Jesus' teaching about servant-empowered leadership comes to the front and center of his ministry near the end when he washes the feet of all of the disciples. As outlined in John 13 and embedded in the larger narrative of the Last Supper, Jesus "knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father." (vs. 1) Servant-empowered leadership can only be truly

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[341] Matthew 20: 20 - 21

[342] Matthew 20: 25 – 28; see also the parallel passages in Mark 10:35 – 45 and Luke 22:24 – 27.

[343] Matthew 23:2

performed by emotionally mature and emotionally secure individuals. It is difficult to serve someone else if at the same time you believe that they do not deserve your service or that you are going to lose something if you serve them. As Hendriksen points out "… in his [Jesus] kingdom greatness is measured by the yardstick of humility (18:1 – 4)"[344]

As Charles Olsen says:

Servant leadership is not a weak, self-effacing posture. It is a strong, positive image deeply rooted in a board's self-perception as a community of value that is loved and gifted by God. We want strong boards and councils of servants with the capacity to lead out of the integrity of who they are.[345]

Jesus vision of servant leadership is not to deny leadership by creating a "leadership free" zone or to suggest that the ambition to lead was wrong or sinful.[346] Jesus corrects the misplaced notion that leadership exists for its own benefit. The idea that leaders serve for themselves and for their own gain is what Jesus challenges. Leadership is for the sake of the other. One leads because of a desire to bring benefit and value to those being served. Jesus goes on to state that those who are going to be the best leaders must choose to be last, to be a servant.[347]

Gene Wilkes suggests seven principles of servant leadership from Jesus teaching:[348]

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[344] William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* in the New Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 744.

[345] Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards,* p. 40.

[346] Paul will later say "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task." (1 Timothy 3:1)

[347] The word "*doulos*" is used here, translated "slave" or "bond servant."

[348] Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1998), p. 25 – 27.

1. Humble your heart – Servant leaders humble themselves and wait for God to exalt them (based on Luke 14:7 – 11)

2. First be a follower – Servant leaders follow Jesus rather than seek a position (based on Mark 10:32 -40)

3. Find greatness in service – Servant leaders give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others (based on Mark 10:45)

4. Take risks – Servant leaders can risk serving others because they trust that God is in control of their lives (based on John 13:3)

5. Take up the towel – Servant leaders take up Jesus' towel of servanthood to meet the needs of others (based on John 13:4 -11)

6. Share responsibility and authority – Servant leaders share their responsibility and authority with others to meet a great need (based on Acts 6:1 – 6)

7. Build a team – Servant leaders multiply their leadership by empowering others to lead (based on Mark 6:7)

Jesus' teachings regarding servant-empowered leadership bring up the same themes as we have noticed in the four Old Testament narratives: delegation, careful selection, divine calling, teamwork, servanthood, integrity, faithfulness, humility and honesty.

3. Conflict Resolution: Leading from Your Core Values (Acts 6: 1 – 7)

Following the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the early church was birthed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Spirit empowered leaders, trained under the ministry of the Lord Jesus himself and tested in the fires of persecution, now step up to lead the young church. Early in their new roles they are presented with a challenge that tests the mettle of their leadership.

The church in Jerusalem that had started out as 120 followers meeting to pray in the Upper Room, waiting for the promise of the Father, now numbers in the thousands. Persecution has caused them to rejoice rather than recoil and Spirit-empowered healings and new found favor among all the people of the city was cause for even more rejoicing. And then it hit… "In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews complained among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food." (Acts 6:1)

Even in the life of the early church, giddy with joy and overflowing with the power and presence of God among them, trouble had been brewing. This challenge, if not handled correctly, could create major division in the young church. The lines were being drawn in terms of language, culture and ethnicity. Caring for widows was a ministry of compassion that demonstrated in very practical terms the love and grace of God that had become so evident among the early followers of Jesus.

Conflict had developed over the apparent favoritism in the distribution of food to widows among them. How could this issue be resolved? Would there be a solution that would bring healing and trust again?

"So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

The leaders meet with the whole church family ("all the disciples") and proposed a solution that maintained their priorities in ministry while taking seriously the concerns that had been expressed.

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."[349]

Again similar themes are expressed in the response of the Apostles to this crisis that could have driven a huge divisive stake into the heart of the young fledgling church. Instead, using careful attention to selection criteria, team work, good and open communication and keeping the main thing the main thing, they not only avoided a disaster but actually created an even healthier church body.

Some specific items to note: the leaders didn't argue with the report or deny that there was a problem. They did not wring their hands and ignore the conflict, hoping it would just go away. The leaders called the entire group of believers together, but had obviously already prayed about and discussed a plan of action and had a well thought out and carefully formed solution. The Twelve did not call a meeting of the church family and ask them for advice as to what to do.

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[349] Acts 6: 2 - 7

They led. They came prepared with a course of action, a solution. And yet their solution involved the full and open participation of all of the disciples.

The solution did not include room for one group to criticize or condemn the other. This was not a meeting for affixing blame to someone. The gathering was to communicate a plan that would ensure that all of the widows would be given fair and equitable treatment. Through the principles of delegation and teamwork, the Twelve would continue to keep their priorities straight while ensuring that the work was done well.

One key to proper and God honoring delegation is in the selection criteria. And again, the leaders did not come to the church and say, "Who should we choose? Who would take care of this for us?" Rather, the leadership stated the criteria for a new ministry team that would be delegated with the responsibility and oversight of the ministry of food distribution. The criteria: men that were already part of the church, men with a good reputation among them, men that were known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. (vs. 3) It was the intention of the leaders to involve the entire church in the process of selecting those to be given this ministry. This would allow for full and fair representation as well as silence future criticism. If a Greek speaking believer was concerned that other Greek speaking widows were not being cared for properly, then that person now had the opportunity to recommend someone that would do the job right. But the selection criteria also set up a scenario whereby the potential candidates nominated would have to be wise, honest and faithful men, with integrity and spiritual insight. The church chose seven men, based upon the criteria given them by the leadership.[350] And then the Apostles

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[350] E. M. Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* in the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 75 notes that "From their names it appears that those chosen were themselves Greek Jews. If so, the choice reveals the graciousness of the Church."

affirmed these men and appointed them to their new responsibilities. In fact, they ordained them, installing them through the laying on of hands. (vs. 6)

The result of the wise and thoughtful approach to this potentially disastrous problem was that "the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." (vs. 7)

4. **Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Leaders: A Call to Action (Acts 20: 13 – 38)**

Later on in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke records Paul's farewell visit with a group of leaders from the church in Ephesus. Acts 20:13 – 38 details the conversation that Paul has with these elders. Paul has purposefully invited these men to come to him as he expects to travel to Jerusalem and that he might even face his own death there. With this in the back of his mind, the comments that Paul makes take on a kind of serious reflection as one would expect from a leader saying goodbye to a group of fellow leaders. As Blaiklock notes,

> "This is the only speech in the book [of Acts] which it is certain that Luke actually heard spoken. It is interesting to note the marks of accurate reporting. Luke's common method is to give a speech in outline, and generally to employ for that purpose his own diction. The charge to the Ephesian elders is marked throughout by Pauline expressions which can be matched in the Epistles."[351]

It is in the middle of this farewell speech to these church leaders that we find Paul giving some solid statements that relate directly to the task of leadership:

> "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to

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[351] Blaiklock, *Acts*, p. 166.

draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."[352]

The themes that seem to converge here are variations of the same ideas we've noted before. Paul challenges the elders to "keep watch" over themselves and all the flock of God under their care. The shepherding image, which has been present as an important notion connected to leadership since Moses and David, is now connected to protection from false or heretical doctrine (i.e., "…distorting the truth…"). The leaders are referred to as "elders" (vs. 17, Greek "presbyteros") and then are called "overseers" (vs. 28a, Greek "episkopos") and "shepherds" (vs. 28b, Greek "poimen"). The three words seem to be used interchangeably here by Paul.[353] As Perkins suggests, instead of seeing these terms as referencing three different kinds of ministry positions, "rather we have a generic group of spiritual leaders (i.e. elders) who share various functions within the church, i.e. teaching, administering, caring, etc."[354]

Paul charges these leaders with the task of "keeping watch over themselves." Personal vigilance is critical to ensure that they remain in the faith and do not end up running the race in vain.[355] The challenge that leaders face to maintain their own integrity in terms of theology and ministry, as well as in their own lifestyle and daily living demands both accountability and camaraderie. Accountability provides the "guard rails" that protect us when we begin to "slide" and camaraderie keeps us from sliding in the first place.

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[352] Acts 20:28 – 31

[353] The Apostle Peter will do the same thing in 1 Peter when he uses elder, shepherd and overseer seemingly interchangeably in his exhortation to his "fellow elders." (1 Peter 5: 1 – 4)

[354] Perkins, "Review Article # 1 – Michael Anthony: The Effective Church Board"

[355] 1 Corinthians 9:23 – 25; Galatians 2:1 – 3

The words of Paul to the Ephesian elders sound very similar to the words of Peter to a group of elders he addresses. In 1 Peter 5:1 – 4, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers…" (vs.1 – 2)

Peter connects leadership with shepherding, watchful care and oversight. Having himself been through the fires of suffering and having his own humiliation as he denied his Lord, Peter brings a level of humility and grace to his challenge to other leaders. He insists that being leaders is a decision that needs to be made out of willingness and not compulsion. Shepherding and serving others because you feel that you have to do so does not lead to healthy relationships or ministry.

Motivation for leadership is the underlying issue here. Peter points out that leading out of duty ("because you must"), serving for personal gain ("not pursuing dishonest gain") and leading out of a need for emotional approval ("not lording it over those entrusted to you") are dangerous motivations for leadership. The themes that surface in Peter's challenge to leaders: selection criteria, shepherding motif again, honesty, emotional stability, and maturity.

Although the next paragraph in First Peter goes on to talk to "young men" the challenge is still to leadership as a whole: "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" (vs. 5) Humility in leadership is a major challenge and the temptation to begin to believe followers' compliments is always present.

Paul points this issue out specifically in his letter to the church in Rome[356] when he says, "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." (Romans 12:3)

5. The New Testament "Gift" of Leadership: What's the Fuss? (Romans 12:8)

It is later in this same section Paul explains the importance of using the gifts that God has given to the Body of Christ. We need to understand that we all have different gifts as members of one body. To give an example, he then mentions a variety of different gifts and how, if we have that gift, we should use it. If you have the gift of teaching you should teach. If you have the gift of giving you should be generous.

Embedded in the middle of Paul's example of these different gifts we find the phrase: "if it is to lead, do it diligently." (vs. 8b) Bill Hybels has championed this verse in his call to action in raising up "Romans 12:8" leaders. As Mounce says in his commentary on Romans:

> "Another gift of God's grace is leadership. Leaders are to carry out their responsibility with diligence. Although leadership in the contemporary world is often seen as the fruit of ambition, persistence, and good fortune (cf. Matt. 8:9), biblical leadership is essentially a service carried out for the benefit of others."[357]

Harrison follows in line with this understanding of the verse as well, but hints that some translators believe that the Greek word translated here as "leader" might have another translation.

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[356] Romans 12:3 - 8

[357] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans ---- Volume 27, commentary in The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture,* general editor, E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), p. 235.

"'Leadership' (v.8) is the translation of a word that means to stand before others, so the idea of governing derives readily from it. The need is for one to carry out his ministry 'diligently.' Even in church life some people are tempted to enjoy the office rather than use it as an avenue for service. A few interpreters, doubtless influenced by the items immediately preceding and following, favor the meaning of 'giving aid,' 'furnishing care,' etc., and this is possible. However, the exercise of leadership is the more common in NT usage (1Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:4, 5; 5:17). 'Diligently' fits well in either case."[358]

Stott weighs in on this challenge, explaining that:

"The verb *proistemi* can mean to 'care for' or 'to give aid', and some commentators opt for this sense because this gift comes between 'contributing to the needs of others' and 'showing mercy'. But the more usual New Testament allusion is to leadership, whether in the home [1 Tim. 3:4f, 12] or in the church [1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17]."[359]

Moo offers some helpful explanation as to the challenges the translators face with

this phrase:

"The fifth kind of gifted person Paul exhorts is *ho proistamenos*. The word may denote a person who presides over something or a person who comes to the aid of others. Noting that Paul sandwiches this gift between two others that refer to giving, some commentators argue for the latter meaning. But the meaning 'give aid' is not well attested for this verb, and Paul does not appear to use the verb with this meaning elsewhere. Probably, then, we should translate 'one who presides.' But presides over what? Paul does not say, and this leads a few scholars to think that Paul may intend to denote any person who is in a position of leadership, whether that be in the home or the church. Others try to do justice to the context by arguing that Paul is referring to those persons who presided over the charitable work of the church. But Paul twice elsewhere uses this verb (once absolutely) to denote the 'leaders' of the local church (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17). It is probably this ministry, usually associated with the elders/overseers (see 1 Tim. 5:17) that

[358] Everett F. Harrison, *Romans*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible in Twelve Volumes: Volume 10 (Romans – Galatians),* Frank E. Gaebelein, general editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), p. 131.

[359] John Stott, *Romans: God's Good news for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 328.

Paul has in mind here. Paul exhorts the leaders in the community to pursue their calling with 'eagerness' or 'diligence.'"[360]

James Dunn, however, contends that "leadership" is not the best translation. He prefers the rendering "welfare service" given the context:

> The noun translated leader "means literally 'set before,' and one of the most obvious and frequent uses for the passive is to denote the act of being 'set over or at the head of.' Hence the possible sense for "ho proistamenos" of 'he who rules,' 'leader'(NEB), favored by most...But it is also found quite frequently in the sense 'be concerned about, care for, give aid'... Here the latter is the more probable: (1)'leader is more likely to be expressed with the perfect tense (not the passive), (2) it would be surprising if a regular leadership function were placed so far down the list...(3)almost certainly decisive is the fact that "proistamenos" here is set between two forms of aid giving ("metadidous" and "eleon"), and so would most naturally be read as denoting one of a sequence of three kinds of 'welfare service'..."[361]

Which translation is to be preferred? Does it matter? It matters because Paul's encouragement to the believers in Rome either endorses "leadership" as itself a gift[362] or else he is challenging them to give their very best efforts at caring for people. Perkins, in an online article reviewing Addington's book, *High Impact Church Boards*, has clarified the challenge and offered an insightful response:

> According to Addington, Paul identified leadership as a 'gift' in Romans 12:8 (closely allied to administration (1 Corinthians 12:28)). He also relates Paul's qualifications for leadership with Peter's description of "elders" in 1 Peter 5:1-4.

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[360] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, general editors: Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 768 – 769.

[361] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9 – 16,* in the *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 38*, General editors: Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), p. 731.

[362] Hybels and many others have highlighted the critical nature of leadership and yet, if the New Testament does not in fact speak of leadership as a spiritual gift, much of the modern "leadership" movement might need to reframe their arguments.

However, the details of these texts may not entirely support Addington's perspective that leadership is a spiritual gift. The term Paul used in Romans 12:8 (proistamenos) may emphasize more the idea of exercising care over and not our Western concept of leadership.[1] Further in Ephesians 4:11ff God gives *people* to the church, who fill specific roles. I do not dispute that God calls believers to roles of leadership, but I am not sure that we can affirm 'leadership' as a spiritual gift. Calling and gifting are related, but not the same. As Addington himself indicates, people in leadership require a variety of gifts to lead well.[363]

And so whether or not leadership is to be officially listed on a spiritual gifts inventory survey, the more important consideration is to understand that leadership is about caring for others, shepherding; again picking up a theme that we have noticed in this survey of a variety of the Biblical texts related to leadership.

Paul says to us: if you have been called to serve others, if you have been tasked with providing watch care over others, please do so with earnest zeal, with full and careful attention.

With this recurring theme of leadership as providing watchful care, of shepherding others, another passage of Scripture comes in to play. Hebrews 13:17 reminds us that we are to "have confidence in [our] leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you."

Having confidence in leadership presupposes several things: Are those chosen worthy of our confidence and trust? Are they qualified to lead? Submission to those in authority over us in leadership, especially in our present cultural context, does not just happen lightly or easily. And thus the earlier themes of selection criteria, a clear sense of the call of God, honesty, integrity, humility and wisdom.

