

## **Accountable Leader Model**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. *In the context of the Accountable Leader Model of governance, what does accountability mean? Who is accountable, and to whom?*

The term “accountability” could be paraphrased by saying “answerable to.” So when we say that the pastor is accountable to the board of directors, we could paraphrase by saying “The pastor reports to or answers to the board of directors.” Thus, there are several levels or lines of accountability within this model. For instance, every Christian is accountable to, or answers to, Jesus himself. One day we’ll all appear before the throne of God, and we’ll have to answer for our lives, and what we did during those lives.

In much the same way, the pastor answers to the board of directors. That would be one of the lines of accountability. Another line would be that the board of directors answers to Jesus for what the congregation is doing. The board will have to answer for the mission and vision of the congregation and how effective and faithful the congregation was to that mission and vision.

So they represent the entire congregation before Christ himself. The Board is also accountable to the congregation because they have to answer for that same mission and vision, and the goals that have been set, and whether they have fulfilled their responsibility as leaders of the congregation.

The staff is accountable to, or answers to, the senior pastor. So the senior pastor will help them to establish their goals that are in line with the mission and vision of the congregation, and also make sure that the staff stays inside the boundary principles. Of course, those boundary principles are doctrinal, moral, legal, and financial.

And then finally, the members of the congregation would be accountable to, or they would answer to, the various staff persons. So whatever ministry an individual might find himself or herself in, they would work with a staff member in that area. So the member would answer to, or report to, that staff person.

2. *Is the pastor the CEO of the congregation, or for that matter the CFO?*

In a word, the answer is “no,” because the pastor is not hired by the board. He is “called” by the congregation. In the business world, generally the CEO is hired by the board, and of course can be fired by the board as well. The pastor is not hired and fired by the board and so is not the CEO.

Does the pastor have some of the same responsibilities as the CEO, or CFO? The answer there would be yes, because the pastor does have the overall responsibility for the direction of the congregation, and also whether or not the goals are being fulfilled in the

area of mission and vision. In this regard, he is like the captain of a ship or the head coach of a football team.

*3. Can the pastor hire and fire at his discretion?*

The accountable leader can and should hire and fire contracted employees as well as volunteer staff. Therefore, if the pastor has direct reports that do not have a call, he evaluates those employees based on the mission and vision of the congregation and goals that have been set. Over a period of time, if that person is not performing well, the pastor would have the discretion to replace that individual. Also, if a worker continually violated boundary principles—that is, he or she is doing something immoral, or illegal, or is teaching false doctrine--the pastor would have the authority to replace that worker. In the same way, the principal would have that same authority with a contracted worker in the school, or a preschool director would have that discretion over the contracted worker in the preschool.

For called workers, however, it would be a different scenario. Only the congregation can dismiss a called worker, or for that matter, can call a rostered worker. So that would need to be done through the congregational process.

Of course, the wise accountable leader would also want to use the collective wisdom of the board of directors, or the principal would want to do that with their advisory council in a school before they hired or dismissed anyone. But ultimately the authority would belong to the senior pastor, the principal, or the respective accountable leader.

*4. If a congregation has an associate, or assistant pastor, what is that person's role in the TCN model?*

The role of associate or assistant pastor would be as staff. So the associate or assistant pastor is accountable to the senior pastor and would answer to him.

*What are his tasks?* That would be according to his job description. So whatever that ministry description is for the assistant/associate pastor that's what they would be responsible for, just like any other staff person would be.

*5. Who determines salaries and ministry descriptions?*

The Senior Pastor would do that for his staff, and the Principal would do that for the school. Those persons would have the responsibility to do that, and also the authority. However, the pastor, and/or principal could use a personnel committee to do much of this task. In fact, we strongly recommend such a committee as a very good idea to help the pastor/principal to evaluate various ministries and set salaries and make job descriptions. Ultimately, however, the responsibility and authority, as always, resides with the accountable leader.

6. *If a congregation agrees to a prescription which calls for the accountable leader model, what does that mean for the by-laws of a congregation?*

That really depends on what the by-laws of the congregation already say. If the by-laws call for a bureaucratic structure, in other words many boards and committees, it would take away authority from the accountable leader. In such a case, the by-laws would have to be changed. In fact, when a congregation approves a consultation report that calls for the accountable leader model, they are also agreeing that they will change their by-laws to match the accountable leader model.

