

Proposed Leadership Model Change for Applewood Community Church

February, 2016

Summary

The Council of Deacons and the Fruitful Organizational Structures Team (FOST) have prayerfully and thoughtfully considered how the present Council model at AWCC is functioning. There is a major gap in that the Council does not have the mandate or the time to regularly pray for AWCC and seek God for vision for the church. In addition, deacons serving on the Council have to juggle a lot of activities between their Council-level work and their individual ministry activities. This large load may result in individual burn out, and produces unwillingness in other AWCC members to serve on the Council. As a result, several Council seats are vacant at present.

In light of these findings, the Council and the FOST unanimously recommend a structural change. The proposed Leadership Team would not be tasked with day-to-day management so that it could pray for AWCC and seek God for vision. The ministry team leaders, who would no longer be tasked with serving on Council, would in turn be freed to focus on their specific areas, as well as collaborate with each other to carry out existing activities or test new ones. These structural changes would also make it easier for AWCC members and non-members to plug into ministry areas that they are interested in without the risk of being tasked with higher level leadership responsibilities or attending lots of meetings. These changes would further require substantial communication between the leadership body and the ministry teams, which would increase the overall transparency of AWCC and make it easier for newcomers to plug in and build deeper relationships. Put another way, the ministry teams could act as life groups to give people connection to the whole and a chance to grow relationships as well.

Implementing the recommended changes would require changing the name of the leadership body in the present Constitution, as well as substantial changes to the Bylaws. Such changes require approval from both the Council and the congregation. The FOST and the present Council are in agreement and are ready to move forward with the work of creating the new structure and drafting the new language. Congregational approval is still needed and desired. The following question will be put to a vote at the annual meeting on February 14, 2016:

- Does the congregation bless and commission the FOST and Council to begin the work of changing the governance structure for AWCC?

FOST Activities

The FOST was assembled to evaluate a possible leadership change for Applewood Community Church (AWCC). Members and contributors include Laura Brandt, Tim Hughes, Guy McCaslin, Heather Platt, Lee Richman, Steve Seybold, Paul Veers, and Faris and Marilyn Weber. The FOST desired for the Holy Spirit to work and lead as much as possible. In order to facilitate this desire, FOST meetings began with sweet times of prayer and meditation on

Scripture, which in turn set the tone for respectful listening during the subsequent discussion.

Some key reading prompted FOST discussions. One set of documents included AWCC’s present constitution and bylaws around council function, and a model leadership team constitution from the Covenant Denomination. These documents provided a starting point for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the council and leadership team models (detailed in subsequent sections of the report).

One additional FOST meeting centered around a conversation with Greg Ralston, pastor of Living Hope Covenant Church in Colorado Springs. Living Hope is similar to AWCC in size, and it began under a council model and transitioned to a leadership team model about 10 - 12 years ago. Greg provided valuable insight into how the leadership team model is working at Living Hope. This information underpins the FOST recommendations at the end of this report.

Present Leadership Model: Council of Deacons to Take Care of the Practical Stuff

The present Council structure is summarized in Figure 1, and it is set up to manage activities. The Council is responsible for answering questions such as:

- What is the necessary work, and who will do it?
- How much money is being given, and where is it being spent?

Many AWCC members have served on the Council over the years, and they are all to be commended for their service. These faithful people have contributed many hours and expended much energy for their church family. AWCC is a better place because of them!