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[363] Larry Perkins, "Review Article # 2: T.J. Addington, High Impact Church Boards (2006)" online blog article at http://www.churchboardchair.ca/review-article-2-t-j-addington-high-impact-church-boards-2006/

The author to the Hebrews earlier in the same chapter urged his readers to "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (13:7, 8) Here is part of the way in which we can discern whether or not we should "submit" to those over us in leadership: consider the outcome of their way of life. Discerning whether or not someone is worthy of our "following" depends upon whether or not we want to become like them. If we were to "imitate their faith" as the writer of Hebrews suggests, would we want the end result?

6. **The Hallmark of Kingdom Leadership: Humility (Phil. 2: 1 – 4; John 13:13 - 17)**

It is in this same vein of thought that Paul challenges the followers of Christ in Philippi to imitate the One that they are following and to consider the outcome of His way of life:

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:1 – 4)

While this is not specifically addressed to leaders, certainly this should apply to those in leadership as much as to everyone else, maybe even more so. Paul challenges his readers to think about the benefits that they have received by virtue of their relationship with Christ as well as their relationships with others in the community of faith.

More specifically, Paul says, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (vs. 5) Again, while not directed specifically to leaders, the point is well taken. If Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Lord and Master, "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage" (vs.

6), then maybe as leaders we might want to consider his way of life and the outcome of his life. Or as Jesus himself says to his disciples in John 13,

> You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.[365]

Paul is challenging his readers to develop deep humility and that their supreme example is none other than Jesus himself. He "made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!" (vs. 8)

Paul offers not only a challenge to pay attention to our attitudes toward others and to imitate the example of the Lord Jesus, he also provides for us very clear and detailed information regarding the qualifications to look for in those being considered for leadership responsibilities.

Paul was a "task theologian," travelling from city to city, planting churches, discipling new converts and training leaders, while at the same time running a tent making enterprise, meant that Paul developed his theology and taught on an "as needed" basis. The challenges of understanding the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts prompted, at least in part, the writing of his letter to the church in Corinth. The fear that believers held in Thessalonica that they had missed the second coming of Jesus and that their deceased loved ones had missed out the resurrection prompted him to pen his two letters to them. In the process of writing each time and

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[365] John 13:13 – 17

responding to each circumstance allowed Paul to develop his theological perspective on leadership. Paul's understanding of the nature of leadership and the importance of choosing carefully those that would serve as shepherds of the various flocks of new followers of Jesus that had been birthed throughout the know world is no different.

7. **The Core Qualities of Kingdom Leadership: Three Texts (1 Timothy 3: 1 – 13; Titus 1: 5 – 9; 1 Peter 4: 1 – 5)**

And so it is that Paul writes, as Timothy's mentor, to give explanation and clarity to this young pastor regarding issues related to leadership. It is clear from the first letter to Timothy that Paul had "urged him to stay there in Ephesus [as the leader and teacher] so that he could straighten out issues related to false teaching, theological controversies and meaningless talk.[366] It is in the context of this letter to the young Timothy that Paul provides helpful information so that "you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth." (3:15)

Beginning with the "overseer" (Greek "episkopos") and then the "deacon" (Greek "diakonos"), Paul offers a list of criteria upon which to evaluate potential ministry leaders.[367] The importance of selecting qualified candidates for leadership cannot be overstated. As the

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[366] 1 Timothy 1:3 – 4

[367] It is not necessary or important for the purposes of this research to discuss at length any fine nuances concerning the differences between bishop/overseer, deacon/minister, pastor/teacher and so on. As Perkins points out: "So we have two general groups of church leaders — managers/administrators (1 Timothy 3:1) and ministry assistants or care-givers (1 Timothy 3:8)" in "Review Article # 1 – Michael Anthony: The Effective Church Board", an online article at http://www.churchboardchair.ca/review-article-1-michael-anthony-the-effective-church-board-1993/

Apostle himself asks: "If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" (vs. 5)

Beginning with his first letter to Timothy and then also in a letter to Titus, another "student pastor," Paul provides a fairly comprehensive list of character traits. Peter speaks to this, as well, in his admonishment to his fellow elders.[368]

A comparison and combination of the three Biblical "lists" furnish us with the following:

- Self-controlled – 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8

- Hospitable – 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8

- Able to teach – 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9

- Not violent but gentle – 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7

- Not quarrelsome – 1 Timothy 3:3

- Not a lover of money/does not pursue dishonest gain – 1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 5:2

- Not a recent convert – 1 Timothy 3:6

- Has a good reputation with outsiders – 1 Timothy 3:7

- Not overbearing – Titus 1:7

- Not quick tempered – Titus 1:7

- Loves what is good – Titus 1:8

- Upright, holy – Titus 1:8

- Disciplined – Titus 1:8

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[368] 1 Peter 5: 1 - 5

- Above reproach, blameless – 1 Timothy 3:2, 9; Titus 1:6

- Husband of one wife – 1 timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6

- Temperate – 1 Timothy 3:2, 8; Titus 1:7

- Respectable – 1 Timothy 3:2, 8

- Not given to drunkenness – 1 timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7

- Manages his own family well – 1 Timothy 3:4; 12

- Sees that his children obey him – 1 Timothy 3:4 – 5, 12; Titus 1:6

- Keeps hold of the deep truths – 1 Timothy 3:9; Titus 1:9

- Sincere – 1 Timothy 3:8

- Tested – 1 Timothy 3:10

- Not under compulsion but willing to serve – 1 Peter 5:2

- Eager to serve – 1 Peter 5:2

- Not lording over those entrusted to you – 1 Peter 5:3

The list of qualifications for leadership as outlined above refers to character traits, qualities that are on the inside of a person. Just as Samuel was reminded that "man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"[369] so we too are reminded that what makes great leaders are not the skills that can be seen on a resume or as the result of an IQ test or a theology exam.

> When Paul outlines the qualities of oversight leaders in the Pastoral Epistles, it is significant to note that he points to character rather than ability, and the type of character that is assessed through community and ultimately builds community. I can't help but read that and extrapolate a principle: that Board members form the definitive community of a church. The quality of their interaction and the integrity of

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[369] 1 Samuel 16:7

their relationship has direct bearing on the health of the congregation. This principle can be measured by two corollary statements: 1. *If a Church Board is unable to generate a Biblical sense of community – it will be extremely difficult to expect a congregation to enjoy a healthy sense of community;* 2. *By the same token, if a Church Board is able to generate a sense of Biblical community – the church stands a great chance of building a healthy sense of community throughout its fellowship.*[370]

It would be accurate to say that Paul is quite intentional and straightforward regarding the importance of choosing wisely and carefully those who would be given care over others as leaders. In Paul's second letter to Timothy he encourages the young pastor to be very intentional especially in regards to two specific character qualities: one's teachability and then their ability to teach others. **"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."**[371]

The message of the gospel is about content as well as character. If the messenger does not have the character of Christ evident then the message will be nullified and made of no effect. However, even if the messenger has godly character but does not have the ability to clearly and faithfully communicate the message, the end result will be the same: of no effect. And so Paul is clear in his resolve to Timothy, "be sure that those that you choose to serve the flock as leaders are men and women of quality and godly character who are able to pass on well the message of grace entrusted to us!"

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[370] Lyle Schrag, "Core Basics for Church Boards" online blog at http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/core-basics-for-church-boards

[371] 2 Timothy 2:2

8. The Goal of Kingdom Leadership: Unity and Maturity (Ephesians 4: 11 – 16)

There is one more section in the writings of Paul that needs to be examined in our survey of Scripture as it relates to leadership. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul explains the purpose of leadership as it relates to the church. Within the larger context of challenging the believers to work hard at "keeping the unity of the Spirit,"[372] Paul reminds them that Christ has given grace to each one and that when he ascended to heaven he "gave gifts to men." (vs. 8) This leads to a listing of those gifts,

> "It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The "gifts" given, here in the context, are not the same as the gifts that Paul talks about at length in 1 Corinthians. These gifts are people, individual who have been given to the church for a special purpose. Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers are given "so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Leadership is purposeful. The various individuals, each with their own special gifting and spiritual abilities, whether it is prophecy, wisdom or the ability to teach others, are gifted so that the church might be built up. The goal is the maturing and the maturity of the whole family of God. The measuring stick that is used is "the fullness of Christ."

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[372] Ephesians 4:3

How will we know when we have begun to make a difference as leaders? Is there any hint in this text as to what maturity might look like? Paul indicates that "when the church is built up,"

> We will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.[373]

The word picture that Paul paints here for his readers is not necessarily a kind one. Imagine a row boat full of children, out in the ocean in a storm. The children are fighting with each other, terrified by the waves and driven in every direction by the wind, aimless, lost and hopeless. This, Paul explains, is the church of Jesus, unless and until she matures. As she grows up, that will change and she will become more like Christ, who is her head.[374]

One specific area which will produce maturity in the body is a result of followers of Jesus "speaking the truth in love" to one another, thereby counteracting "the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming." Sounds like a call to action for leaders! Called to serve and protect the flock of God, leaders who model this kind of honest and kind care will see the body as it "builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."[375]

9. Summary of Themes Emerging from Selected NT Texts

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[373] Ephesians 4:14 – 16

[374] Ephesians 4: 15

[375] Ephesians 4:14 – 16

As we conclude our survey of the Scriptural data as it relates to leadership, there are some major themes that have continued to appear over and over again. Delegation and team work, careful selection of leaders, the importance of organization and planning, the training and development of leaders, working from your strengths and understanding that being the leader might mean recognizing someone else's perspective as wisdom from God. Leaders must be: capable, God fearing, trustworthy/faithful and honest (hate bribes). Leadership is not decided on the basis of a popularity vote or by virtue of birth, education or physical prowess. Not only does God know the heart, God is the King and he will choose for himself the one that he wants to represent him as the next leader.

Leaders need to be chosen because they have proven themselves over time and through a variety of experiences, to be capable, discerning and wise leaders.[376] Leadership requires maintaining careful discernment and a prayerful caution to keep the main thing the main thing.

D. Conclusion

What factors would appear to contribute to the building of a healthy church board? Choosing godly, wise, caring and capable leaders according to Paul's criteria would be a key factor. Training leaders to be mindful that their authority is "on loan" from God and that they serve Him as His representatives would be another factor. Testing leaders before releasing them to lead, to ensure that they have the character to lead well and lead with integrity would be an important factor.

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[376] See Appendix 17 – John Wimber on Leadership for an excellent article on the practical outworking of this point.

The issues of church structure and organization seem to be of secondary importance, based on this short survey of the Biblical text. As Perkins comments:

> I would conclude that the leadership patterns continue to diversify. This reflects the reality that many have come to the conclusion that the New Testament provides much direction on issues of character and spirituality, but considerable freedom when it comes to the types of leaders and the organizational structures that a church should implement.[377]

E. The Health Factors Matrix: Adding the Lens of Biblical/Theological Wisdom

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
1.The ability to communicate effectively among board members	*Healthy boards communicate well *Healthy boards know their primary responsibilities *Healthy boards organize for effective ministry *Healthy boards use four empowering processes to govern well	*A godly leader understands that someone else`s perspective might be wisdom from God *Servant empowered leaders are emotionally healthy people *A godly leader listens to others and is more concerned about hearing than being heard		

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[377] Larry Perkins, "Review Article # 1 – Michael Anthony: The Effective Church Board (1993)" online blog article at http://www.churchboardchair.ca/review-article-1-michael-anthony-the-effective-church-board-1993/

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
2. The spiritual maturity of the individual board members	*Healthy boards recognize the importance of having spiritually healthy board members *Healthy board members are spiritually mature, have godly character, passion for Jesus, genuinely love people, have discernment and are motivated and active in evangelism	*A godly leader is one that knows they are called by God to lead *A godly leader leads out of a desire to serve, not to lord it over others *A godly leader understands that leadership is a trust, authority is derived authority *A godly leader is enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit *A godly leader is a student of the Word, meditating on the Word daily *A godly leader understands her role as a shepherd to God`s flock		

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
3. Positive and healthy relationships among board members & pastor	*Healthy boards trust and respect each other *Healthy boards develop healthy interpersonal relationships	*A godly leader seeks to build up other leaders *A godly leader spends no time on their own image *A godly leader lifts burdens off of people *A godly leader is a servant *A godly leader is for the other *A godly leader is humble towards others		
4. The process used to identify, train and release new board members	*Healthy boards are strategic in recruiting, they know the characteristics of healthy board members, they proactively screen potential new members *Healthy boards are intentional about orientation and assimilation of new board members	*A godly leader is a team builder *A godly leader keeps watch over himself *A godly leader mentors others that are teachable and can in turn teach others *A godly leader knows the Biblical character qualities of godly leaders *For a godly leader, character is more important than ability		

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
5. The process by which decisions are reached as a board	*Healthy boards display courage in decision making	*A godly leader exhibits humility, gentleness, and discernment		
6. The level of agreement and unity of vision, purpose and values within the board	*Healthy boards work well as a team *Healthy boards choose new members that are in alignment with the vision, mission, values, strategy and doctrine of the church *Healthy boards choose new board members that are already active in the life and ministry of the church	*A godly leader is purposeful, understanding that the point of leadership is to bring the church into the fullness of Christ *Godly leaders maintains careful discernment and intentionality to keep the main thing the main thing! *A godly leader ought to be tested first, before being released into leadership *A godly leader needs to be chosen because she has proven herself over time and with a clear demonstration of the call of God, wisdom and humility		

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
7. The process by which conflict is handled within the board	*Healthy boards know how to manage conflict *Healthy boards display courage *Healthy boards have a bias towards action, leads willingly, boldly and with intentionality	*A godly leader seeks to discover the mind of God in a matter *Godly leaders lead from their core values *Godly leaders seek the face of God in conflict *Godly leaders do not abandon the purpose and will of God in solving conflict situations *Godly leaders act with boldness, humility and courage in the face of conflict		

Chapter 4 - Sociological Interviews and Survey

- ### _Key Question and Purpose Restated_

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and discuss the sociological interview and subsequent survey that was undertaken. The question that this thesis intends to answer is: "what selected factors appear to contribute to healthy church boards in small Atlantic Baptist Churches?" Ten healthy[409] small churches[410] were chosen, based upon the recommendations of the Regional Minister of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches.

A. The Process and Procedure

Once all of the pastors of these churches were contacted and invited to participate in the project, the researcher meet with each pastor and at least two of their board members, individually and privately. After explaining the purpose of the study, each person (both pastor and board members) was interviewed using a _semi-standardized_ interview.[411] The following questions were used as the main questions, followed up with unscheduled probing questions, designed to gain greater insight into the dynamics and issues relating to the major questions.

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[409] The definition of a "healthy small church" used throughout this project is taken from Dennis Bickers, _The Healthy Small Church_ (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2006), p. 10.

[410] Small churches, for this project, refers to congregations that have 100 or less in average Sunday morning worship attendance, including children.

[411] A semi-standardized interview "involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics. These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewees are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to the prepared standardized questions." From Bruce L. Berg, _Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. Fifth Edition_ (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 81.

1. **Preliminary Questions**

   Preliminary Questions for Interview with Pastors and Board Members:

1. **Effective Communication**

   Think about one of your best board meetings when the discussion went well. How do your board members communicate with each other?

2. **Spiritual Maturity**

   In your opinion, how do your board members exhibit their spiritual maturity? What place does their spiritual maturity have in their experience as a board member?

3. **Healthy Relationships**

   To what extent are you friends outside of the board responsibilities? How do you cultivate positive, healthy, relationships on an interpersonal level?

4. **Board Training and Orientation**

   What training or orientation has proven best in preparing your board members for their service?

5. **Decision Making Processes**

   When the board has made healthy albeit tough decisions together, what elements or process did they exhibit?

6. **Self Reported Major Factors**

   What do you attribute as the most important factor/factors to the unity and effectiveness of your church board?

2. The Questionnaire/Survey Instrument

After the individual interviews with the pastors and board members, each person was invited to respond to the following survey questions. Using a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing total agreement and 4 representing total non-agreement, each participant circled the number best corresponding to their thoughts and feelings for each statement. These surveys were then submitted anonymously and were subsequently tabulated for statistical study.