However, having said that, it may take some time to make those changes. Experience shows that it can take a minimum of six months before the by-laws can be changed, because those changes would have to go through the appropriate congregational and district processes. Ultimately, the congregation would have to approve those by-laws. Essentially, they are already saying that they will do that by accepting the report. They have to go to the district and be approved there as well. So the district can and should have a process put in place that can expedite all of this. It is very helpful for the district board of directors to already approve some model by-laws and make those available for the congregation. The bottom line answer to the question is that any by-laws dealing with structure that don't support the accountable leader model would have to be changed, if such a prescription is made and agreed to.

*What about the constitution? Does that need to be changed?* The constitution does not need to be changed if it does not specifically call for another type of structure. Many times the constitution will not need to be changed. And usually only one, two, or three of the by-laws need to be changed; just the ones dealing with structure.

7. *What other models are there to ensure accountability to the Great Commission without undoing other aspects of the congregation's modus operandi which may be working quite well?*

We believe that the accountable leader model is the best governance structure for helping a congregation to be outwardly focused and gain the greatest participation in the Great Commission. We know that's true from our experience and from the research that we have been doing. We know that 80 percent or more of the congregations in the LCMS are not growing. And the main reason for that is they're not outward focused. They're not intentional about reaching lost or unchurched people. Somebody has to be held accountable for that. And we know that it's very difficult to hold a group accountable a board or group of people for anything, let alone going against our human nature and getting out of our comfort zone and reaching new people with the gospel.

Any structure that doesn't hold individuals accountable for the authority and responsibility given to them is going to be weaker than one that does.

8. *How can the presentation of the accountable leader model to a congregation be less formidable and insurmountable?*

There's another question that deals with trust and whether or not the congregation should engage in the accountable leader model if there is not a high level of trust. And these two go hand in glove. There needs to be a high level of trust of the pastor before the accountable leader model can be implemented.

If the trust level of the pastor is low, that should be detected during the assessment process prior to the consultation. In such a situation, there should not be a consultation. Or, at least, there should not be a prescription that calls for the accountable leader model, because it will cause difficulties that may be worse than not doing anything. In such a case, the coach, the district facilitator, and the lay leadership should work with the pastor before there's a consultation, in order to bring that trust level up.

However, if there are "controllers" within the congregation who simply will not allow the pastor to lead, it is important that the consultants and coach help the pastor make sure that they do not remain in a position of authority. A good nomination and board training process that includes a Code of Conduct for supporting the pastor, the mission and vision of the congregation, high ethical standards, and ministry involvement should insure that mature and principled leaders are selected for the new board of directors. It can also be helpful to keep the old board on for a transition period, where they also go through the board training process. This helps them understand the new system, gives them ownership in it, and often prevents anyone from trying to sabotage the new process.

Another thing that can be done, if the trust level is moderate or high, is education and training in the accountable leader model before the consultation. The leaders could read John Kaiser's book, *Winning on Purpose*, and the pastor could lead them through a discussion of that by forming a congregational leader learning community. That way many of the difficult questions could be answered in advance. By gaining more knowledge of the model, by building relationships with each other, and by growing in the Word, the trust level will be strengthened, and the process will go much smoother.

9. *Who will make sure that the congregation follows the accountable leader model once it's implemented, and that the new roles are followed by the proper people?*

The answer to that would be the chairman of the board of directors. It's his responsibility to make sure that the accountable leader model is followed. The pastor will also play a large part in instructing and training the board, the lay leaders, and the congregation in what this new model looks like. The coach can also assist with this. The coach should help lead the board training and assist the pastor in training the congregation in this new model.

10. *In this model, who monitors the finances, determines the budget, and makes decisions on major emergency purchases or expenditures?*

The senior pastor is the accountable leader for the finances of the congregation. That means he's responsible for all of these issues. However, having said that, it doesn't mean

that he should pore over all of the details. He can and should delegate that responsibility to others, such as the treasurer, or to a budget committee, or to the staff, or a combination of all of those. What's important to understand about the accountable leader model is that the senior pastor has the overall responsibility for the ministry of the congregation and for the mission and vision; but he isn't the person who is going to oversee the day-to-day activities of all of the various ministries. Each staff person should do that. And the senior pastor can delegate people who are gifted and experienced in various areas, including finances, to monitor those day-to-day activities and make sure that they're done well. But he still has the overall responsibility for it.

