

2008

TJ District of the UUA

Annette Marquis,
District Executive

[THE ART OF GOVERNANCE]

The handouts contained here are to assist congregational board members in fulfilling their responsibilities, providing effective leadership, running high quality meetings, and evaluating their board's functioning

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A DISCERNER'S GUIDE TO CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNANCE

by **Dan Hotchkiss**

The envelope please! Runner-up for Most Influential Book as rated by American clergy is ...

“Ladies and gentlemen, will it be a book on spiritual practices? Biblical studies? The ever-popular ‘How to Blame Lay Leaders’? No, the topic of the second most important book this year is [drum roll] congregational administration!”

Who’d have thought it? For many seminary students, the course on administration is a pothole on the road to glory as a preacher or a pastoral caregiver. We all know great and successful clergy who never say “administration” without wrinkling their noses.

Rick Warren, among others, changed all that. Riding on the coattails of his phenomenally successful 2003 book *The Purpose-Driven Life*, Warren’s previous and little-noticed book *The Purpose-Driven Church* by now has sold more than 100 times as many copies as there are congregations in America. In a 2005 survey by George Barna, U.S. pastors ranked Warren’s books first and second in their influence.

“Administration” is too horn-rimmed a word for the brawny, visionary style of leadership Rick Warren has in mind. He talks mostly about the pastor and the “ministries” the pastor leads, and not much about the role of other players: boards, committees, bishops, and the congregation itself gathered for business.

And yet, when leaders follow Warren’s model, the shift in the pastor’s role causes what amounts to a new polity: a strongly pastor-led church with a small board, few committees, and a multitude of “ministries” that run with a minimum of organizational overhead. The vision as articulated by the pastor is the unifying force, not bylaws or bureaucracy or voting. This is more than streamlining—it’s an essential shift in governance.

Warren’s ideas have fed a growing hunger among leaders who sense that the old ways of governing and managing aren’t working. Many leaders long to streamline structures so that deliberative processes don’t get in the way of ministry. One congregation coined a slogan to describe its governance reforms: “Fewer meetings, more ministry!”

We live in an extraordinary time of risk, reflection, and experiment in congregational governance. Congregational leaders strain against the force of habit and the requirements of their denominational structures and risk conflict in the hope of overcoming difficulties and frustrations that have dogged synagogues and churches for a long time.

Why Now?

Why this sudden interest in governance?

One reason is that it’s about time. The model of governance in most congregations dates from the latter half of the 19th century, and its weaknesses have become glaring. Compared to successful businesses or

charitable groups, the majority of synagogues and churches are sluggish, overcautious, change-resistant, and wasteful in their use of volunteers. Across traditions, long-established congregations are more similar than different, with many common stultifying features:

- A governing board that spends most of its time listening to reports, rubberstamping proposals, and arbitrating conflicts rather than envisioning the future, creating long-term goals and policies, and ensuring organizational performance.
- A long list of standing committees, each of which makes policy for a program area and also has to do the work. This combination creates a bias against new ideas, which have to be approved by a group too busy to take on anything new.
- The “map” theory, in which every inch of programmatic territory belongs to a standing committee: if an idea involves music, then it has to go before the music committee, and so on. This extends the bias against change to the entire institution, and makes outlaws of creative people who bypass the committee system.
- A short list of “power” committees—usually including finance, personnel, and property—that hold an effective veto over any new idea that encroaches on their turf. A new idea has to be approved by up to four committees and a board, each of which has the power to say “no,” but none of which can utter a decisive “yes.”
- A miserly approach to delegation, in which projects are approved provisionally and then come back again and again for criticism, reconsideration, and approval of next steps. Since no one has full authority to accomplish anything, there is always an excuse for delay.
- A paid staff whose members connect to their committees more than to the staff team.