The survey was not given until after the verbal interviews so as not to prejudice or in any way offer any kind of information as to the kind of responses that the interviewer might be looking for.

a. The Survey Questions: The Healthy Small Church Governing Board audit

Survey Questions:

(answer the questions: 1 = true, 2 = more true than false, 3 = more false than true, 4 = false)

1. I feel that my work on the board is a most valuable use of my time. 1 2 3 4

2. The board addresses the most important issues that affect our church. 1 2 3 4

3. The board doesn't micromanage the pastor and his ministry. 1 2   3 4

4. The board has a clear, compelling direction. 1 2 3 4

5. I feel that my work on the board is a good use of my gifts and abilities. 1 2 3 4

6. The board doesn't spend time on trivial matters. 1 2 3 4

7. No one person dominates or tries to control the board. 1 2 3 4

8. The board is performing at a high percentage of its leadership potential. 1 2 3 4

9. The board is proactive not reactive in its work. 1 2 3 4

10. The board members often disagree and debate with one another. 1 2 3 4

11. New board members receive an orientation and training for their position. 1 2 3 4

12. The board members trust and show respect for one another. 1 2 3 4

13. The board members are well qualified spiritually for the board's work. 1 2 3 4

14. The board has set clear lines of authority between itself and the pastor. 1 2 3 4

15. By being on the board, I am making a significant difference for Christ. 1 2 3 4

16. I am disappointed when board meetings are cancelled. 1 2 3 4

17. The board has established a clear set of policies that guide its decisions. 1 2 3 4

18. It is rare that board meetings last for more than 2 hours. 1 2 3 4

19. All items that appear on the board's agenda have been carefully screened by the board

    chairperson. 1 2 3 4

20. Rarely do board members interfere with the pastor's work. 1 2 3 4

21. We have board meetings on a monthly basis. 1 2 3 4

22. Board members rotate on and off of the board on a annual basis. 1 2 3 4

23. The board views its work as primarily spiritual work. 1 2 3 4

24. Board members receive regular training to continue to grow in their ability to faithfully serve

    on the board. 1 2 3 4

25. The job description of a board member is clearly written down for anyone to observe.1 2 3 4

26. The board evaluates the performance of the pastor on an annual basis. 1 2 3 4

27. The board does an evaluation of its own performance annually. 1 2 3 4

28. The board members have developed deep friendships and care for each other. 1 2 3 4

29. The board has grown stronger as a result of dealing with difficult or conflicted situations.1234

30. I feel free to share both positive and negative concerns at board meetings. 1 2 3 4

B. Analysis of Responses to Survey Instrument and Interview Questions[412]

In total, twenty-seven personal interviews (90% of those invited) were held with 9 pastors and 18 board members participating. Most of the interviewees consented to having their verbal interview taped for transcription at a later point.[413] A total of 24 surveys (88.8% of those interviewed) were submitted anonymously following the interviews. The churches interviewed, although having been determined to be "healthy, small churches" by the Regional Ministers of the CABC,[414] had a variety of different governing structures.

One church was led by a gentle, caring senior pastor who basically called the deacon's board together on an "as needed" basis. He had a separate team that he called his "vision team" that served as a sounding board and strategic planning group. The deacon's, in this context, served specifically as "spiritual advisors" and usually in terms of conflict management and resolution. Another church had a board that was chaired by an individual who wasn't even a member of the church but in that context it seemed to work quite well! And so there was quite a bit of diversity within the governance structures being employed.

There seemed to be a direct correlation to the length of tenure of the pastors and the health of the board, and thus the subsequent health of the overall congregation. Of the nine churches surveyed, the shortest term was five years, the average was over seven years and the longest term is over 20 years. None of the churches that were recommended by the Regional Ministers as

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[412] See Chart 5 – Healthy Small Church Board Survey Questionnaire Results, page 216, for the actual data.

[413] One pastor and one board member requested that their verbal interview not be taped but allowed the interviewer to keep written notes. Both of these individuals also provided their own written response to the interview questions that had been provided to them in advance of the interview appointment.

[414] The Regional Ministers were given Dennis Bickers definition of a "healthy, small church" and were asked to carefully determine whether each of the churches recommended fit within that set of criteria.

"healthy small churches" had pastors who had been serving for less than five years. It should be noted that length of tenure does not in and of itself indicate health. Rather, length of tenure increases the likelihood of health, if the pastor and leadership are intentionally developing trust and positive relationships among themselves both as a board and as a congregation.

1. **Effective Communication**

The first question participants were asked was: *"Think about one of your best board meetings when the discussion went well. How do your board members communicate with each other?"*

A common theme that began to exhibit itself among the responses to this question was the issue of trust. The board members, as well as the pastors, that felt that there had been positive and healthy communication and discussion, disagreement even, all spoke of a high level of trust between the individuals on the board. Trust, first of all, in the sense of confidentiality that what was about to be shared would not leave the meeting or be shared with anyone outside of the board.

> *"...they are confident that everything is confidential, and they are willing to, they've had a couple meetings where they said "look, this is the way I see it". And what we were talking about, whether it was good or bad, we agree or don't agree with.... there was no fear of anybody else trying to say anything outside of that committee unless they had to. And they've maintained that confidentiality....they know they have the freedom to speak their mind, and know that it stays there..*"[415]

Another leader of a small church commented specifically on this issue of trust:

> *"There is a very great level of trust, because I know Larry and I, over the years we have discussed various things and even to this day nobody except Larry and I know those, I haven't so much as even told my wife and he has never told his. Its very the same as if someone has confided in us in the church or ask us something and we*

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[415] Taken from the transcription of an interview with one of the pastors in the study.

discuss it. There has been various things over the years. If I happen to have a little problem with something, it is almost like a mentoring program is sort of what it is and I have another younger gentlemen, and him and I are mentoring, he's only in his early twenties and him and his wife they attend here and he has a little problem with something and I'll ask him how he is making out with that and his wife doesn't even know about that and nobody knows about that except him and myself. He has great trust in me."[416]

As well, there was a strong sense that the board members felt safe from being ridiculed, misunderstood or maligned, by other board members, for sharing their own particular thoughts and concerns on any given subject.

Highlighting the importance of respect, one pastor shared:

"...I think it's just that they respect each other, and each other's opinions and they're open to hearing what each one thinks in that particular situation and eventually come to a compromise, you know, they listen to each other and each one hears what we can do in this situation or whatever, so, I think that probably one of the things that, ah you know they do. They work very well together, which is amazing you know. I've been blessed in that way. Yeah, I would have to say that they respect and appreciate each other for who they are, their ideas, their thoughts..."[417]

For several of the churches that were interviewed, the discussions that were recalled and shared with the interviewer were in fact actually whole church business meetings! Since the congregation was small (less than 50 people in average Sunday morning attendance), there were monthly meetings of the entire church family, where discussions were held, decisions made and plans established. The actual deacon's board met separately but only every three months or so. In one case, the deacon's board only met when there was a crisis of some kind.[418]

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[416] Taken from the transcription of an interview with one of the deacons participating in this study.

[417] Taken from the transcription of another one of the pastors in the study.

[418] The "governing board audit" survey questionnaire shows that only 36% (average score of 2.8 with 1 being true and 4 being false) indicated that the boards met regularly on a monthly basis.

2. Spiritual Maturity

The second questions participants were asked was: *"In your opinion, how do your board members exhibit their spiritual maturity? What place does their spiritual maturity have in their experience as a board member?"*

There was a fair amount of diversity in what was understood as spiritual maturity. For some, spiritual maturity was simply the chronological age of the board members, while others understood the term to refer to one's tenure as a board member. However, regardless of the individual's definition of spiritual maturity, the vast majority of the board members felt strongly that this was a very important characteristic for board members to possess in order to serve well on the board.

As one pastor explains, his view of spiritual maturity has changed over his time at this particular church:

> *"Well, when I started out I thought spiritual maturity would come by, especially when I met my two deacons, I'm thinking well, both of them went through, well _____ went through seminary and Bible school, _____ went through Bible school and spent a year down in Acadia [University]. So I'm thinking, well, and then people I meet with, I'm thinking well, maturity comes through education; the more you know, the more mature you should be. But I've discovered over the years that education is a wonderful thing, people need to study the scriptures, but spiritual maturity can't be based on how much they know. It's on how close they're walking with the Lord and that nearness, that close walk, their time they spend in prayer and devotion. It comes out and starts to become very relevant in their walk."[419]*

Several board members spoke of the value of board members' spiritual maturity in the context of dealing with conflict or difficult situations within the congregation. Others spoke of spiritual maturity being an asset in assisting the pastor in making strategic planning decisions or sorting through sensitive issues in providing pastoral care in specific cases.

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[419] Taken from the transcription of an interview with a pastor in this study.

In the words of one pastor, spiritual maturity is evidenced in action:

"How it comes out is in the way they respond to situations, how they handle people and all of these things. And in their belief, I find that mature Christians become bigger risk takers because they trust God a little more. And because of that trust, they are willing to step out in faith, take a little more of a risk where those who are not may still be focusing on well maybe we should have everything we need in place first. So maturity I think comes through their walk with God. The more time they spend with Him, the more mature they're going to be in feeding on the Word and feeding on prayer."[420]

For some of the interviewees, spiritual maturity meant nothing more than tenure and thus the ability to serve communion well or assist at a baptism. For most, there was no explicit connection made in their responses to Paul's exhortations to godly character qualities (such as 1 Timothy, Titus or other Biblical passages) relating to spiritual maturity. One respondent spoke of the church's constitution and by-laws and what requirements might be found there relating to spiritual maturity as a requirement for board membership.

This highlights an area of concern in relation to developing healthy and strong boards. While the churches that participated in this study were deemed "healthy small churches," there are areas such as this that could be improved upon. We will revisit this issue in the final chapter as a suggestion for ongoing board training and improvement.

3. Healthy Relationships

The third question that was asked was: *"To what extent are you friends outside of the board responsibilities? How do you cultivate positive, healthy, relationships on an interpersonal level?"*

Given the fact that the board members were part of small Atlantic Baptist Churches, mostly in rural or small village communities, the idea that most board members knew each other quite

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[420] Taken from the transcription of an interview with a pastor in this study.

well outside of the board work was not surprising. Since the size of the congregations represented in the interviews was part of the determination of who was to be interviewed, this would normally have been the case. However, what was a surprise was the fact that some of the pastors, who did not reside in the community where the church was located, spoke of the close relationships which they had with the board members. Some spoke of regular hunting and fishing trips, others referred to entire family camping trips as an annual event.

On the other hand, more than half of the participants spoke of feeling friendly towards each other but that there were no intentional or regularly planned events that would enhance and encourage friendship among the board members. One pastor indicated that the question had raised in his mind the need for being more intentional about this in his planning.

4. Board Training and Orientation

The fourth question asked of the participants was: *"What training or orientation has proven best in preparing your board members for their service?"*

Only two of the nine pastors interviewed indicated that there was any kind of regular or ongoing training for board members. Most of the board members had not received any kind of orientation prior to serving on the board. One pastor did have an intentional training plan and was in the process of reviewing the material and updating it again. There were going to be a couple of new board members starting soon and so this pastor had planned to provide specific orientation for them.

The majority of the board members spoke of a kind of "on the job" training mentality whereby new board members were provided orientation and ongoing training on an as-needed basis. The positive side of this is that the longer term board members would orient and educate

the newer board members as time and conversations would take place. Negatively, if there was dysfunction or disease among the board, this would most likely continue.

Only 7 out of 24 respondents (29%) indicated that there was any kind of "orientation" or board training for new board members and the same number stated that there was no ongoing board member training to help them continue to grow in their ability to faithfully serve.[421]

5. Decision Making Processes

The fifth question the participants were invited to think about was: *"When the board has made healthy albeit tough decisions together, what elements or process did they exhibit?"*

Prayer, lots of open discussion, freedom to explore a variety of options/responses to the problem/situation, time to process the information (decisions weren't made in haste), other church members were consulted, other denominational leaders were also consulted and further information was gathered before a final determination/decision was made.

The process was a fluid one in most of the churches surveyed. There definitely wasn't any written protocol or "conflict management policy" written out for the boards to follow. As one pastor shared with me, the above elements of prayer, discussion, exploration, seeking external advice are all present:

> *"There was with a leader, with one of the youth workers and it was a problem that needed to be addressed and we did because it was a dating problem. And it just had to be settled because this was a mature young man and the young lady was still in her teens. And so we really wrestled through that in the how to and what steps do we take but more so, I think, for the protection and wellbeing of the young lady, that she wouldn't be offended or misunderstood and that it didn't become public, everything that's going on. And so yeah, the process of working that through was discussion and prayer and then, once again, we chose to seek out for other advice so I met with [denominational leader] and asked him some questions on how he would handle it and I met with another senior pastor from the _____ church [nearby large*

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[421] See Chart 5: Healthy Small Church Board Survey Questionnaire Results, p. 162.

church] and asked him how he would answer a situation as such and then I brought the information back and we agreed that we'd go with the process from listening to the two other men. We sat down with the person and explained to him "we've got to let you go because of this" and we prayed for them, we gave them lots of encouragement and we told them, you know, that the thing is that it is not such a wicked crime but it is, you know, the rules that we set up for the youth was no dating especially, you know. The rules say that if there's any dating there will be a dismissal, so we have to stand by what we say."[422]

In one church a particular situation had developed where someone had used the church's computer for "inappropriate activity" and when it was discovered it was brought to the pastor to respond. As he says:

"… just two of three weeks ago, one of my deacons come to me and said this is going on. It was the person who had our church computer and was running our PowerPoint presentations for our announcements on Sunday morning and stuff, the computer in the home was broken, so he got into the church computer. And so something had happened to it, and so we had a person who was kinda good at it, so he'd given it to him to see if he could fix it and he found a lot of stuff that ought not be on a church computer. So he went to one of the deacons and he came to me and we said "we gotta do something."And here again shows the level of maturity of my deacons, because if that had been probably 8 or 9 years ago, they'd say "you gotta go deal with that!" Instead we said that "we know the situation, we sorta understand what's happening. We'll meet with this individual, the parent."And they did, they arranged it. And that has worked itself out very quickly because it wasn't allowed to smolder, and I think that's where we made the mistake before, so I try to learn from it."[423]

In this case, the leadership had learned from previous experiences how to better handle delicate and potentially divisive situations. From the interviews of both pastors and board members, small churches seem to want to avoid conflict and are often slow to respond to difficulties and challenging situations.

It seems that the leadership and the congregation at large have a high value on personal relationships and caring about people. The danger in the small church with this

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[422] Taken from the transcription of an interview with a pastor in this study.

[423] Taken from the transcription of a pastor interviewed for this study.

area is when it becomes "peace at any cost" or when inter-personal relationships and the fear of offending someone becomes more valued than other values such as mission fulfillment, holding people accountable for their actions and theological integrity.

6. Self Reported Major Factors

The final question that participants were encouraged to discuss was: *"What do you attribute as the most important factor/factors to the unity and effectiveness of your church board?"*

a. Trust

The most often mentioned factor was that of trust. Most people returned to their opening comments about the value and importance of being able to trust each other on the board. Knowing that your comments and concerns will be kept confidential was a key issue.

b. Prayer

Another factor that was brought up several times was prayer. There was clear recognition that the work of the board was primarily spiritual work. Work that required prayer and a reliance on the Spirit of God to guide and direct them in the decision making. As one leader said, *"Well, most important is that we've got to be strong, strong Christian men. Someone that prays daily. That is probably one of the hardest things, is to sit down and pray."*[424]

C. Specific findings from the questionnaire/survey instrument

1. Positive Findings

Positively, most board members and pastors felt very good about their time spent on the board as valuable use of their time (average 1.3 score). As well, the board's ability to stay

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[424] Taken from the transcription of an interview with a leader participating in this study.

focused on the major issues was also highlighted. One hundred percent of the board members indicated that they did not feel that one person dominated or tried to control the board. Trust and respect among board members also ranked at 100%, with the same percentage feeling that members had developed deep friendships, cared about each other personally and felt that they had grown stronger as a result of dealing with difficult or conflicted situations.