In the case of a major emergency purchase, i.e., something beyond the limits of the budget and the bylaws, the congregation would need to give approval.

11. *If the congregation has a school, preschool, kindergarten, or other educational program, how does this entity, with its leadership and staffing, relate to the governing board, and to the pastor?*

The answer to that is that they will not relate directly to the governing board. The principal, the preschool director, or director of any of these other programs, would report to the senior pastor, and they would be accountable to him. And the senior pastor would be accountable to the board. So these individuals involved in educational ministries would be staff, and thus report to the pastor. So that's how that works.

*Are the principal, preschool director, etc., to be concerned about an outward-driven focus?* Absolutely, because they'll be held responsible for that focus. They will have goals that relate to reaching lost and unchurched people, and they would have to fulfill those. And yes, the same people will be concerned about that nitty-gritty, day-to-day affairs, in their ministry area. The governing board will not affect them.

12. *Why can't there exist at the same time a governing board and an operations board?*

The answer to that is because the staff functions as the operations board already. They're responsible for the day-to-day operations of a church. They're in the best position to do that. They're around these ministries all the time, and they're paid to make sure that these ministries function well. So they are responsible for the operations, and the governing board is responsible for the governance.

13. *Who is responsible for conducting all annual employee evaluations?*

The senior pastor would be responsible for that. The Board of directors would develop the policy and procedures for the evaluations and write them into the boundary principles, or in larger churches, a policy manual. Then the senior pastor would be responsible for conducting those evaluations. If there's a school, preschool, etc. the principal and preschool director would conduct the evaluations within those ministries.

Then the board of directors would evaluate the senior pastor. The entire process would be conducted according to the lines of accountability that have been established, each employee being evaluated by the person to whom they are accountable.

*14. Should a congregation consider the accountable leader model if there isn't a high degree, or at least a sufficient degree, of trust and confidence in the pastor.*

No, they shouldn't. See #8 above.

*15. What if this pastor leaves, dies, or in some way loses his credibility?*

If the current pastor leaves or dies, a new pastor would need to be called. Of course, that new pastor would become the new accountable leader. In the interim, someone else could be designated as the accountable leader. It could be an interim pastor, a vacancy pastor, an associate pastor, or another staff person. If the pastor loses his credibility, that would have to be determined by the board, so it's really kind of a moot question. It's so subjective. However, if the pastor is habitually not meeting his goals, or continually steps outside the boundaries, the board would need to deal with him according to the established board policies and congregational bylaws, and he would be held accountable for his actions.

*16. If a pastor has to do all these things to help the congregation become outward focused, and meet all these new goals, who's going to do all the other ministry?*

The answer to that really deals with time management, and the coach will help him with that. He'll need to delegate much of his current responsibility, in many ministry areas, to staff. If he doesn't have enough paid staff to do all those things, he'll have to recruit volunteer staff and train them to carry out these ministries. In many cases, some of the ministries will simply need to be dropped. Especially if they're not helping the congregation to reach its mission and vision, then they should no longer continue, or they should just be allowed to die from neglect.

In summary, some ministries may need to be discontinued, there will need to be delegation of many responsibilities, and the pastor will need coaching to help him do this because he may not have a lot of skill in those areas.

*17. Pastors have always been trained from seminary days to be chaplains rather than leaders, or missionaries. So how does that transition take place?*

The entire transforming churches process is designed to help this take place. The resources, encouragement, and support are provided through the consultation, through the coaching, and through the learning communities to help the pastor change his attitudes, his behaviors, and develop new skills, so that he can become a leader and a missionary. It's our belief that a reasonably competent and gifted pastor can become an accountable leader. Because he's been called by God through the congregation, it's our assumption that these gifts are innate within him, and we just need to stir up those gifts. By

providing him with the proper training and support, we believe that he can do make these changes. Of course, it may take a long period of time. There will need to be lots of patience, and training and support along the way. But that's what this whole process is for.

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