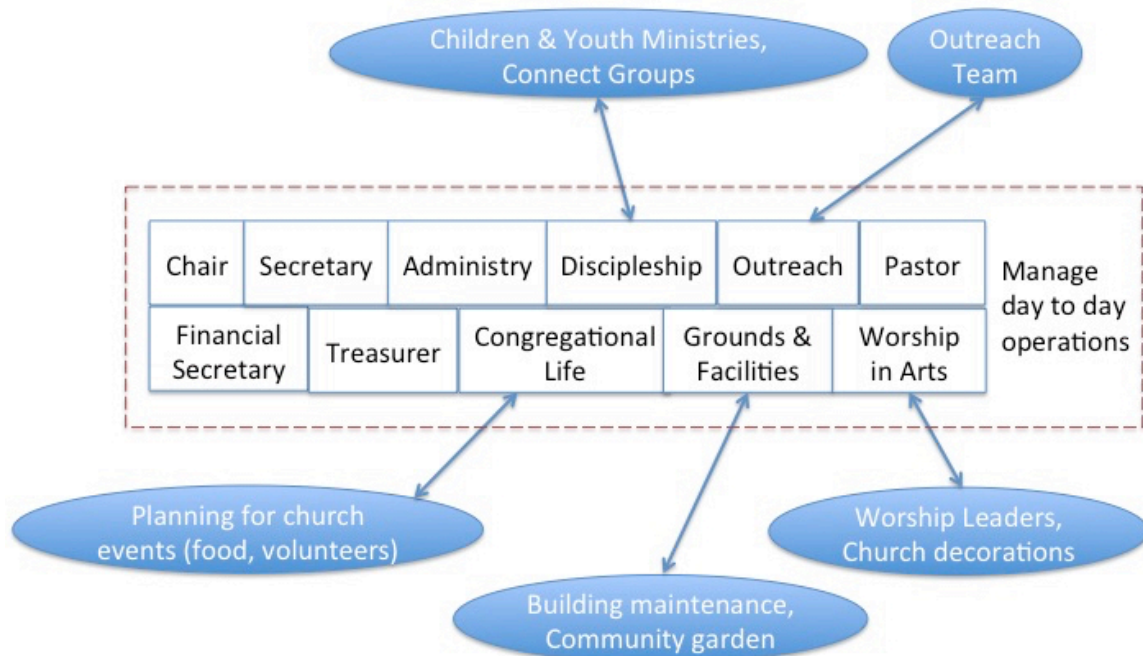


Figure 1. Schematic depicting the present Council at AWCC.

A brief consideration of the Council schematic in Figure 1 provides some important insights into how it works. First, the Council is designed to be in the middle of everything going on at AWCC. Each ministry is headed by a deacon on the Council. As a result, the deacon has all of the ministry responsibilities in addition to the Council-level meetings and work. This is a substantial amount of responsibility that requires a lot of time and effort from a volunteer with many other things going on in his or her life. A way to visualize the way the present structure impacts people is shown in Figure 2.

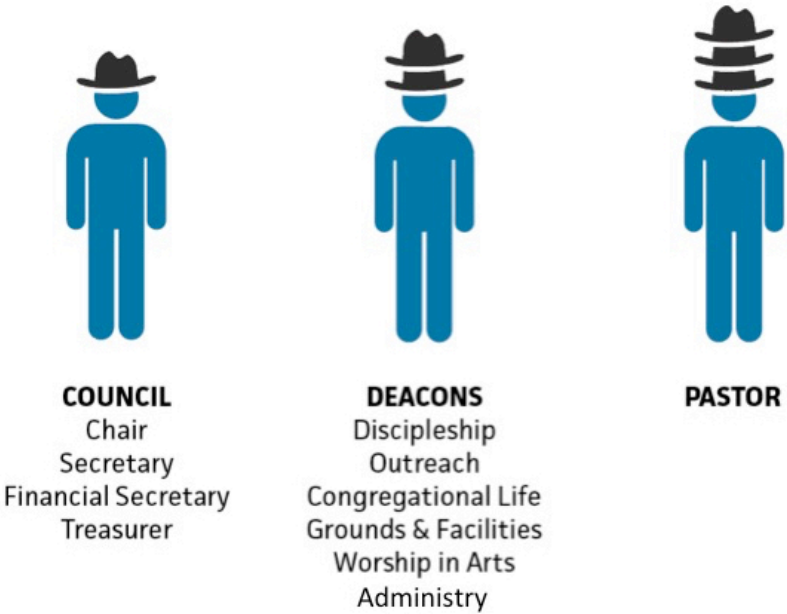


Figure 2. Figures representing the present leadership positions at AWCC. The hats represent important responsibilities that the officers, deacons, and pastor carry out.