Another positive response from the survey was that 100% of respondents (both pastors and board members) indicated that they did not feel that they were micromanaging the pastor and his ministry. The same high response came back to the statement "rarely do board members interfere with the pastor's work."

When asked how they felt about whether or not there was a clear line of authority between the pastor and the board, 79% responded affirmatively. While this is a healthy percentage, there seems to be an opportunity here to create greater clarity regarding the individual roles of pastor and board.

2. Concerns Uncovered

Only 54% felt that the board had established a clear set of policies that would guide their decision making. This seems to correlate with the verbal interviews and the lack of structure and strategic planning mentioned.

The thoughts concerning the boards' clarity of vision and direction for ministry was high at 92%. However, with an average score of 1.8 (with 1 being true and 4 false) there seems to still be a lot of room for improvement in the area of vision clarity and ministry planning.

Thus when asked if they felt whether the board spent more time reacting to situations, rather than working in a proactive fashion, 79% responded affirmatively. Encouragement to act

with intentionality, developing clarity of vision and strategic planning would seem to be appropriate action steps here.

Lack of training and orientation for new board members (only 26% responded affirmatively to having something in place) and the lack of clearly written job descriptions for board members (only 50% responded affirmatively) are concerns that didn't seem to be considered important in the verbal interviews. Only 17% indicated that the board did any kind of annual performance self-evaluation, and only 21% evaluate the performance of the pastor on an annual basis.

One area surveyed that seems to be a bit of confusion among the board members was the issue of healthy debate and conflict. When asked to respond to "I feel free to share both positive and negative concerns at board meetings," 100% of the respondents indicated that this was true (average of 1.1). And yet, at the same time, when evaluating the statement, "The board members often disagree and debate with one another," 88% indicated that this was false in their experience at the board level. There is definitely some kind of disconnect among pastors and board members in their thinking about this area of board work. There seems to be a need to differentiate between having "fierce conversations"[425] and unhealthy conflicted arguments at the board level. Is there some sort of stigma attached to the possibilities and potential benefits of having healthy disagreement and debate at the level of board dialogue and discussion?[426]

When asked, 29% (average 2.4 score) of respondents indicated that they are not disappointed when board meetings are cancelled. This statistic seems to be at odds with the

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[425] A wonderful phrase from Susan Scott's book, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time.* New York, NY: Berkeley, 2004.

[426] Here is an opportunity for further research and evaluation!

response to the first question (100% positive response to the statement: "I feel that my work on the board is a most valuable use of my time.") Is this because the meetings are not enjoyable or that the board members don't find it fulfilling spiritual work? 96% indicated that they felt that their work on the board was making good use of their gifts and abilities and the same percentage noted that the board did not spend time on trivial matters. However, only 50% of board members indicated that the board's agenda seemed to be carefully screened and only 8% of them rotate on and off of the board on an annual basis! Could it be that there is a feeling of burn out, of being "trapped" in a position because "no one else will do it…!" These numbers were somewhat borne out in the verbal interviews, in that most small churches have a very limited number of individuals to choose from for board positions. Most of the members will serve as deacons for life and know that going into their roles.

From our earlier findings regarding board processes, it seems that the questionnaire has confirmed the need for more intentional planning and preparation for board meetings. It is encouraging to note, however, that 92% responded positively to the statement that "the board views its work as primarily spiritual work."

3. Conclusion

Overall the questionnaires indicate what we expected to find with regards to the relationship between healthy small churches and healthy small church boards. Healthy small church boards are led by spiritually mature, godly people; they view their work as spiritual work and have developed a high level of trust and collegiality among themselves. The relationship between pastor and board is healthy, positive and mutually affirming. The lines of communication and authority, as well as the roles and responsibilities of both pastor and board are clear and respected.

The areas of improvement whereby small church boards can gain greater health and increased redemptive potential for the Kingdom of god are in the areas of board orientation and ongoing training, better planning for board meetings and ongoing, annual evaluation of both pastoral ministry and the performance of the board.

A significant area of board development for the small church board, which this research seems to be discovering as an area of confusion for many leaders, whether pastor or board members, is in the area of learning how to have healthy conflict, fierce conversations and spirited debates among the board. Healthy small church boards seem to exhibit a higher degree of ability to have strong conversations as a board whereby board members and pastor are safe and secure to disagree agreeably.

D. The Health Factors Matrix: Adding the Sociological/Survey Lens

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
1.The ability to communicate effectively among board members	*Healthy boards communicate well *Healthy boards know their primary responsibilities *Healthy boards organize for effective ministry *Healthy boards use four empowering processes to govern well	*A godly leader understands that someone else`s perspective might be wisdom from God *Servant empowered leaders are emotionally healthy people *A godly leader listens to others and is more concerned about hearing than being heard	*Effective communication at the small church board level begins with trust and respect *Communication is greatly enhanced when board members feel *safe* to talk *Confidentiality is a key factor in creating healthy communication in a small church board	

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
2. The spiritual maturity of the individual board members	*Healthy boards recognize the importance of having spiritually healthy board members *Healthy board members are spiritually mature, have godly character, passion for Jesus, genuinely love people, have discernment and are motivated and active in evangelism	*A godly leader is one that knows they are called by God to lead *A godly leader leads out of a desire to serve, not to lord it over others *A godly leader understands that leadership is a trust, authority is derived authority *A godly leader is enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit *A godly leader is a student of the Word, meditating on the Word daily *A godly leader understands her role as a shepherd to God`s flock	*Spiritual maturity is most evident in handling conflict situations *For most churches surveyed, spiritual maturity was not a well defined concept and was sometimes confused with length of service *The vast majority of those surveyed did agree that spiritual maturity ought to be an important characteristic for board members	

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
3. Positive and healthy relationships among board members & pastor	*Healthy boards trust and respect each other *Healthy boards develop healthy interpersonal relationships	*A godly leader seeks to build up other leaders *A godly leader spends no time on their own image *A godly leader lifts burdens off of people *A godly leader is a servant *A godly leader is for the other *A godly leader is humble towards others	*Most of the board members interviewed indicated that they knew each other quite well, however, there often lacked an intentionality to developing those relationships *Most of those interviewed self-reported healthy relationships between the pastor and board	
4. The process used to identify, train and release new board members	*Healthy boards are strategic in recruiting, they know the characteristics of healthy board members, they proactively screen potential new members *Healthy boards are intentional about orientation and assimilation of new board members	*A godly leader is a team builder *A godly leader keeps watch over himself *A godly leader mentors others that are teachable and can in turn teach others *A godly leader knows the Biblical character qualities of godly leaders *For a godly leader, character is more important than ability	*Only 2 out of 9 pastors interviewed had any kind of intention process for identifying, training and releasing new board members *The majority of churches provided an *on the job* approach to training *Most churches did not provide any kind of orientation process for new members	

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
5. The process by which decisions are reached as a board	*Healthy boards display courage in decision making	*A godly leader exhibits humility, gentleness, and discernment	*Most churches described a very fluid, relational approach to decision making *People and relationships are a higher priority than programs (Danger :peace at any cost, mission drift and losing focus on the main thing) *Only half of those surveyed indicated that there was a clear set of policies to guide their decision making	

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
6. The level of agreement and unity of vision, purpose and values within the board	*Healthy boards work well as a team *Healthy boards choose new members that are in alignment with the vision, mission, values, strategy and doctrine of the church *Healthy boards choose new board members that are already active in the life and ministry of the church	*A godly leader is purposeful, understanding that the point of leadership is to bring the church into the fullness of Christ *Godly leaders maintains careful discernment and intentionality to keep the main thing the main thing! *A godly leader ought to be tested first, before being released into leadership *A godly leader needs to be chosen because she has proven herself over time and with a clear demonstration of the call of God, wisdom and humility	*Unity is a high value in most of the churches interviewed, however, clarity of vision, values, purpose and mission was not as evident *Most agreed that clarity of vision was important but did not have any written documents *While unity was valued there was a clear disconnect when thinking about healthy debate and disagreement	

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
7. The process by which conflict is handled within the board	*Healthy boards know how to manage conflict *Healthy boards display courage *Healthy boards have a bias towards action, leads willingly, boldly and with intentionality	*A godly leader seeks to discover the mind of God in a matter *Godly leaders lead from their core values *Godly leaders seek the face of God in conflict *Godly leaders do not abandon the purpose and will of God in solving conflict situations *Godly leaders act with boldness, humility and courage in the face of conflict	*Key factors reported in conflict management: prayer, lots of dialogue and discussion, discernment and discretion, seeking external advice from godly counsel and more prayer *Otherwise, there was no intentional process for conflict management	

Chapter Five

A. Original Hypothesis

In conclusion, it has been the hypothesis of this researcher that the relative health or dysfunction of the church board has a direct correlation to the overall health of the congregation at large. As discussed above, the congregation will not develop beyond the level of health and maturity of its own governing leadership. Based upon our study of the literature and reflecting upon the theological insights gained in our Biblical survey, it seems clear that this correlation does in fact exist.

B. The Key Question

This research has focused on the question: "How do selected factors appear to contribute to healthy church boards in small Atlantic Baptist Convention churches?"

C. The Selected Health Factors

The specific factors that were chosen as potentially contributing to the health of small church boards were:

1. The ability to communicate effectively and clearly among board members

2. The individual spiritual maturity of the board members

3. Positive and healthy relationships between board members and between the board and the pastor

4. The process used to identify, train and release new board members

5. The process by which decisions are reached within the board

6. The level of agreement and unity of vision, purpose and values within the board

7. The process by which conflict is handled within the board, as well as within the larger congregation

D. Preliminary Conclusions Arising From the Research

From the research that has been done, it seems clear that all seven proposed factors are in fact key areas in their ability to improve the overall health of a small church board. Drilling down into each of these areas, there are some specific learnings that are important, especially for the small church context:

1. Communication issues

Board work can be difficult at times and by its very nature and definition is mostly about talking and communicating ideas, thoughts, and concerns. Some of the issues that small church boards have could be relieved greatly if board members were able to better communicate. Active listening skills, the ability to speak clearly and communicate one's own thoughts and feeling: these are three skills that need further attention and development for both boards and pastoral leaders.

Another issue related to communication but also connected to spiritual maturity and healthy relations ia that of having a level of emotional maturity (one's EQ[427]). It is outside of the scope of this research but is an important consideration that needs to be addressed in order for communication to be healthy and effective within the context of a healthy small church board.

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[427] The emotional maturity of board members seems to be a serious enough issue from the literature survey and the interviews recorded to warrant a call for a study of its own to further research this topic. From personal experience, it seems that the church board can sometimes become a harbor for emotionally unstable and unbalanced individuals and we are often "too nice" to respond firmly and appropriately to inappropriate behavior and destructive communication.

2. Board spirituality

Olsen has done a wonderful job of highlighting the need for governing board members to understand the nature of their board work as "spiritual, worshipful work." In this area of board development, board members need to be chosen with careful attention to their own individual level of spiritual maturity. Choosing board members because they can bring business acumen or Bible college training to their board work, while not wrong in itself, is flawed without prayerful attention to these individual's own personal spiritual maturity.

As we have seen in the interviews, there exists a wide range of definitions in actual operation at the practical level of the local small church. However, for the small church to develop greater health, clarity and caution is needed with regards to the discerning of the spiritual maturity of its governing leaders. The Apostle Paul's emphasis on character over skills is an important Biblical injunction that we neglect to our own demise.

3. Interpersonal relationships

Closely related to the need for better communication and for spiritual and emotional maturity, board members need to develop in their ability to relate well to each other and to the pastor. Healthy small church boards exhibit a high degree of healthy, interpersonal relationships. It has been the experience of this researcher that when there are relational issues and interpersonal conflict between board members or between individual board members and the pastor, there will inevitably be conflict and dysfunction resulting in a decline in church health.

4. Structures and processes

How a small church board communicates with each other, the spiritual and emotional health of the individual board members and the quality of the interpersonal relationships among board members and with the pastor: all of these factors can be stymied and nullified with a church system and/or the structure of the board that is designed to work at cross-purposes with all of these things.[428] Healthy small church boards thrive in a permission-giving environment where the constitution, by-laws and governing policies empower leadership to serve well. Structural road blocks and out-dated by-laws will effectively hamstring and frustrate healthy, empowering leaders. Addington provides a helpful survey that enables boards to determine their own `leadership paradigm.[429]

5. Agreement and unity of mission, vision, and core values

Within a context of good and positive communication, spiritual and emotional maturity, healthy relationships, and empowering structures, the final piece which creates health and vitality in a small church is in the area of unity and passionate agreement with regards to the vision, purpose (or mission) and core values of the leadership and then of the whole congregation. The process of finding unity of vision is not the same as finding consensus. Vision is a gift from God that needs to be discerned by the pastor and leadership in a prayerful, reflective process over time and with effort and intentionality.

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[428] Constitutions, by-laws, and policy statements can be woefully outdated and can unwittingly create a very unhealthy, dysfunctional situation. Careful attention to these governing documents is an intentional decision of a small church board that will lead to greater health in the long run but often leads to conflict and more challenges in the short term.

[429] `See Appendix 4, - What is Your Church`s "Leadership Paradigm?", pages 223 – 224.

6. Identifying, training and releasing new board members

First, identifying new board members requires that there is an understanding of what a healthy small church board member looks and acts like. What are the characteristics and personal qualities essential that board members should be looking for?

In order to further assist small church pastors and leaders in moving towards greater health, this research has concluded that there are seven discernable characteristics of healthy church board members. These seven characteristics are provided as a guide by which existing pastors, board members and nominating committees[430] can pray, discern and reflect upon potential new board members. This list also offers a potential measuring stick by which existing board members can evaluate themselves and their performance as a board.

a. Characteristics of healthy small church board members:

1. Exhibits spiritual maturity – godly character, passion for Jesus, displays humility, extends hope, loves people genuinely, motivated and active in evangelism, has spiritual discernment

2. Exhibits leadership qualities – "kingdom vision," influences others positively, has a "bias for action," leads willingly, boldly and with intentionality, has a non-traditional/future focused perspective

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[430] This list of health characteristics could also be applied to the work of pastoral search committees by healthy small churches as an aid in determining if potential candidates are a good fit within their specific ministry context. This list, along with an alignment of mission, vision and core values, could provide the search committee with much information, over which they can pray, reflect and seek the will of God for their church.

3. Ability to communicate well – with their own family and spouse, with other board members, the larger church family as well as with other potential stakeholders

4. Is in alignment with the church's mission, vision, core values and strategy and with the doctrinal stance of the church

5. Is a team player – respects and trusts other board members and the pastor, is able to distinguish between personal goals and ambitions and those of the church/team

6. Is a lifelong learner, reliable/stable emotionally and teachable/open to growing

7. Is already an actively involved member of the church and has the support of their spouse to be involved at the board level

The above list of seven health characteristics offers definition and greater clarity so as to enable a small church pastor and board some "hooks" upon which to hang their thoughts and a path by which they can assess an individual's "suitability" for service on a small church board. The list is not intended to suggest that only those leaders who exhibit 100% in all seven areas should be admitted to the board. Nor does this research suggest in any way that board members are all going to look and act the same. There needs to be a higher level of maturity in relation to personal character qualities. But as Tony Morgan points out in *Developing a Theology of Leadership,* "I may be gifted to lead, but my character will determine the ongoing impact of my leadership… Character is proven over a lifetime." [431]

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[431] Tony Morgan, "Developing a Theology of Leadership," an online e-book available for free download at http://tonymorganlive.com/theology-of-leadership, p. 12.

7. The process by which conflict is managed within the board

This a training issue that ought to be developed more fully and will need further research, within the specific context of a healthy small church, in order to provide appropriate and practical assistance to healthy small church boards.

E. Towards a NEW Definition of a Healthy Small Church

In the process of researching this area of healthy small church boards, it has also become clear that there needs to be an updated and revised definition of what a "healthy" *small* church looks and acts like. As part of further research, originally outside of the scope of this present study, it is recommended that there be further work done as to what the characteristics of a healthy small church would be. Based upon the materials surveyed and the work of three particular authors,[432] this researcher is proposing that there are seven important "health" characteristics:

1. Courageous, visionary and empowering leadership highlighted by a positive congregational self-image

2. A compelling mission, a clearly expressed vision and common core values

3. A "gift-oriented," "every-member" ministry paradigm

4. Need oriented, outreach "biased" evangelistic passion

5. Loving relationships exhibited in caring small group contexts

6. Passionate spirituality infused by inspiring worship experiences

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[432] Namely, Dennis Bickers (The Healthy Small Church), Kennon Callahan (Small, Strong Congregations) and Christian Schwartz (Natural Church Development), see bibliography at the end of this paper.

