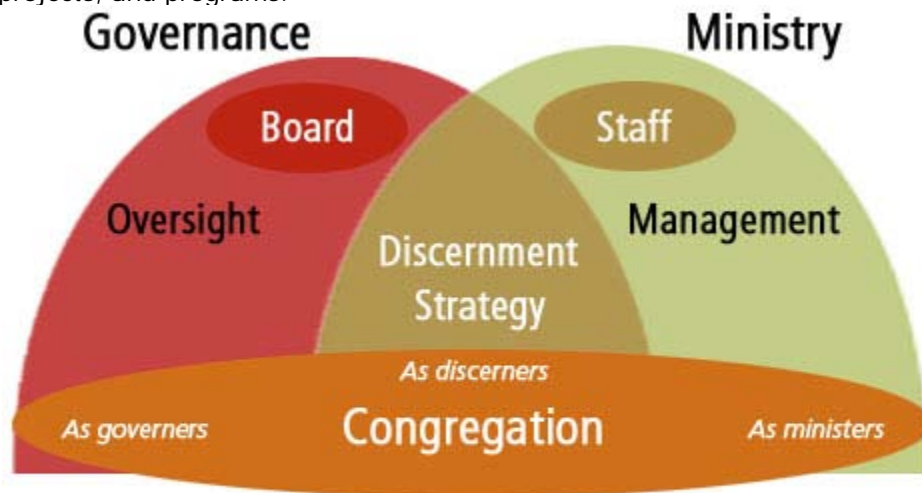


## A Map for Thinking About Governance

Rather than considering any specific model of congregational governance, let's instead think about governance and ministry using a conceptual map (see figure below). On this map, Governance and Ministry are two zones of leadership that overlap. Governance includes the top-level tasks of articulating the congregation's mission, selecting a strategy for getting there, making sure it happens, ensuring that people and property are protected against harm, and seeing to it that the congregation lives in harmony with its own values. Ministry is the active "doing" aspect of the congregation, the daily practical work that brings into being worship services, study groups, visitation schedules, service projects, and programs.



**A Map for Thinking About Congregations**  
**Dan Hotchkiss, author of *Governance and Ministry***

In congregations, people wear many different hats, so it's not uncommon for a board member to also play a role in ministry. The hat metaphor can be a useful reminder about the separation of duties, depending on one's role in the moment.

At the top of each curve is its most frequent decision maker—typically the board for governance and the staff for ministry. The overlap of these two zones of power and control creates a third zone of shared decision making on issues that need input from both governance and ministry before traveling upward to the right or left for a decision. Clear decision-making authority at the top and clear understanding about the boundaries between governance and ministry actually makes it easier to share information, power, and influence throughout the organization.

**Oversight** belongs to the board, which maintains a certain separation from the staff in order to maintain sufficient objectivity to serve as an effective check and balance. The board connects with ministry leaders by adopting policies to guide their work. These policies include mission and vision statements, annual goals and budgets, and rules about finance, personnel, real estate, and so on. Through policies the board delegates authority to ministry leaders and gives them guidance about how that authority should be used. It also holds staff accountable. Responsible boards match delegated power with accountability—neither writing a blank check to ministry leaders nor holding them responsible for a result without first giving adequate authority to accomplish it.

**Management** is the staff's sphere. Here, too, some separation and clear boundaries need to be in place. The staff accepts responsibility for managing its own internal relationships and for using the authority it has been delegated.

**Discernment** involves articulating mission and vision. **Strategy** involves making the big choices about capital investments, staffing, program philosophy, and outreach goals. No matter who plays the final decision-making role in these two areas, the process leading up to a decision needs to be a shared one.