Too often the result is disconnected fiefdoms with no accountability for overall results. None of these familiar traits of congregational life is mandated by the Scriptures. Religious institutions borrow organizational forms from the society around them: the early church was organized like a Hellenistic mystery cult, the medieval church resembled monarchy, New England Puritans cloned the structure of an English town. The most important influences on the structure of the contemporary American church or synagogue date from the 19th century, when the nonprofit corporation emerged as an all-purpose container for benevolent work. But while other nonprofits have changed, too many congregations still live in the Victorian world of Robert’s Rules.

People are Impatient

No wonder *The Purpose-Driven Church* has found such a large audience! Leaders have lost patience with the plodding pace of the conventional congregation. Spending an evening talking about tiny budget items, listening to reports, and making group decisions that could easily be made by individuals has little appeal for people who can hardly find time for their families. Even young retirees, our only growing leisure population, are now baby-boomers who ask, “How does this meet my needs?” In such a situation, it is not surprise that leaders look for something better.

Another reason leaders are dissatisfied with the old ways is that religion can no longer count on general goodwill to bring them members. At the peak of congregational participation in the 1950s, all nice people knew that all nice people attended and supported the church or synagogue of their choice. Today most people feel quite free not to join a congregation, and almost everyone feels free to leave one congregation for another.

In this environment, each church or synagogue has to articulate its special calling and actively say why it deserves support. It then needs to produce the promised results. That kind of clarity, accountability, and efficacy requires far more focused, streamlined organizational behavior than most congregations are accustomed to.

Congregations are Larger

A third reason for the recent interest in governance is that the average congregation is quite a bit larger. The larger a congregation is, the more of its behavior is explained by formal documents like bylaws, books of order, job descriptions, and budgets. A small congregation may have all of these documents (though it may not know where they are), but it makes most of its decisions based on an informal pecking order based on seniority, relationship, and trust. Who happens to be a board member at the moment means little; who happens to be pastor, even less.

In a large congregation, formal understandings matter more. These understandings may or may not be in writing; I have noticed that by measuring the thickness of a congregation's policy book you can estimate the distance to the nearest state or national capital. But in large congregations voting matters, written job descriptions more or less describe real jobs, and agreements about governance actually govern how governing bodies govern. One minister who has remained in place while his church grew from pastoral to corporate size said, "There are people in the congregation I'll have to treat as though we were small until they die." Even in a large church, relationships, longevity, and money still confer informal authority. But as a congregation grows, it can't leave so much to chance. Leaders don't bump into one another often enough to pass along information, establish an informal hierarchy, or smooth over conflicts by the influence of personal friendship.

Unfortunately, even the formal governance most congregations inherit is optimized for the small congregations of the past. Denominations that prescribe a universal "discipline" or "order" for all congregations generally require structures that work less well as worship attendance (or, in most synagogues, member families) passes the 250 mark. Beyond 400 they often stop working at all. Effective larger congregations have long made their own rules; as more congregations become larger, we need new norms of governance that work in larger groups.

Three Themes in Governance Reform

As congregations grow, they need to rely less on tacit understandings and more on written policies, consistent leadership training, clear delegation of authority, and regular evaluation of results. Roles need to be more crisply defined. In particular, effective congregations know the difference between governance (defining the mission, making policy, setting overall direction, and evaluating overall results) and ministry (program leadership, staff supervision, business administration). Typically the governing board is ultimately in charge of governance, and the senior clergy person (sometimes as part of a management team) is in charge of ministry.

Clear role definition does not mean people work in isolation. On the contrary, the clearer it becomes where each buck stops, the more easily the players can collaborate without needing to worry about losing control of what they will be held accountable for doing.

Rick Warren's model of the church is popular, but it is only one of several governance reforms explored by synagogue and church leaders. Three themes appear often in these efforts.

Pastors Who Cast Visions

Rick Warren, William Easum, Tom Bandy, and many others call on the head clergy person to articulate the congregation's unique calling loudly and often. The upside of this is efficiency and the potential to multiply opportunities for service unencumbered by board and committee meetings. The potential downside is that a congregation that relies so much on one person to provide leadership can become brittle and unstable. A congregation that builds muscle in its clergy leader needs at the same time to provide ways for the congregation as a whole to co-create the vision. It also needs to strengthen its governing board to act as a strong partner with—and, when necessary, as a counterbalance to—strong clergy leadership.