7. Solid financial resources springing from faithful stewardship and functional, permission giving structures

Further research and statistical studies would need to be carried out to determine if in fact these seven characteristics are exhibited by healthy, growing, small churches. to the question as to whether there should be a distinction made between being a healthy small church and a healthy, ***growing***, small church. This again is another area for further discussion and research.

F. Goals restated and summarized

At the beginning of this research, there were five goals stated. As a summary, we will take each goal individually:

1. To understand the dynamics unique to small churches and the reasons why small churches behave the way that they do, especially why small church boards often act the way that they do.

Chapter two covered the survey of "board" literature as well as that of "small church" writings, in particular the challenges that are unique to a small church culture. As Addington strongly affirms:

> "I would argue that two defining characteristics of church cultures are bureaucracy and control. These are often fueled by a third characteristic: mistrust. Together, these three dysfunctions disempower at every level, preventing church cultures from freely carrying out responsibility…. Whether intentional or not, these dysfunctions hinder the health of the church, the happiness factor of those involved, and the ministry effectiveness. Is it any wonder so many churches find themselves ineffective, with frustrated staff members, board members, and volunteers who simply leave for other churches where they are empowered to minister? The net loss to ministry is huge."[433]

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[433] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 160 - 161.

These three characteristics, combined with the unique challenges found in the small church, especially the "single cell" mentality and the "family church" thinking, make for a potentially difficult ministry context. The "big frog in the small pond" syndrome and the attitude of many small churches to allow and empower emotionally and/or spiritually unhealthy people to serve as leaders can create a sometimes volatile situation.

However, all is not lost nor is it necessarily as bad as it seems! The small church has many redeeming qualities, especially its love of people, its ability to respond quickly and creatively to need within their community and the fact that small churches can care for people on a much more personal level.

The challenge is to not judge the small church with an unfair or biased standard, as was elaborated on in chapter two. It is precisely at this point that knowing what a healthy small church looks and acts like is so important. This leads to the second goal.

2. To understand what a healthy small church board should look like and the connection between the relative health or dysfunction of the board and the health or dysfunction of the church as a whole.

As has been demonstrated throughout this research paper, a healthy small church is going to develop out of the efforts of and as a direct result of the leadership of the small church choosing to move in the direction of greater health. John Maxwell calls it the "Law of the Lid."[434] Essentially the point is that an organization or church will not be able to grow past or beyond the level of its leadership. Schrag has pointed out that the governing board, the

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[434] John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 8.

leadership team, is "the prime spiritual community" within the larger congregation.[435] Efforts to improve the health of the congregation as a whole are best spent in developing the leadership circle of the governing board.

This research has also suggested a new, updated paradigm of what a healthy small church looks like as well as suggesting further research into this area of study.

3. To provide small church pastors and leaders with the theological understanding behind the importance of developing a healthy church board, the benefits, costs and processes involved.

Chapter three develops the theological and Biblical foundations for understanding leadership within a healthy small church. The key passages referenced were:

Exodus 18:17 – 26 – Jethro's advice to Moses

Numbers 27:12 – 23 – Joshua's anointing as the successor to Moses' leadership

Deuteronomy 17:14 – 20 – Moses' requirements for choosing a king

1 Samuel 12:1 – 5 – Samuel's anointing of David as the new king

Matthew 20:25 – 28 – Jesus' response to James and John's mother to promote her sons

Matthew 23 – Jesus' seven "woes" pronounced on the Pharisees

Mark 7:1 – 23 – Jesus' challenge to the Pharisees concern over hand-washing rituals

Mark 10:35 – 45 – Parallel passage to Matthew 20 above

Luke 22:24 – 27 – Jesus' teaching on "servant empowered" leadership

John 13:1 – 16 – Further teaching from Jesus on "servant empowered" leadership

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[435] Lyle Schrag, "The Board … The Prime Spiritual Community," an online article at
http://www.nbseminary.ca/archives/the-board-the-prime-spiritual-community

Acts 6:1 – 7 – The early church leadership responds to a potentially divisive problem

Acts 20:13 – 38 – Paul's farewell conversation with the Ephesian elders

Romans 12:8b – Paul's comment on "the spiritual gift of leadership"

Philippians 2:1 – 4 – Paul's discussion of Jesus' attitude towards leadership and servanthood

1 Timothy 3: 1 – 12 – Paul's list of qualifications for elders and deacons

2 Timothy 2:2 – Paul's challenge to ensure leaders are teachable teachers

Titus 1:5 – 9 – Paul's second list of qualifications for elders

Hebrews 13:7 – 8, 17 – The author's challenge to "remember your leaders"

1 Peter 5: 1 – 4 – Peter's list of qualifications for elders

Bible studies and small group discussions around the themes developed in these key Biblical passages would provide a great amount of theological framework for small church leaders.

4. To develop teaching materials that would explore even further the relationship between board health and congregational health and the unique challenges faced by the small church context in this particular area of ministry development.

   a. To develop a survey to help small church leaders determine the relative health or dysfunction of their own board.

The Healthy Small Church Board Audit, adapted from Malphurs `*Governing Board Audit,*[436] would be the starting point in helping a small church board determine the areas that

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[436] `See Appendix 5, page 225 – 226.

might need to be addressed. This audit was used in the interview and survey process for chapter four.

There are also three character assessment questionnaires included in the appendices that would provide feedback relating to the level of `spiritual maturity` of potential candidates for leadership responsibilities.[437] Appendices 9 through 11 are samples of new board member orientation outline and checklists.[438]

b. To develop a series of teachings/workshops that would help small church pastors and board members to move towards greater health by addressing the particular issues that are causing the dysfunction.

A special small church board leadership training workshop and accompanying PowerPoint presentation are humbly offered as a part of this research paper.

c. To develop coaching materials that would enable small church pastors and board members, denominational coaches and seminary professors, to mentor and facilitate education and awareness concerning the importance of healthy church boards in the small church environment.

The various charts and appendices provided at the end of this paper are included as tools to resource small church pastors, coaches and professors in their work with small church boards.

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[437] See Appendices 6 – 8, pages 227 – 233.

[438] See pages 234 – 237.

5. To provide a context for further research and study that would help small church pastors, board members, as well as seminaries, and denominations, further understand the unique situation faced by the small church.

Section G immediately following will enumerate five areas that are being recommended for further research.

G. Further Research Recommended

This research has determined that there are several areas that are in need of further work and study:

1. The issue of emotional maturity and an individual's personal self worth and how that effects the communication, spiritual maturity and relational health of board members was raised earlier in this paper. Scazzero's recent book, *I Quit*, and the work on *Emotional Intelligence* would both be resources to begin further research with.[439]

2. The impact of developing vision on the small church, specifically vision discernment, vision sharing and vision alignment. The small church thinks and behaves differently than the "large" church. Olsen's work is helpful but more work needs to be done to understand the mechanics involved in this important process.[440]

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[439] Geri Scazzero, *I Quit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1995) and Steven J. Stein & Howard E. Book, *The EQ Edge: Emotional Intelligence and Your Success* (Mississauga, ON: John Wiley and Sons, 2011).

[440] This researcher has been involved in leading the transitional process in a small church in Miramichi, New Brunswick. The "vision" process that the church underwent lasted for over a year and involved every level of leadership and is still in process. While Aubrey Malphurs, Andy Stanley, T. J. Addington, Bill Hybels and

3. The second area where further research is needed is in the area of "prayerful discernment" as it relates to the work of a healthy small church board. Again, while some work has been done, how this works itself out within a healthy small church is another issue.

4. Further research is recommended in the specific areas of risk management as well as crisis management, within the context of the small church. Legal liability issues, child abuse accusations, and "same-sex union" challenges are but a few of the items that need further attention, especially from the small church context.

5. Research and study into "best practices" for *small* church boards. Early in this paper, there was a long list of issues relating to the actual board meeting and how to conduct such in such a way as to provide optimal results and to maintain effective governance and oversight. More work needs to be done to provide small church boards with the practical knowledge and skills to have productive, healthy meetings.[441]

H. Specific Recommended Resources

Several resources that are recommended specifically for small church pastors and board members to consider in their pursuit of developing greater health within the board (see bibliography for more information):

- Don Page, Ph.D., *Servant-Empowered Leadership* – an excellent study resource complete with a DVD training/study guide included

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several others have written extensively on the importance of developing a clear and compelling vision, little to nothing exists from the unique perspective of the healthy small church.

[441] One helpful book that provides some insight into how to operate as a board is Jim Brown's *The Imperfect Board Member: Discovering the Seven Disciplines of Governance Excellence* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

- J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* – an older work but one that is rich in insight

- Jim Brown, *The Imperfect Board Member* – another very helpful, very practical tool

- T. J. Addington, *High Impact Church Boards* – a very practical, hands on resource

- Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* – an insightful and challenging resource that has a companion book entitled: "*Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Field Guide for Leaders, Managers, and Facilitators* (also by Patrick Lencioni) - this is a VERY helpful resource that provides much practical insight for board to begin to think as a team[442]

- John Maxwell's resources, such as "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership" or "The 17 Laws of Teamwork" could be used as monthly training articles at board meetings. They are helpful and practical tools that are within the reach of the small church price wise and the annual "Chick-fil-a Leadercast" is also a great opportunity for many leaders to get some exposure to leadership training and development

- Bill Hybel's annual "Leadership Summit" is another helpful event, although my own experience is that it has been cost-prohibitive and many of the sessions (other than Hybel's himself) have been difficult to translate back into the culture of the small church

- The late John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Movement, wrote an excellent précis on the nature of leadership and some key leadership concepts. The wisdom and practicality

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[442] See Appendix 17, Team Assessment Questionnaire (Pg. 243 – 244) for a starting survey that is very insightful

of the document has much to commend it to be studied and reflected upon, especially within the context of the small church. It is included here as the final appendix.[443]

I. Closing Comments

"How do selected factors appear to contribute to healthy church boards in small, Atlantic Baptist Convention Churches?" This research has determined that all seven of the selected factors that were proposed were in fact key factors that will greatly enhance the health of small Atlantic Baptist Convention churches. Intentionally developing board members along the lines of these seven core areas will create the environment for greater health and thus for greater ministry effectiveness for the kingdom of God.

The Scripture is clear and consistent in that character matters in terms of leadership. Choosing men and women with godly character and in whom the Spirit resides not only provides safety for the church, it promotes health in the larger body.

Trust, communication and prayer. A trio that will bring life to a small church board. And as life begins to flow into a renewed, healthy small church board, it will in turn flow out of that prime group into the life of the whole congregation, enhancing, energizing and encouraging health and vitality to emerge within the whole body. It will take courage, intentionality and much hard work but for the sake of the eternal destinies of the lives of many people who are touched by the hundreds and thousands of small churches across the country, it is well worth the effort.

The hundreds of small Atlantic Baptist Churches scattered across the region can become healthier, more vibrant mission outposts for the kingdom of God. As Paul encourages the believers in Rome: "lead with all diligence."[445]

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[443] See Appendix 19, page 246.

J. The Health Factors Matrix: Conclusions and Application: Looking through all of the

lenses

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
1.The ability to communicate effectively among board members	*Healthy boards communicate well *Healthy boards know their primary responsibilities *Healthy boards organize for effective ministry *Healthy boards use four empowering processes to govern well	*A godly leader understands that someone else`s perspective might be wisdom from God *Servant empowered leaders are emotionally healthy people *A godly leader listens to others and is more concerned about hearing than being heard	*Effective communication at the small church board level begins with trust and respect *Communication is greatly enhanced when board members feel *safe* to talk *Confidentiality is a key factor in creating healthy communication in a small church board	*The healthy small church board can increase their effectiveness in ministry and governance by intentionally developing their communication both conversationally and formally (agendas, minutes, and regular board meetings) *Resources such as training in active listening, developing *fierce conversations*, praying together for the ministry and for each other and intentionally spending time together to develop friendships are key areas
Seven possible factors	From the lens of	From the lens	From the lens of	Conclusion: the

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445 Romans 12:8. This verse is often quoted in the context of modern leadership paradigms but our research has indicated that this might not be quite what Paul had it mind. However, the challenge to serve the church, shepherding it and caring for it with *ALL diligence and zeal* should not to be understated.

that might impact board health:	the literature survey:	of theological/ Biblical survey:	the sociological interviews and survey:	healthy small church board
2. The spiritual maturity of the individual board members	*Healthy boards recognize the importance of having spiritually healthy board members *Healthy board members are spiritually mature, have godly character, passion for Jesus, genuinely love people, have discernment and are motivated and active in evangelism	*A godly leader is one that knows they are called by God to lead *A godly leader leads out of a desire to serve, not to lord it over others *A godly leader understands that leadership is a trust, authority is derived authority *A godly leader is enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit *A godly leader is a student of the Word, meditating on the Word daily *A godly leader understands her role as a shepherd to God`s flock	*Spiritual maturity is most evident in handling conflict situations *For most churches surveyed, spiritual maturity was not a well defined concept and was sometimes confused with length of service *The vast majority of those surveyed did agree that spiritual maturity ought to be an important characteristic for board members	*The healthy small church board needs to develop their own definition for spiritual maturity, then to write a clear *list* of the characteristics that *they* believe are key for potential new members *The healthy small church board needs to intentionally develop their own spiritual lives through prayer, Bible study, worship and witness. There needs to be acommitment to growth on the part of the existing board members that will then be an expectation of new board members *The healthy small church board needs to agree to a high standard for leadership and to purposefully (and with grace) hold themselves accountable to that standard *Resources like *Experiencing God*, *Servant Empowered Leadership* by Don Page are helpful

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
3. Positive and healthy relationships among board members & pastor	*Healthy boards trust and respect each other *Healthy boards develop healthy interpersonal relationships	*A godly leader seeks to build up other leaders *A godly leader spends no time on their own image *A godly leader lifts burdens off of people *A godly leader is a servant *A godly leader is for the other *A godly leader is humble towards others	*Most of the board members interviewed indicated that they knew each other quite well, however, there often lacked an intentionality to developing those relationships *Most of those interviewed self-reported healthy relationships between the pastor and board	*The healthy small church board needs to be intentional about building positive and healthy relationships among board members and pastor through social events, praying together, team building exercises and retreat type events *Resources such as Lencioni`s *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* and Maxwell`s *17 Laws of Teamwork* would be helpful

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
4. The process used to identify, train and release new board members	*Healthy boards are strategic in recruiting, they know the characteristics of healthy board members, they proactively screen potential new members *Healthy boards are intentional about orientation and assimilation of new board members	*A godly leader is a team builder *A godly leader keeps watch over himself *A godly leader mentors others that are teachable and can in turn teach others *A godly leader knows the Biblical character qualities of godly leaders *For a godly leader, character is more important than ability	*Only 2 out of 9 pastors interviewed had any kind of intention process for identifying, training and releasing new board members *The majority of churches provided an *on the job* approach to training *Most churches did not provide any kind of orientation process for new members	*The healthy small church board needs to be intentional about identifying, training, orienting and releasing new board members. *The healthy small church board will find clarity as they engage in a process of discussing and writing down the board`s vision for the kind of individual that they feel ought to serve as a spiritual leader *The healthy small church board needs to study the Scriptural qualifications of leaders as a key resource for developing spiritually healthy leaders *Oswald Sanders *Spiritual Leadership* is a key resource here

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
5. The process by which decisions are reached as a board	*Healthy boards display courage in decision making	*A godly leader exhibits humility, gentleness, and discernment	*Most churches described a very fluid, relational approach to decision making *People and relationships are a higher priority than programs (Danger :peace at any cost, mission drift and losing focus on the main thing) *Only half of those surveyed indicated that there was a clear set of policies to guide their decision making	*The healthy small church board needs to intentionally develop their core values and discuss their vision, mission and goals as a ministry. Clarity regarding these areas builds a cohesive team as well as providing leaders with a clear focus and a sense of direction. *Resources such as Malphurs` *Values Driven Leadership* and Maxwell`s *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* would make excellent studies for the board to work through together