The congregation is at the bottom of the picture not because it is less important but because its members serve in all three zones. The congregation plays three distinct roles. As *governors*, members of the congregation play a formal, corporate decision-making role. This can take a variety of forms, and the role may be shared with the larger denominational family. As the main volunteer labor pool, members of the congregation play a role as *ministers*. Members of the congregation also play a role as *discerners*. Discernment aims to discover what good the congregation truly exists to do—what part of God's will is ours to accomplish? Members play other non-organizational roles as well—worshippers, students, evangelists—usually without thinking much about it. Governance and ministry in the best sense is a partnership, one that depends on both clear boundaries and a relationship of mutual support.†

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*This material is adapted from Chapter 4 of [Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership](#) and represents less than 1/20th of the content of that chapter*

# Church Board Roles and Responsibilities

## CHURCH BOARD ROLES

Direction  
Vision

Doctrine  
Values

Discipline  
Effectiveness

- Determine the church's mission, values, vision, major strategies and primary constituents

- Guide in the selection of the Senior Pastor

- Recruit potential Board Members for appointment by the congregation and orient new Board Members

- Develop a spirit of collaboration

- Spiritual oversight of the ministry

- Maintain accountability for legal and ethical integrity

- Approve and monitor major programs and services of the church

- Ensure adequate resources (personnel, facilities, finances)

- Enhance the church's public standing

- Assess achievement of outcomes—accountability

- Ensure effective organizational planning

- Ensure right decisions are being made by the right groups

- Financial oversight of the church

- Support and encourage the Senior Pastor and assess his performance

- Assess Board effectiveness against established structure and processes

### Core Competencies for Church Boards

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 an intentional strategy to develop better skill in addressing their shared issues together.

Core Capacity	Competency:	Core Issues	Relevant Skills – Activities - Capacities
<b>Redemptive Ministry</b>	<p><b>Church Board Role: Doctrine - Values</b></p> <p>The Church Board defines the spiritual foundations of the relational nature of the Church , the core Biblical values of the community, and embodies those values as the prime community of the church. [the alignment and integration of relationships and partnerships]</p>	<p><b>Personal Calling:</b> Individual spiritual discipline and preparation, orientation to ministry,</p>	<p>Personal Development, Mentoring, Character Assessment, Board member orientation</p>
		<p><b>Ministry Relationships and Skill Development:</b> between Pastor/Chair, Cross-training between Board and Staff, the Board as a Ministry Team and learning community</p>	<p>Continuing education, group training</p>
		<p><b>Spiritual Community:</b> Retreats, Congregational communication, the Spiritual community of Board and Church,</p>	<p>Retreats, “road trips”, prayer ministry, town-hall meetings, Membership Class policies</p>
		<p><b>Church Discipline:</b> abilities to discern points of tension, and solution strategies for congregational health</p>	<p>Risk Management policy development and implementation</p>
<b>Strategic Leadership</b>	<p><b>Church Board Role: Direction - Vision</b></p> <p>The Church Board discerns the strategic dynamics for the health and mission of the Church [the alignment and integration of mission and ministry]</p>	<p><b>Vision Development, Strategic Planning, :</b> discern Missional mandate: mission, values, vision – into action; monitor mission fulfillment and assess congregational health</p>	<p>Annual goal planning, Church health assessment (consultation) Ministry Reports Congregational Affirmation/Celebration</p>
		<p><b>Ministry Alignment:</b> Monitor and assess mission fulfillment, assess size/ministry dynamics of the local church, identifying both an appropriate leadership structures to meet the size requirements, ensure robust communication</p>	<p>Reporting system</p>
		<p><b>Decision-Making and Conflict Management:</b> strategies to form wise, God-honoring decisions,</p>	<p>Policy development and adherence, decision profile, discussion guide</p>
<b>Fiduciary Stewardship</b>	<p><b>Church Board Role: Discipline – Effectiveness</b></p> <p>The Church Board ensures faithful accounting in the functioning of the Church</p>	<p><b>Meeting Stewardship:</b> meeting strategies and time stewardship</p>	<p>Consent Agenda strategy</p>
		<p><b>Ministry Designation and Evaluation:</b> ministerial selection, development, and evaluations; Board performance assessment</p>	<p>Search strategies, human resource development, Evaluation strategies</p>
	<p>The Church Board confirms the reliability and integrity of the Church in accordance with established structures and processes</p>	<p><b>Resource Allocation:</b> board reporting translated into resource allocation, fiscal integrity, risk management, and policy development</p>	<p>Financial reporting, Job description development for all ministries, policy developments</p>
		<p><b>CCRA – Legal Responsibilities:</b> ethical responsibilities in accord with CCRA certification</p>	<p>Trustee accountability</p>

## **Ministry Lift: Best Practices for Church Boards .. Important Questions**

### **General Questions for Self-Reflection:**

*What does "governance" mean to me as a Christian and as a church leader?*

*What Biblical principles inform governance practice and enhance spiritual ministry?*

*What guidelines would I follow regarding my role and relationship that would enhance a healthy leadership environment in the church setting?*

*What spiritual practices would enhance governance?*

*What is there about governance that would bring fulfillment to governors, particularly in the church setting?*

*How should church governance be distinct from corporate governance?*

*How should church governance be, on the one hand, consistent with non-profit governance and on the other hand, distinct from non-profit governance?*

### **Biblical Foundations:**

How Biblical is organizational Leadership?