The hats that each figure wears represent an important responsibility. The Chair, Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer are responsible for the Council meetings and activities. The deacons that head Discipleship, Outreach, Congregational Life, Grounds & Facilities, and Worship in Arts wear two hats to represent their Council-level responsibilities and leading their specific ministries. Finally, the pastor wears three hats. These hats represent the Council responsibilities; preaching, and caring for people; and seeking God for vision for AWCC.

A second insight into the present Council that can be observed in Figure 1 is that the ministries are not designed to interact with each other directly. This can pile even more responsibility on the deacons heading the ministries if they (rightly) want to collaborate with each other. All of this activity can quickly over-tax the deacons and lead to burn out. When that happens, other members of the congregation will observe the effects and may become reluctant to serve on Council.

The effects of this busy cycle are clearly apparent at AWCC. At present, several of the deacon slots on the Council are vacant because no one is willing to fill them, and this problem has occurred throughout AWCC’s existence. Other slots are held by people who were willing to take on the responsibility, but do not feel very well equipped or gifted to head the respective ministry. As a result, the ministry may be less vital and effective than it could be with a more gifted and passionate person heading it up. It should be emphasized

that the added load of Council responsibilities, not a lack of passion and gifts, discourages people from engaging in the ministries.

The third, and most significant, insight to be gleaned from Figure 1 is the pieces that are missing. Prayer for AWCC and seeking God for vision are not stipulated priorities. The current Council meetings are preoccupied with managing the ministry activities, which leaves only the occasional opportunity to seek vision in reference to an issue that has arisen. Past and present Council members have attested that these activities do not typically fit into the monthly meetings, and the AWCC Bylaws do not call for separate meetings or define another body that is tasked with carrying them out. The need for clear vision and focus for AWCC were identified as recommendations for change in the Vitality Team Report [p. 15]. There is overwhelming evidence that AWCC needs a group tasked with seeking God through prayer for vision. As Solomon put it in Proverbs 29:18 (MSG): “If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what He reveals, they are most blessed.”

Proposed Leadership Model: Leadership Team for Vision Casting and Body Ministry Freedom

Regular prayer and vision casting for AWCC are clearly needed, but the present Council is already fully engaged. Fortunately there is a straightforward solution to this conundrum, which is implementing a new structure suggested by the Evangelical Covenant Denomination. Figure 3 is a pictorial representation of how this new Leadership Team would interact with the ministry teams.