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
6. The level of agreement and unity of vision, purpose and values within the board	*Healthy boards work well as a team *Healthy boards choose new members that are in alignment with the vision, mission, values, strategy and doctrine of the church *Healthy boards choose new board members that are already active in the life and ministry of the church	*A godly leader is purposeful, understanding that the point of leadership is to bring the church into the fullness of Christ *Godly leaders maintains careful discernment and intentionality to keep the main thing the main thing! *A godly leader ought to be tested first, before being released into leadership *A godly leader needs to be chosen because she has proven herself over time and with a clear demonstration of the call of God, wisdom and humility	*Unity is a high value in most of the churches interviewed, however, clarity of vision, values, purpose and mission was not as evident *Most agreed that clarity of vision was important but did not have any written documents *While unity was valued there was a clear disconnect when thinking about healthy debate and disagreement	*The healthy small church board needs to spend time and energy talking and praying together as a board, intentionally discerning and prayerfully discovering their own unique, Spirit-led understand of their vision, mission, purpose and values *The pastor and board chair need to spend time and energy praying and talking about the history of the church, the present context and state of ministry effectiveness so that they can work together in unity and with a common sense of purpose *Resources such as Olsen`s *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders*, Addington`s *High Impact Church Boards* and Malphurs` *Building Leaders* are be key resources here

Seven possible factors that might impact board health:	From the lens of the literature survey:	From the lens of theological/ Biblical survey:	From the lens of the sociological interviews and survey:	Conclusion: the healthy small church board
7. The process by which conflict is handled within the board	*Healthy boards know how to manage conflict *Healthy boards display courage *Healthy boards have a bias towards action, leads willingly, boldly and with intentionality	*A godly leader seeks to discover the mind of God in a matter *Godly leaders lead from their core values *Godly leaders seek the face of God in conflict *Godly leaders do not abandon the purpose and will of God in solving conflict situations *Godly leaders act with boldness, humility and courage in the face of conflict	*Key factors reported in conflict management: prayer, lots of dialogue and discussion, discernment and discretion, seeking external advice from godly counsel and more prayer *Otherwise, there was no intentional process for conflict management	*The healthy small church board needs to wrestle with the realities of conflict and to determine their level of commitment to spiritual growth both as a board and as a church and then to decide their own level of tolerance to the discomfort often produced when leaders decide to make the vision clear and the mission their number one priority *Resources such as Susan Scott`s *Fierce Conversations* and Collins` *Vision that Works* are helpful tools, as is Brown`s *The Imperfect Board Member*

Charts

Chart 1

"Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry" [448]

Avg Sunday Attendance	Key Leaders	Self Identity	Organizational Scheme	What the Pastor does…	How members/pastor relate
Family < 50	Long time members	"Family chapel"	None needed	What the (key) members want	Directly
Pastoral 50 – 150	The pastor	"One big family"	Pastor makes all decisions	Everything	Directly
Program 150 – 350	The pastor, staff and key lay leaders	What we DO	Pastor makes most decisions; consults with staff and lay leaders as needed	Almost everything	May relate to pastor; some will relate to associate pastor or particular lay ministers
Corporate or Resource > 350	The senior pastor (and staff)	"Big important church", "cultural/arts center," "activists" etc.	Collection of departments with staff and/or lay leadership for each department	With vestry, "keeper of the vision"; supervises staff; much preaching; some pastoral work	Members look to senior pastor for leadership and spiritual guidance. Pastor care comes mostly from staff and trained laity
Cathedral	Same as corporate	Multiple centers of worship or foci	Same as corporate but more division by sub-congregation or demographic	Same as Corporate	Usually each congregation identifies with particular staff member

[448] Arlin Rothauge, *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry,* (New York, NY: Episcopal Church Center, 1983), p. 79.

Chart 2

Daman's comparison of "managerial" model with "family" model

Daman compares the "managerial model" with the "family model" of leadership in a small

church. [449]

	Managerial Model	**Family Model**
Management is by?	Objective	By relationships
Pastor serves as:	CEO	Shepherd
What dictates policy?	Organizational Plans	Relationships
Success is measured by:	Programs & growth	Stability & unity
Decision making:	A few decide	Congregation decides
Budget versus decisions:	Budget guides decisions	Decisions guide the budget
Groups function:	Independently	Interdependently

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[449] Daman, *Leading the Small Church*, p. 212 – 218.

Chart 3

Healthy Small Church Characteristics Comparison Grid[450]

Title	*The Healthy Small Church*[451]	*Natural Church Development*[452]	*Small, Strong Congregations*[453]
Author	Dennis Bickers	Christian Schwartz	Kennon Callahan
The "health" characteristics:	*6 characteristics*	*8 characteristics*	*12 characteristics*
1. Courageous, visionary & empowering		Empowering leadership	Strong leadership resources
2. A compelling mission, a clear vision and common core values	A common vision		Specific, concrete missional objectives
			Sold decision making
3. Every member ministry	Ministry the responsibility of the whole church		Pastoral and lay visitation
	Maintains community while welcoming new visitors		Open accessibility
4. Need oriented evangelism		Need oriented evangelism	
5. Caring small groups		Holistic small groups	Significant relational groupings
6. Loving relationships		Loving relationships	
7. Inspiring worship		Inspiring worship	Corporate, dynamic worship
8. Passionate spirituality		Passionate spirituality	
9. Gift based ministry	Gift based ministry	Gift oriented ministry	
10. Faithful stewardship	Practices faithful stewardship		Solid financial resources
11. Positive self image	Positive self image		
12. Functional structures		Functional structures	
			Several programs and activities
			Adequate land and parking
			Adequate space and facilities
			High visibility

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[450] Chart compiled by Terry A. Branscombe, copyright 2011.

[451] Dennis Bickers, *The Healthy Small Church: Diagnosis and Treatment for the Big Issues* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), p. 13 – 18.

[452] Christian Schwartz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1996), p.16 – 36.

[453] Kennon L. Callahan, *Small, Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths and Health for Your Congregation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 22.

Chart 4

Contrast and comparison of characteristics of healthy board members[454]

Combined List of Characteristics	Leading Leaders[455]	High Impact Church Boards[456]
	Aubrey Malphurs	T. J. Addington
Spiritual maturity:	Spiritual maturity	
Godly character		Exhibits godly character and lifestyle
Passion for Jesus		Holds a deep passion for Jesus
Displays humility		Displays personal humility
Extends hope		Extends hope
Loves people genuinely		Loves people genuinely
Life long learner, reliable and teachable	Reliable and teachable	Learns throughout life
In doctrinal agreement	In doctrinal agreement	
In alignment with vision, mission, values & strategy	In alignment with the church's values, mission, vision and strategy	Understands and agrees with God's leadership assignment
Involved members	Involved members of the church	
Reasonably loyal to the pastor	Reasonably loyal to the pastor	
Team player:		
Respects and trusts board members and the pastor	Respecting other board members	Focuses on the team
Nontraditional/future focused	Nontraditional (not keepers of the status quo)	Grapples with the future
Having their spouse's support	Having their spouse's support	
Exhibits leadership qualities:		
Influences others positively		Influences other positively
Exhibits a bias towards action		Exhibits a bias towards action
Leads willingly		Leads willingly
Leads boldly		Leads boldly
Discernment		
Motivated and active in evangelism		
Kingdom vision		
Ability to communicate well with stakeholders		
Intentionality		
Biased towards action, drive		
Resource gathering and preservation		

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[454] Chart created by Terry Branscombe.

[455] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 47 – 50.

[456] Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 36.

Chart 5

Healthy Small Church Board Survey Questionnaire Results

Total number of participants: 27   Number of surveys returned: 25

	1 = True, 2 = More true than false, 3 = More false than true, 4 = False	Average	TRUE		TRUE	FALSE		FALSE
1	I feel that my work on the board is a most valuable use of my time.	1.3	25		100%	0		0%
2	The board addresses the most important issues that affect our church.	1.3	25		100%	0		0%
3	The board doesn't micromanage the pastor and his ministry.	1.2	25		100%	0		0%
4	The board has a clear, compelling direction.	1.8	23		92%	2		8%
5	I feel that my work on the board is a good use of my gifts and abilities.	1.5	24		96%	1		4%
6	The board doesn't spend time on trivial matters.	1.7	23		92%	2		8%
7	No one person dominates or tries to control the board.	1.1	25		100%	0		0%
8	The board is performing at a high percentage of its leadership potential.	1.7	24		96%	1		4%
9	The board is proactive not reactive in its work.	1.8	20		80%	5		20%
10	The board members often disagree and debate with one another.	3.3	3		12%	22		88%
11	New board members receive an orientation and training for their position.	2.8	7		29%	17		71%
12	The board members trust and show respect for one another.	1.1	25		100%	0		0%
13	The board members are well qualified spiritually for the board's work.	1.3	25		100%	0		0%
14	The board has set clear lines of authority between itself and the pastor.	1.8	20		80%	5		20%
15	By being on the board, I am making a significant difference for Christ.	1.8	23		92%	2		8%
16	I am disappointed when board meetings are cancelled.	2.4	18		72%	7		28%
17	The board has established a clear set of policies that guide its decisions.	2.3	13		52%	12		48%
18	It is rare that board meetings last for more than 2 hours.	1.2	25		100%	0		0%
19	All items that appear on the board's agenda have been carefully screened	2.5	12		48%	13		52%
20	Rarely do board members interfere with the pastor's work.	1.1	25		100%	0		0%
21	We have board meetings on a monthly basis.	2.6	11		44%	14		56%
22	Board members rotate on and off of the board on a annual basis.	3.7	2		8%	23		92%
23	The board views its work as primarily spiritual work.	1.6	23		92%	2		8%
24	Board members receive regular training to continue to grow in their ability to faithfully serve on the board.	3.0	7		28%	18		72%
25	The job description of a board member is clearly written down for anyone	2.4	12		48%	13		52%
26	The board evaluates the performance of the pastor on an annual basis.	3.1	5		20%	20		80%
27	The board does an evaluation of its own performance annually.	3.2	4		16%	21		84%
28	The board members have developed deep friendships and care for each other.	1.4	25		100%	0		0%
29	The board has grown stronger as a result of dealing with difficult or conflicted situations.	1.4	25		100%	0		0%
30	I feel free to share both positive and negative concerns at board meetings	1.1	25		100%	0		0%

Appendices

Appendix 1

Covenant of Healthy Relationships[457]:

Knowing that we, as leaders of this congregation, must model godly relationships before one another and the church, we commit ourselves to:

- Pray daily for fellow members of the leadership team and for the ministry of the church

- Never speak ill of any member of the team

- Resolve broken relationships personally and quickly

- Forgive one another when offended and hold no grudges

- Always support decisions of this board once they are made, unless a biblical, moral issue is at stake

- Care for one another when a member is hurting

- Always be honest in board deliberations and never devious in seeking personal agendas

- Never betray a confidence of the board

- Hold one another accountable for this covenant and agree to step off the board if there is regular violation of these agreements

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[457]   Addington, *High Impact Church Boards,* p. 85.

Appendix 2

Sample **Board Member Covenant**[458]

As one who has been elected to serve on the Church Board of _____ Church, and in view

of the tremendous privilege and responsibility this service entails, I affirm the following.

- o I will actively support and promote the values, mission, vision and beliefs of the church.

- o I will faithfully pray for and encourage the entire leadership team which includes the pastoral staff and other board members.

- o I will discharge all the duties and responsibilities expected of board members as well as those assigned by the board during the year.

- o I will diligently seek to live up to and fulfill the comments of the Member's Covenant (Constitution of _____ Church).

- o I will model support for board decisions amongst the Congregation.

- o I will demonstrate openness, honesty, humility, trust and respect in my board meeting participation and in dealings with fellow board members.

- o I will maintain strictest confidentiality regarding topics and issues that come before the board, even in relation to family and closest friends.

- o I will promote and in all ways possible seek to advance the health of the church.

Believing that leadership in _____ Church is a sacred trust, I accept the opportunity set before

me and commit myself in faithfulness to this covenant.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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[458] Unknown author, "Board Member Covenant," online article in the resource – governance section of the Alberta Baptist Association website,
http://www.nab.ca/aba/ChurchEnrichment/Governance/Board%20Member%20Covenant.pdf

Appendix 3

Board Member Covenant Outline[459]

The following is a sample of a board member covenant developed for a specific local church.

- *Attendance.* Every board member is expected to maintain consistent and regular attendance. Board members are to be present for Sunday school, Sunday morning and evening worship services, and Wednesday evening services. Board members are expected to attend all board meetings.

- *Stewardship.* Board members are expected to be faithful stewards. They are to be responsible in the way they conduct their personal business and financial affairs. Board members must support the ministry of the church through their tithe.

- *Ministry.* Being a board member is not a passive position. Board members are expected to be actively involved in the ministries of the church. They are to be an extension of the pastor's ministry to the congregation.

- *Training.* Learning is a lifelong process. Board members are expected to continue to learn how to better serve the church.

- *Example.* Board members must set the example for the church family. Their lifestyle must be free of addictive drugs, alcoholic beverages, and sinful habits. Their marriage must be strong and free from activities that might be construed as unholy.

- *Doctrine.* All board members will faithfully support the doctrines of the church.

- *Confidentiality.* Board members will keep matters confidential.

  - *Prayer.* Board members will faithfully pray for the pastor, the church, and for those in leadership.

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[459] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 157 – 158.

Appendix 4

Olsen`s Bell Curve: The Stages of Board Development[460]

Olsen's chart shows the two bell curves in the stages of development: invitation, inclusion, elation, disillusion, commitment, function, and termination.

Graph adapted by Olsen from Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*

Elation

inclusion

disillusion

function

commitment

invitation

explicit covenant

termination

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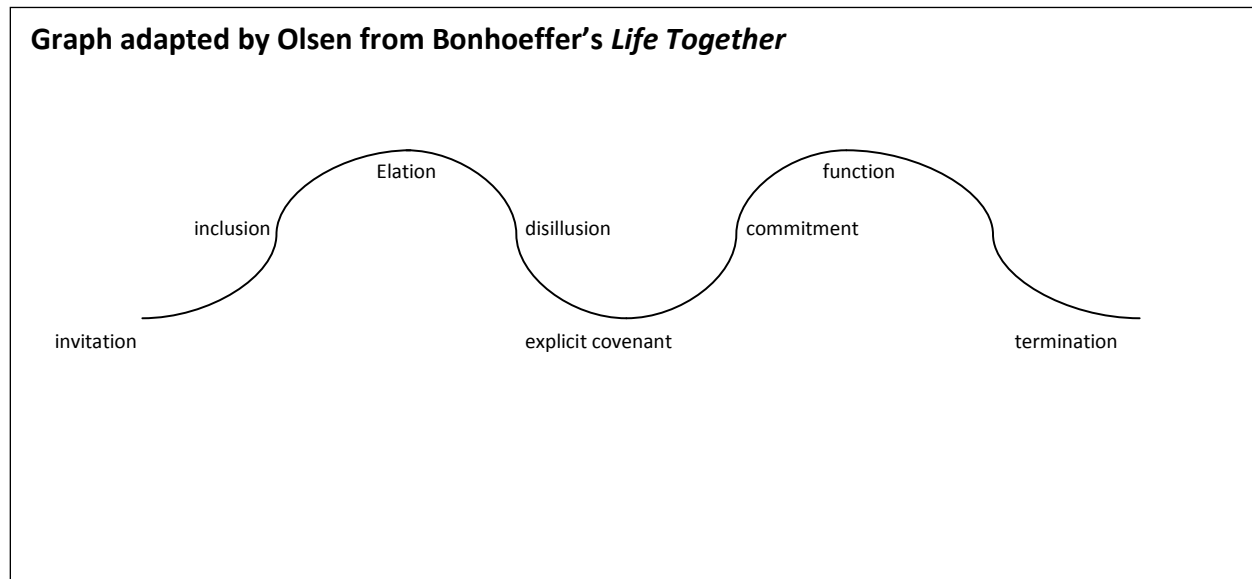
[460] Graphic adapted from Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1995), p. 140 – 152.