How is Biblical organization structured?

How should leadership in a congregation board differ from other types of board leadership?

### **Structural Issues:**

What are the "boundaries" of the "business" of church? What affects the shape of those boundaries the most?

What factors help a church align its structure in an appropriate fashion? What does that alignment look like?

How will the board officers be chosen?

How many officers will there be? What will the term of office for board members be?

How will the board relate to ministries/committees? Will the board get involved in operations?

What is the role of the chair of the board?

What responsibilities will the pastor have in relation to governance/board?

Who has the authority to hire the staff?

How and in what format will the pastor report to the board?

Are we convinced that there is a high level of trust between the board and the pastoral staff, board and Congregation?

Is there a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the board and that of the staff, or between the board and ministry leaders?

### **Board Assessment:**

Are we always satisfied with the way our board functions?

Are we satisfied with the pace at which our board members are growing and developing spiritually and functionally?

Does our board spend more time involved in strategic thinking and planning for the future, or in dealing with the routine issues of current ministry?

Are there good and effective forms of communication used throughout our ministry?

Are we making the best use of the resources available to us?

If the health of our church were measured by the effectiveness of our organization/governance, would we be considered healthy?

Can we identify specific actions taken by the board in the last twelve months to educate itself regarding critical issues or strategic development? Is there a plan for future educational activities? What does the board need to learn in order to fulfil its responsibilities with excellence?

When the board has invested in self-care, what benefits have occurred?

How does your board seek to set all of its work within a spiritual frame of reference?

How do current policies enhance the board's work? How do they impede it? What needs to change?

Where is space given for prayer, reflection upon Scripture, listening to the Holy Spirit?

In the board meetings held over the past twelve months how much time has been devoted to discussing future direction?

In its decision-making how does the board reflect upon the ministry agency's story and enable it to influence the process? Does the board ever rehearse and reflect upon this story? How does the board ensure that its various constituencies know the story?

Does your board ever discuss questions such as: what core values define this ministry? What is the primary thing this ministry agency does? Who benefits?

In its decision-making process how much consideration is devoted to discerning alignment with the mission, vision and values? When was the last time the board said no to a proposal because it was not aligned with the mission?

How does the board define excellence in relation to this ministry's operations? What might be some of the key benchmarks that demonstrate excellence?

Where in the annual cycle of the board's work does it give attention to providing and defining strategic direction, i.e. developing or reviewing strategic plans or an annual ministry plan?

When the board approves new initiatives or require specific action, how does it assign responsibility?

How does it ensure accountability?

How do the minutes of board meetings enable the board to keep track of assigned accountability?

Does the board have an ordered collection of board policies that guide its work? Are these available to all board members?

What recent innovation in ministry has had the greatest impact on congregational/agency life? Why?

What role should the board play in giving oversight to denominational relations?

What does the board do to evaluate annually progress towards mission achievement? How does it measure the contribution of its own performance to mission advancement?

What process does the board have for developing, reviewing and implementing an annual ministry plan?

How does the board exercise risk management on behalf of the congregation?

In what ways does the board seek to balance its focus on mission advancement with appropriate concern for financial viability?

If the ministry agency has debt, do the board members understand its extent and how it is being managed?

When you review the minutes from the last twelve meetings of the board, what evidence is there that the board is providing strategic leadership for the congregation?

In making decisions how does the board allow appropriate groups in the congregation to speak into that decision?

Has the board defined what "congregational health" looks like and defined ways to measure it on a consistent basis?

Does the board in fact give oversight to the management of external, congregational relations? How?

As the number of staff increases, how will the board ensure that its role remains strong and that appropriate support for the staff in their ministries is also provided?