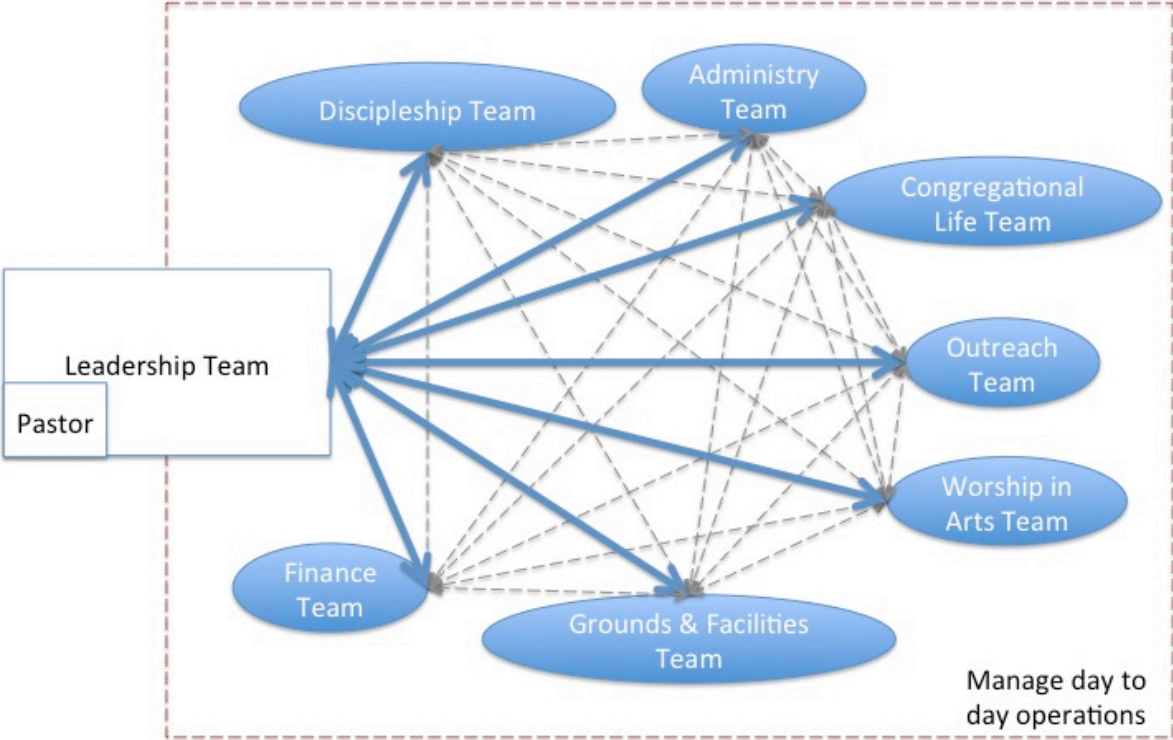


Figure 3. Schematic depicting the proposed Leadership Team model and its relationship to the ministries of AWCC.

Under the proposed model, teams headed by people who are passionate about the ministry area are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day work. These teams would be free and encouraged to collaborate with each other. For example, Grounds and Facilities could work with Worship in Arts and Congregational Life to plan and execute the yearly Christmas tree lighting and community Christmas party, which is fairly close to what actually happens now. This collaborative environment would also make it easier for the ministry teams to brainstorm and execute new ideas, and recruit new team members who were excited about the ministry area. The Leadership Team would then be freed up to focus on praying for AWCC, and would be tasked with answering the following important questions:

- Where is God leading AWCC?
- What do the gifts and finances God has given AWCC enable it to do?

A way to visualize how the proposed Leadership Team structure would impact people is shown in Figure 4.

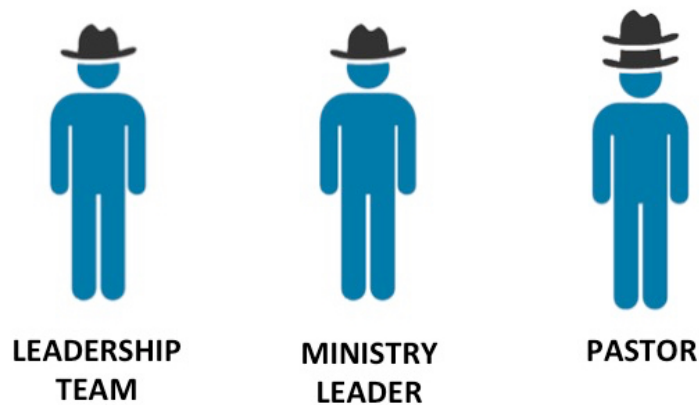


Figure 4. Figures representing the proposed leadership positions at AWCC. The hats represent important responsibilities that the leadership team, ministry leaders, and pastor would carry out.

As in Figure 2, the hats that each figure wears in Figure 4 represent an important responsibility. The Leadership Team members would be tasked with seeking God for vision for AWCC and supporting the ministry leaders. The ministry leaders would be responsible to lead their specific ministries and work with each other as appropriate. The pastor would continue to wear two hats that represent preaching and caring for people, and seeking God for vision for AWCC with the support of the Leadership Team.