Appendix 5

Catalog of Core Competencies for Boards

Copyright by Dr. Lyle Schrag (used by permission)

Possible Modules for Board Governance Certificate	Banff: 4 circles	Banff: 25 core	BPfCB Diagnostic Survey:	Governance as Leadership	Imperfect Board Member	Doing Good Even Better	United Way – Project Blueprint	Board Source: 12 Principles of Governance	Board Source 10 Basic Responsibilities
Church Boards in Biblical context	Community, Network, Partnerships	Knowledge of Business; Network Perspective; Future Focus Stewardship Sustainability	Board Development	Fiduciary Mode: Faithful to mission Accountable to performance Compliant with laws/regulation	Reflect on organizational results Respect owner expectations Select prominent leadership Direct organizational performance	Board relationships	Boardsman-ship Board Development and Operations	Constructive Partnership Mission Driven Strategic Thinking	Determine Mission and purpose
Church Boards in general Canadian non-profit context	Organization, Systems, Relationships, Team, Analytics, Options Personal Practices	Community Connection Direction Setting Social Responsibility Senior Management Accountability and Succession Transparency Ethical conduct	Board Functioning Board Decision Making			Board duties Board organization and training	Board Meeting Management and Parliamentary Procedures	Culture of Inquiry Independent – Mindedness	Select Chief Executive Proper financial oversight Ensure adequate resources
Basic Board principles [roles, responsibilities, time stewardship]	Banff: 12 Courses: Communication, Trust, Teamwork Strategic Leadership Systems model	Wise Counsel Governance Work Prudence Duty to Manage Strategic Agility Resource Management Fiduciary Duty	Board Roles and Responsibilities	Strategic Mode: Set organization's priorities and course Deploy resources accordingly	Protect organizational performance Expect Board – Management interaction	Meeting effectiveness CEO – Board relationships	Financial Management Non-profit collaborations Resource Generation and Financial Development	Ethos of Transparency Compliance with Integrity Sustaining Resources	Ensure legal and ethical integrity and accountability Ensure effective organizational planning
Collective Board work Board Chair	Role of Board and Management Team Strategic Thinking	Public and Government Relations Board Succession Emergency Response	Board Accountability	Generative Mode: Expressive aspects: values, judgements, insights	Connect healthy relationships	Legal/Financial obligations	Strategic Visioning and Planning	Results – oriented Intentional Board practices	Recruit and orient new board members – assess performance
Board Member Board organization	Future Positioning Oversight: Ethics Evaluation of CEO Board Agenda management	Self-Assessment Diligence Interpersonal Effectiveness Board Renumeration					Teamwork: building and playing	Continuous Learning Revitalization	Enhance organization's public standing Determine, Monitor, strengthen programs and services
Mentoring, orienting new Board members Education	Risk Assessment, capital management Diplomacy, public leverage Legal liabilities and duties Board succession								Support chief executive and assess performance

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Appendix 6

What is Your Church's "Leadership Paradigm"?[461]

T. J. Addington, in leadership consultations with churches, often asks "Tell me about your organization's decision-making process." To help you answer this question, respond to the following twenty questions by circling yes or not. Think about your church's leadership board and governance system as you answer.

1. Are you ever frustrated by the pace of decision-making? Yes or No

2. Is it necessary to get approval from more than one group in order to get something done? Yes or No

3. Do you ever find your board revisiting issues you thought were settled? Yes or No

4. Is there confusion or conflict over the place the congregation, staff, or board plays in leadership or decision-making? Yes or No

5. Does your board have a clear job description and understand its responsibilities? Yes or No

6. Does your board spend more time managing day-to-day activities than thinking and planning for the future? Yes or No

7. Can you identify the "preferred future" for your congregation, and is this a shared dream of the board? Yes or No

8. Do your board and staff members work from clear annual ministry goals and plans? Yes or No

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[461] T. J. Addington, *High Impact Church Boards*, p. 16 – 17.

9. Are you frustrated with the number of decisions that need to go to the congregation for approval? Yes or No

10. Is there a high level of unity and relational health among board members? Yes or No

11. Do your church structure and bylaws hinder rather than help leaders make timely decisions? Yes or No

12. Does your board have ample time for prayer and study of Scripture and to dream and plan for the future? Yes or No

13. Does your board have a covenant that spells out its procedural and relational practices? Yes or No

14. Has the lack of such a covenant ever caused problems for the board? Yes or No

15. Does the church have a process designed to find the very best leaders for your senior board? Yes or No

16. Do you have a process to mentor and train potential leaders before they become leaders? Yes or No

17. Do you believe your church is maximizing its ministry impact? Yes or No

18. Does your congregation have more than one elected board? Yes or No

19. Is there tension or confusion between the staff and board over who is responsible for what? Yes or No

20. Are you able to attract and retain the best leaders in your church to serve on your senior-leadership board? Yes or No

Appendix 7

Governing Board Audit[463]

One of the most influential leadership groups in your church is the governing board. How is your board doing? Circle the answer that best describes your board situation.	TRUE	MORE TRUE THAN FALSE	MORE FALSE THAN TRUE	FALSE
I feel that my work on the board is a most valuable use of my time.	1	2	3	4
The board addresses the most important issues that affect our church.	1	2	3	4
The board doesn't micromanage the church and its ministry.	1	2	3	4
The board has a clear, compelling direction.	1	2	3	4
I feel that my work on the board is a good use of my gifts and abilities.	1	2	3	4
The board doesn't spend time on trivial matters.	1	2	3	4
No one person dominates or tries to control the board.	1	2	3	4
The board is performing at a high percentage of its leadership potential.	1	2	3	4
The board is proactive not reactive in its work.	1	2	3	4
The board members often disagree and debate with one another.	1	2	3	4
New board members receive an orientation and training for their position.	1	2	3	4
The board members trust and show respect for one another.	1	2	3	4
The board members are well qualified spiritually for the board's work.	1	2	3	4
The board has set clear lines of authority between itself and the pastor.	1	2	3	4
By being on the board, I am making a significant difference for Christ.	1	2	3	4
I am disappointed when board meetings are cancelled.	1	2	3	4
The board has established a clear set of policies that guide its decisions.	1	2	3	4
It is rare that board meetings last for more than 2 hours.	1	2	3	4
All items that appear on the board's agenda have been carefully screened by the board chairperson.	1	2	3	4
Rarely do board members interfere with the staff's work	1	2	3	4

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[463] Malphurs, *Leading Leaders*, p. 125 – 126.

Appendix 8

<u>Men's Character Assessment for Leadership[464]</u>

Directions: Circle the number that best represents how you would rate yourself in each area.

1. I am "above reproach." I have a good reputation among people in general. I have done nothing that someone could use as an accusation against me. weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

2. I am the "husband of one wife." If married, not only do I have one wife, but I am not physically or mentally promiscuous, for I am focused only on her.   .

   .   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

3. I am "temperate." I am a well-balanced person. I do not overdo anything, such as use of alcohol, TV watching, working, etc. I am not excessive or given to extremes in beliefs and commitments.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

4. I am "sensible." I show good judgment in life and have a proper perspective regarding myself and my abilities (I am humble).   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

5. I am "respectable." I conduct my life in an honorable way, and people have and show respect for me.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

6. I am "hospitable." I use my residence as a place to serve and minister to Christians and non-Christians alike.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

7. I am "able to teach." When I teach the Bible, I show an aptitude for handling the Scriptures with reasonable skill.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

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[464]   Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 149 – 152

8. I am "not given to drunkenness." If I drink alcoholic beverages or indulge in other acceptable but potentially addictive practices, I do so in moderation.   .

.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

9. I am "not violent." I am under control. I do not lose control to the point that I strike other people or cause damage to their property.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

10. I am "gentle." I am a kind, meek (not weak), forbearing person. I do not insist on my rights or resort to violence.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

11. I am "not quarrelsome." I am a peacemaker who avoids hostile situations with people.   .

weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

12. I am "not a lover of money." I am not serving God for financial gain. I seek first his righteousness, knowing that God will supply my needs.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

13. I "manage my family well." If I have a family, my children are believer who obey me with respect. People do not think my children are wild or disobedient.   .

.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

14. I am "not a recent convert." I am not a new Christian who finds myself constantly struggling with pride and conceit.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

15. I have "a good reputation with outsiders." Though lost people may not agree with my religious convictions, they still respect me as a person.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

16. I am "not overbearing." I am not self-willed, stubborn, or arrogant.   .

.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

17. I am "not quick-tempered." I am not inclined toward anger and I do not lose my temper quickly and easily.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

18. I am "not pursuing dishonest gain." I am neither fond of nor involved in any wrongful practices that result in fraudulent gain. weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

19. I "love what is good." I love the things that honor God. weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

20. I am "upright." I live in accordance with the laws of God and man. .

. weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

21. I am "holy." I am a devout person whose life is generally pleasing to God. .

. weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

22. I "hold firmly to the faith." I understand, hold to, and attempt to conserve God's truth. I also encourage others while refuting those who oppose the truth. .

. weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

When you have completed this character assessment, note those characteristics that you gave the lowest rating (a 4 or below). The lowest of these are to become the character goals that you work on to grow spiritually.

Appendix 9

Women's Character Assessment for Leadership[465]

Directions: Circle the number that best represents how you would rate yourself in each area.

1. I am "worthy of respect." I find that most people who know me respect me and tend to honor me as a dignified person who is serious about spiritual things.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

2. I am not a "malicious talker." I do not slander people whether believers or unbelievers.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

3. I am "temperate." I am a well-balanced person. I do not overdo any activity, such as use of alcohol, TV watching, working, etc. I am not excessive or given to extremes in belief and commitments.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

4. I am "trustworthy in everything." The Lord and people find me to be a faithful person in everything I do.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

5. I live "reverently." I have a deep respect for God and live in awe of him.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

6. I am "not addicted to much wine." If I drink alcoholic beverages, I do so in moderation. I am not addicted to them.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

7. I teach "what is good." I share with other women what God has taught me from his Word and life in general.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

8. I "love my husband." If I am married, I love my husband according to 1 Corinthians 13:4–8.

    weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

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[465]   Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders,* p. 153 – 155.

9. I "love my children." If I have children, I love my children and care for them.   .

    .   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

10. I am "self-controlled." I do not let other people or things run my life, and I do what I

    know is right.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

11. I am "pure." I am not involved emotionally or physically or physically in sexual

    immorality.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

12. I am "busy at home." If I am married, I take care of my responsibilities at home.   .

    .   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

13. I am "kind." I am essentially a good person.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

14. I am "subject to my husband." If I am married, I let my husband take responsibility ofr

    and lead our marriage, and I follow his leadership.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

15. I have "a gentle and quiet spirit." I am a mild, easygoing person who wins people over by

    a pure and reverent life more than by my words.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

16. I "dress modestly." I wear clothing that is decent and shows propriety.   .

                                             weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

17. I "do good deeds." I do those things that are appropriate for women who profess to know

    and worship God.   weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 strong

When you have completed this character assessment, note those characteristics that you gave

the lowest rating (a 4 or below). The lowest of these are to become the character goals that

you work on to grow spiritually.

Appendix 10

Character Assessment of Potential Board Members[466]

The following tool is designed to be used within the process of recruitment and election or appointment of board members in local church ministry. While this is not a clinical tool and should not be used outside the intended effort, it is designed to guide the prayerful deliberation of those who are entrusted with the responsibility of putting forth names of those being considered for leadership roles.

Drawing on various character lists found in Scripture the following are identified and defined.

Process:
☐ Rate the candidate on a scale of 1 to 5 for each of the following.
☐ Combine the ratings of each committee member, thereby creating an averaged response.
☐ Review the averaged scores and prayerfully consider if the results support a recommendation or disqualify the individual from consideration.
☐ Once a decision regarding a recommendation has been reached, destroy all assessment sheets.

(Scale: 1 = Inadequate 5 = Adequate)

1. Above Reproach
☐ Has a good reputation amongst church members
☐ Has no accusation or complaint against them   1   2   3   4   5

2. Marital Faithfulness
☐ Demonstrates a healthy relation with spouse
☐ Upholds marital commitments   1   2   3   4   5

3. Temperate
☐ Is well-balanced
☐ Stable and steadfast   1   2   3   4   5

4. Self-controlled
☐ Sound in mind
☐ In command of all passions, desires and abilities   1   2   3   4   5

5. Respectable
☐ Lives in an honorable way
☐ Is held in high regard   1   2   3   4   5

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[466] This assessment tool was developed by Jim Leverette for the Alberta Baptist Association and offered through the ABA's website as a resource for their churches.
http://nab.ca/aba/ChurchEnrichment/Governance/Character%20Assessment%20of%20Potential%20Board%20Members.pdf

6. Hospitable
☐ Is open and welcoming
☐ Uses material possessions to serve and minister to others 1   2   3   4   5

7. Able to Teach
☐ Can communicate Scriptural truths effectively
☐ Is able to draw out and express Biblical teachings   1   2   3   4   5

8. Not Addicted to Wine
☐ Is not abusive or indulgent of alcohol
☐ Is not given to addictive practices   1   2   3   4   5

9. Not Violent
☐ Emotions and actions are controlled
☐ Is not verbally abusive or quarrelsome   1   2   3   4   5

10. Gentle
☐ Is kind and fair
☐ Gives deference to others   1   2   3   4   5

11. Patient
☐ Ability to control or withhold actions
☐ Is not reactionary   1   2   3   4   5

12. Not Quarrelsome
☐ Not given to contentious debates and arguments
☐ Peaceful   1   2   3   4   5

13. Free from the Love of Money
☐ Demonstrates a non-materialistic attitude
☐ While possessing is not obsessed by goods   1   2   3   4   5

14. One who Manages His/Her Own Household Well
☐ Conduct in the home demonstrates faith and commitment
☐ House and home reflect the attitude of a steward   1   2   3   4   5

15. Spiritually Mature
☐ Not a new convert/believer
☐ Demonstrated spiritual growth and health   1   2   3   4   5

Overall Suitability for Leadership   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Appendix 11

Orientation of New Board Members[467]

Orientation of the entire board shortly after the election is essential.

The purpose of the orientation is:
- To familiarize new members with the organization and with the board's responsibilities;
- To ensure that new members understand their legal duties as individual board members;
- To build a working relationship among board members that promotes ongoing support and enables them to come to an agreement on how they will carry out their work.

It is important that new board members receive regular feedback on their performance, especially if it is their first time serving on a Board of Directors. Board members responsible for the orientation of new members should be aware of the performance expectations that are most important to convey to new members. Though all aspects of orientation are important and need to be worked on by new members, directors should clearly communicate to new members the expectations that must be understood and complied with *immediately*. There may be specific conventions for each Board, such as those related to charitable giving to the organization, that also need to be made clear from the onset (Gill 2005).

Here are items to consider in developing an orientation session/ manual for new Board members:
- History of the organization
- Copy of by-laws
- Mission of the organization
- Strategic priorities, goals and objectives
- Summary of the organization's programs and services
- Membership base
- Organizational structure
- Board structure, executive members, committees, staff structure
- Board member's role
- Job descriptions, expectations, and legal liabilities
- Board / staff roles
- Committees
- Board recruitment, development and evaluation process
- Budget process and   Current year's budget

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[467] Taken from the United Way of Canada Board Materials [Materials to be found at: http://www.boarddevelopment.org/ - while material is available for review and download, it is under copyright© These materials have been adapted from the United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada Board Basics Kit Manual.]

Appendix 12

Board Member Orientation[468]

Board orientation is motivated by the desire that all board members begin their service with a common understanding as to the role and responsibilities of the board. It is not assumed that just because an individual is elected or appointed to the board, there is clarity and understanding. Although in the recruitment process an effort is usually made to explain important issues to potential candidates, this level of instruction cannot pass for effective orientation. It is for this reason that a concerted effort should be made to educate and inform all new board members and to ensure that there is a common point of entry for those coming into service.

It is also noted that many boards include not only new members but also continuing members in the orientation effort. Such an approach serves a regular, intentional effort to review and reinforce the fundamentals of board service.

Orientation Issues
- Spiritual Leadership
- Covenant (Church/Board)
- Governance Philosophy
- Documents – Defining, Directional, Operational
- Development Plan
- Monitoring Protocols
- Meeting Overview
- Issues: Ongoing, Pending

Orientation Documents
- Defining Documents
- Statement of Faith
- Values
- Mission
- Directional Documents
- Constitution
- Policies
- Strategic Plan
- Operational Documents
- Job Descriptions
- Procedures
- Handbooks
- Assessment Formats – Board Self-Assessment, Pastor Performance Review

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[468] Board Member Orientation resource courtesy of the Alberta Baptist Association website,
    http://www.nab.ca/aba/ChurchEnrichment/Governance/Board%20Member%20Orientation.pdf

Appendix 13

Orienting New Board Members[469]

Focusing on these ten procedures will get newcomers off to a promising start.

1 Corinthians 3:10

By Richard R. Hamar

New church board members often receive no orientation or training. They show up at board meetings without the slightest idea as to the nature of their responsibilities or possible liabilities. They deserve better. This article presents ten steps that your board can take to orient members. These recommendations will make the new members feel welcome, significantly increase efficiency and value, and provide them with a positive "first impression" regarding the competency of church leadership.

1. 4-hour training programs. An audio course called "The 4 Hour Legal Training Program for Church Boards" addresses vital legal and tax information with which every church board member should be familiar. We recommend that churches provide these CDs to every new board member as a component of an orientation program. Some of the topics that are addressed include fiduciary duties, risk management, documents and records, financial issues, and personnel issues. In addition, the topic of personal liability for church board members is explained. It is important for church board members to understand that they, and their church, are as likely to be sued as any other leader or organization. For more information, go to http://store.churchlawtodaystore.com/test.html

2. Minutes of annual business meetings. Provide new board members with the minutes of the last few annual business meetings, along with the minutes of any recent special business meetings.

3. Minutes of prior board meetings. Provide new board members with the minutes of all board meetings for the past year.

4. Financial statements. Provide new board members with the church's financial statements for the most recent two or three years.

5. Budget. Church budgets are a mystery to many new board members. Many sit silently during board meetings when budgetary matters are being addressed, ashamed to "show their ignorance" by asking questions about what is happening. Senior pastors, and veteran board members, should anticipate this and provide new board members with an overview of the church's budgetary system at their first meeting.

6. Explain all "special rules." These include the number and identity of persons who are authorized to sign checks and contracts on behalf of the church; the dates, times, and locations of board meetings; any special events (such as retreats) that are being planned; and whether or not the church carries "directors and officers" insurance for the members of the board.

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[469] Richard R. Hamar, Orienting New Board Members, published in Christianity Today, 2005. Originally appeared in Church Law & Tax Report.

7. Bylaws. Provide each new board member with a current version of the church's governing documents. These ordinarily will include the corporate charter if the church is incorporated, and a constitution or bylaws. We recommend that a veteran board member or the senior pastor take a few minutes to review the main provisions in these documents.

8. Explain fiduciary duties. Most church officers and directors are unaware of the fact that they owe various "fiduciary duties" to the corporation. These fiduciary duties are imposed on officers and directors because of the position of special trust that they occupy. One of these duties is the duty of care. Board members are under an obligation to perform their duties "in good faith, in a manner they reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the corporation, and with such care as an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances."

Church board members can satisfy this fiduciary duty by:

Attending all of the meetings of the board and any committees on which they serve.

Thoroughly reviewing all interim and annual financial statements and reports, and seeking clarification of any irregularities or inconsistencies.

Affirmatively investigating and correcting any other problems or improprieties.

Thoroughly reviewing the corporate charter, constitution, and bylaws.

Dissenting from any board action with which they have any misgivings, and insisting that their objection be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Resigning from the board if and when they are unable to fulfill these duties.

Directors of nonprofit corporations (i.e., churches) also have a fiduciary duty of loyalty to the corporation. This duty generally requires that any transaction between the board and one of its directors be (a) fully disclosed, (b) approved by the board without the vote of the interested director, and (c) fair and reasonable to the corporation. In most cases, a director breaches the duty of loyalty only through some secret or undisclosed interest in a transaction with the corporation.

9. Confidentiality. New board members should be instructed that some matters considered by the board are confidential, and should not be disclosed to others. Some church boards adopt "covenants of confidentiality" requiring board members to maintain the confidentiality of a specified matter.

10. Ongoing lessons. The website www.churchlawtoday.com/ contains weekly lessons, which provide another way to orient new board members. We recommend that each new board member immediately be apprised of this service, and how to access it. These lessons are designed to assist church board members understand and fulfill their legal and administrative responsibilities, and reduce legal risks to themselves and the church.

Appendix 14

Core Competencies for Church Boards[471]

The ministry of a Church Board is unique and calls for a distinct sense of trained skills and personal practices – or competencies. What makes Church Board practice different from non-profit Boards is that Church Board members serve both a Spiritual Community and a Human Organization. Their involvement is a response of obedience to God's call, and fulfills a deeply Spiritual ministry. Without the careful ministry of Board members, the Church suffers. But, as Church Board members grow in their capacity together, as a spiritual community they are able to make a difference. This chart outlines the three primary capacities that define the set of skills that Church Board members can discover. As Church Board members measure the results of the Best Practices for Church Boards Survey, the Survey Practice column provides a gauge to assess the level of health in their practice … and resolve on a intentional strategy to develop better skill in addressing their shared issues together.

Core Capacity	Competency:	Core Issues	Survey Practice
Redemptive Ministry	The Church Board defines the spiritual foundations of the relational nature of the Church [the alignment and integration of relationships and partnerships]	**Personal Calling:** Individual spiritual discipline and preparation, orientation to ministry	**Development**
		Ministry Structure: size/ministry dynamics of the local church, identifying both an appropriate leadership structure to meet the size requirements	**Decision Making**
		Ministry Relationships: between Pastor/Chair, Cross-training between Board and Staff, the Board as a Ministry Team	**Roles/Responsibilities**
		Spiritual Community: Retreats, Congregational communication, the Spiritual community of Board and Church	**Accountability**
Strategic Leadership	The Church Board discerns the strategic dynamics for the health and mission of the Church [the alignment and integration of mission and ministry]	**Vision Development and Strategic Planning:** discern Missional mandate: mission, values, vision – into action	**Decision Making**
		Decision-Making: strategies to form wise, God-honoring decisions	**Decision Making**
		Conflict Management: abilities to discern points of tension, and solution strategies for health	**Functioning**
Fiduciary Stewardship	The Church Board ensures faithful accounting in the functioning of the Church	**Meeting Stewardship:** meeting strategies and time stewardship	**Functioning**
		Ministry Selection: Pastoral Development [elevating Pastoral evaluation to a higher purpose] and **Board Development** [the continuing education of Board]	**Accountability**
	The Church Board confirms the accountability of the Church	**Resource Allocation:** board reporting translated into resource allocation	**Functioning**
		CCRA – Legal Responsibilities: ethical responsibilities that go beyond CCRA such as policy development.	**Accountability**

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[471] Used by permission from Dr. Lyle Schrag,, The Northwest Centre for Leadership Development

Appendix 15

The Marks of an Effective Governing Board

The marks of an effective board[472]:

- an effective board has a mission statement

- an effective board nurtures strong personal relationships

- an effective board stays in touch with its' world (whatever its' world is)

- an effective board does very good planning

- an effective board gives itself competent and inspirational leadership

- an effective board works seriously at the growth, needs, and potential of its members

- an effective board provides to the institution wisdom, wealth, work and witness

- an effective board is intimate with its responsibilities

- an effective board decides what it will measure and does it

- an effective board plans time for reflection

- an effective board says "thanks"

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[472] De Pree, *Called to Serve, p. 7 – 22.*

Appendix 16

Board Self-Assessment[473]

Members of the board are asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1 – 4, with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree.

1. Mission
1.1 All board members are familiar with and support the current Mission Statement. 1 2 3 4

1.2 The board's policy decisions reflect the Mission of the church. 1 2 3 4

1.3 The board agrees on who should be served by the ministry. 1 2 3 4

2. Policy and Strategic Planning
2.1 The board focuses most of its attention on policy issues rather than operational matters. 1 2 3 4

2.2 The board shares a strategic vision of how the ministry should be evolving. (Strategic Plan). 1 2 3 4

2.3 The board periodically engages in a strategic planning process. 1 2 3 4

2.4 Decision making, and all board practices, are guided first by a grounding in God's Word and seeking His direction first. 1 2 3 4

2.5 Decision making is evidence based and includes appropriate internal and external sources of information. 1 2 3 4

2.6 All the information that is required for each decision is made available to the full board. 1 2 3 4

3. Ministry
3.1 The board periodically reviews programs, both current and proposed, for their fit with the mission. 1 2 3 4

3.2 The board receives reports from the staff on the need for, and the effectiveness of the ministry. 1 2 3 4

4. Communication

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[473] This assessment tool was developed by Jim Leverette for the Alberta Baptist Association and offered through the ABA's website as a resource for their churches.
http://www.nab.ca/aba/ChurchEnrichment/Governance/Board%20Self-Assessment.pdf

4.1 The board has a plan for communicating the church's Values, Mission, and Vision to the congregation. 1 2 3 4

4.2 Individual board members understand the church's Mission, programs and Strategic Plan well enough to speak about them. 1 2 3 4

4.3 The board as a whole and individual members are advocates for the members. 1 2 3 4

5. Finances
5.1 The board understands the operating budget and makes financial decisions based on a working knowledge of the church. 1 2 3 4

5.2 The board receives financial reports on a regular basis that are understandable, accurate and timely. 1 2 3 4

5.3 The board has been careful to follow its approved financial policies. 1 2 3 4

5.4 The board understands the financial needs required by the ministry for future growth. 1 2 3 4

6. Operations
6.1 The board has adopted policies that minimize the church's exposure to risks. 1 2 3 4

6.2 The church maintains an adequate level of insurance coverage to protect board members, staff members and the church as a whole from loss. 1 2 3 4

7. Church Leadership
7.1 The board ensures that the senior pastor directs the ministry toward mission and vision fulfillment. 1 2 3 4

7.2 The board works in partnership with the senior pastor, providing the support, authority and resources needed to fulfill the Strategic Plan. 1 2 3 4

7.3 The board assesses the senior pastor's performance at least annually in a systematic and fair way. 1 2 3 4

8. Board Development and Education
8.1 The board is familiar with and follows the constitution and policies of the church. 1 2 3 4

8.2 The board provides orientation for new members about their responsibilities to the church including a job description for new board members that clearly outlines expectations. 1 2 3 4

8.3 Board members receive regular and continuing leadership development opportunities. 1 2 3 4

8.4 Meetings, committees and back-up materials are designed to make good use of board members' time, helping them focus on the critical issues facing the church. 1 2 3 4

8.5 The board regularly takes time to better know each other and improve their functioning as a group. 1 2 3 4

8.6 The board operates as a team, where each member's contribution is valued and encouraged. 1 2 3 4

8.7 The board assesses its own work on a regular basis. 1 2 3 4

9. Understanding its Role
9.1 The board understands its responsibility as a financial steward of the church. 1 2 3 4

9.2 The board understands its responsibility for operating in compliance with conditions for incorporation within the laws of Alberta. 1 2 3 4

Appendix 17

Team Assessment Questionnaire[474]

Instructions: Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to your team. It is important to evaluate the statements honestly and without over-thinking your answers.

3 = Usually
2 = Sometimes
1 = Rarely

___1.   Team members are passionate and unguarded in the discussion of issues.

___2. Team members call out one another's deficiencies or unproductive behaviors.

___3.   Team members know what their peers are working on and how they contribute to the collective good of the team.

___4.   Team members quickly and genuinely apologize to one another when they say or do something inappropriate or possibly damaging to the team.

___5.   Team members willingly make sacrifices (such as budget, turf, head count) in their departments or areas of expertise for the good of the team.

___6.   Team members openly admit their weaknesses and mistakes.

___7.   Team members are compelling, and not boring.

___8.   Team members leave meetings confident that their peers are completely committed to the decisions that were agreed on, even if there was initial disagreement.

___9.   Morale is significantly affected by the failure to achieve team goals.

___10. During team meetings, the most important and difficult issues are put on the table to be resolved.

___11.   Team members are deeply concerned about the prospect of letting down their peers.

___12. Team members know about one another's personal lives and are comfortable discussing them.
___13. Team members end discussions with clear and specific resolutions and calls to action.

___14.   Team members challenge one another about their plans and approaches.

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[474] Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2002), p. 192 – 194.

___15. Team members are slow to seek credit for their own contributions, but quick to point out those of others.

Scoring. Combine your scores for the preceding statements as indicated below:

Absence of Trust	Fear of Conflict	Lack of Commitment	Avoidance of Accountability	Inattention to Results
Statement 4 ___	Statement 1___	Statement 3___	Statement 2___	Statement 5___
Statement 6___	Statement 7___	Statement 8___	Statement 11___	Statement 9___
Statement 12__	Statement 10___	Statement 13___	Statement 14___	Statement 15___
Total:___	Total:___	Total:___	Total:___	Total:___

A score of 8 or 9 is a probable indication that the dysfunction is not a problem for your team.
A score of 6 or 7 indicates that the dysfunction could be a problem.
A score of 4 to 5 is probably an indication that the dysfunction needs to be addressed.

Regardless of your scores, it is important to keep in mind that every team needs constant work, because without it, even the best ones deviate toward dysfunction.

Appendix 18

McIntosh's *Typology of Church Sizes*[475]

Factors	Small Church	Medium Church	Large Church
Size	15 - 200 worshipers	201 - 400 worshipers	401+ worshipers
Orientation	Relational	Programmatical	Organizational
Structure	Single Cell	Stretched Cell	Multiple Cell
Leadership	Resides in key families	Resides in committees	Resides in select leaders
Pastor	Lover	Administrator	Leader
Decisions	Made by congregation	Made by committees	Made by staff and leaders
	Driven by history	Driven by changing needs	Driven by vision
Staff	Bivocational or single pastor	Pastor and small staff	Multiple Staff
Change	Bottom up through key people	Middle out through key committees	Top down through key leaders
Growth Patterns	Attraction model through relationships	Program model through key ministry	Proclamation model through word of mouth
Growth Obstacles	Small-church image	Inadequate facilities	Poor assimilation
	Ineffective evangelism	Inadequate staff	Increase bureaucracy
	Inadequate programming	Inadequate finances	Poor communication
	Downward momentum	Poor administration	Loss of vision
	Ingrown fellowship	Increasing complexity	Lack of member care
Growth Strategies	Renew a sense of purpose	Develop distinct identity	Renew the vision
	Begin new ministries	Add additional staff	Design assimilation plan
	Cultivate evangelism	Use facilities multiple times	Streamline procedures
	Celebrate victories	Offer multiple worship services	Offer need-based events
	Start new groups/classes	Write a long-range plan	Adjust leadership roles
	Involve new people	Improve quality of ministry	Increase the number of small groups

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[475] Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1999), p. 143 – 144.

Appendix 19

John Wimber on Leadership

1. It is not administration.
   - Most material available today marries leadership and administration.
   - Administration is what we must do to implement leadership.

2. Leadership, by definition, is two things:
   - Getting the mind of the Lord for a given time and people.
   - The ability to envision with credibility these same people.

3. It is planning and executing the plan.

4. It is recruiting, training, deploying and monitoring according to the plan.

5. Though it is demonstrated in a wide range of styles, it must be appropriate for the people you are leading and the plan you are executing.

6. It is the ability to adjust the plan, should the need arise.

7. It is the enablement to ask for forgiveness should you lead your people down a false trail.

8. It is sometimes demonstrated by recognizing who is leading in a given situation.

9. It can never be assumed; it is only authenticated by a following.

10. It is tested:
    - By continuing to demonstrate that you are the leader.
    - It is illustrated through modeling the message (what you are and what you say).
    - It is molded by the circumstances of both success and failure. (We must not assume that the leadership model of the past is best for the present; we must constantly evaluate our current-effectiveness.)
    - It is enhanced by surrounding yourself with people whose capabilities exceed your own in a defined area of work.

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