Figure 3 also shows one other important aspect of the relationship between the proposed Leadership Team and the ministry teams. The solid bold arrows represent the Leadership Team's responsibility for all of the activities going on at AWCC, as well as new activities that are proposed. New activities would be evaluated in light of Scriptural principles and the overall vision for AWCC. If the new activity passes these tests, the Leadership Team would then be responsible to support the leader in carrying it out. Existing activities would pass through several stages of evaluation. During the proposed transition from the existing Council to the Leadership Team, the FOST would determine which present activities are vitally important and must be continued. Some examples of such important activities include handling money, maintaining the facility, worshipping God through music, and educating the children and youth. Congregational input into determining which activities are vitally important would be welcomed and valued. The Leadership Team would then be

responsible for ensuring that the ministry teams are carrying out these activities. All other existing activities would be evaluated in light of the overall vision for AWCC by the Leadership Team after it is assembled. Some activities might be discontinued because they are not well aligned with the overall vision. This would allow AWCC to focus on fewer activities and to do them well, which was a recommendation in the Vitality Team Report (p. 15). Periodic evaluation of ministry activities would be an on-going task for the Leadership Team as it continues to seek God through prayer.

While the proposed model would provide greater freedom for the ministry teams and take the day-to-day management off of the Leadership Team, it would also put a greater responsibility on all of the teams to communicate with each other and the congregation. The Leadership Team would be charged with clearly passing on God's vision, so that everyone has a view of the bigger picture. The ministry teams would then need to consider how their activities fit in with that vision, and each person in the congregation would be asked to consider how they could be involved in the ministries. Ideally, this would also provide a clearer mechanism for people from the congregation to approach the Leadership Team or an individual ministry team with new ideas, without the risk of being tasked with higher level leadership responsibilities such as serving on the Leadership Team or attending lots of meetings.

The web of connections among the teams shown in Figure 3 would have the additional benefit of providing lots of points for newcomers to connect with others at AWCC. While AWCC is clearly a welcoming church, people have sometimes found it difficult to connect with others on a deep and nourishing level. Working with a team around a shared goal is an excellent way to build these sorts of relationships. This model is very much in line with the Internal Assessment report from the Vitality team, which recommended, "encourage[ing] the formation of a network of friendships in the church that looks...like a web" [Vitality Team report, p. 14]. Such a web of connections will build the individual up and encourage him or her to help with some part of the work that is needed to keep AWCC functioning and vibrant.

FOST Recommendation and Proposed Next Steps

Having identified that the present Council model often leads to volunteer burnout and does not provide for regular prayer and vision casting for AWCC, the FOST and the present Council unanimously recommend transitioning to a Leadership Team model. The leadership body should not be tasked with day-to-day management so that it can pray for AWCC and seek God for vision. The ministry team leaders would in turn be able to focus on their specific areas, as well as collaborating with each other to carry out existing activities or test new ones. Like the present Council, the Leadership Team would be composed of elected members who have AWCC's best interest at heart. It would be tasked with communicating clearly with the ministry teams and the congregation, as well as listening to concerns from both groups.

One important caveat is that the success of the Leadership Team in devoting time to prayer and vision will depend on the willingness of the rest of the congregation to take additional responsibilities in operating the various ministries. Will the congregation assume the additional responsibilities and lead? There are several examples that indicate that this will

be the case. Congregational Life is one such example. In spite of the fact that there is no deacon at present, the usual Congregational Life activities, such as providing meals for families with new babies and the annual Christmas tree lighting, are taking place. The recent appointment of a new Life Groups coordinator is another example of day-to-day management going on without the leader also serving on Council.

Implementing the recommended changes will require changing the name of the leadership body in the present Constitution, as well as substantial changes to the Bylaws. Such changes require approval from both the Council and the congregation. The FOST and the present Council are in agreement and are ready to move forward with the work of creating the new structure and drafting the new language. Congregational approval is still needed and desired. The following question will be put to a vote at the annual meeting on February 14, 2016:

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