Governing Boards that Govern

The effort to strengthen boards is a second major theme in today's ferment about congregational governance. "Boards" of 25 or even 50 members, which are not uncommon, cannot engage questions of purpose and vision with the depth that they require. Even more seriously, scandals in the secular nonprofit world have shown that members of large boards tend to feel less responsible for overseeing the corporation and ensuring compliance with the law. A board of seven to 12 members can represent the interests of a large congregation better than an oversize board.

In addition to reducing board size, many churches are eliminating awkward, multi-board arrangements and replacing them with a clear hierarchy where a single board holds ultimate responsibility for governance.

Sophistication about board governance has evolved greatly in the secular nonprofit world in the last few decades. A wide variety of resources have become available to help boards with strategic planning, staff oversight, policymaking, and keeping focused on top-level governance and out of management. The work of thinkers like John Carver and Richard Chait and resource groups like BoardSource and the Leader to Leader Institute have only begun to inform the work of congregation boards.

The challenge of this work is to remember that a congregation is a congregation first and a nonprofit corporation second. A minister is not exactly like an executive director, and a congregation is not the passive "membership" of a museum or the alumni of a university. So the good new resources on board governance need to be supplemented by reflection rooted in the practical realities of congregational life and in the traditions that make each congregation special.

Congregations that Discern Together

Many congregations, dissatisfied with business meetings as the sole way for the whole membership to engage in its own governance, have implemented various methods of group discernment. Some of these, like Ignatian decision-making and consensus governance, as practiced by the Mennonites and Quakers, arise from Christian history. Others, like Future Search and Open Space Technology, come from the world of nonprofit, public, and business administration. Still others, like the family-system insights of Edwin Friedman and Ronald Heifetz's work on building an organization's "adaptive capacity," have roots in the mental health professions.

Like clergy leadership and board governance, congregation-based discernment works best in combination with the others. Each congregation must reflect on its own.

Many religious traditions give lip service to the congregation's role in discerning its own direction. Only a

few (traditional Quaker meetings, for example) actually require enough time and attention from every member to bring the whole congregation into day-to-day decision-making. The new “technologies” of large-group planning and visioning enable large groups to enter into governance for one or two carefully planned days a year. Each congregation needs to balance the expectations it is willing to place on members with the amount of large-group participation it will lead them to expect.

How to Explore Governance

If your congregation wants to explore governance alternatives, I suggest you begin by designating a small Governance Task Group who will study books and resources like those in the list accompanying this article. I particularly recommend Edward Long’s *Patterns of Polity*, which may help you to identify the core values of your own denomination’s style of governance. The group might wish to interview past leaders to learn what was satisfying or frustrating for them.

Once the task group has a hunch about the scope and nature of the changes it wants to explore, it is ready to plan its process. The plan should specify the areas of governance that will be looked at, the concerns or goals to be addressed, the occasions when leaders or members can have input, the approximate date the task group recommendations will be acted on, and the body that will act. It is worth mentioning the hope that, by that time, every interested person will have had a chance to express his or her hopes and concerns, so that the vote itself will be an anticlimax.

Once the process is approved by the governing board, it should be widely and repeatedly publicized. It is always good to overdo publicity. I’ve found that people will accept a great deal of top-down decision-making if they know well in advance what is under consideration, when they can have input, who will decide, and when.

Next the governance task group should facilitate a series of sessions for the congregation at large and specific groups of leaders. Presentations on governance alternatives, denominational wisdom, and best practices from the nonprofit world should be mixed with liberal amounts of time for feedback and discussion. Between large gatherings, the task group needs time to reflect alone. Periodically it meets with the board to share the questions it is struggling with. Sharing questions is a better way to elicit helpful feedback than presenting fixed conclusions.

Trial Run

Some congregations find it helpful to try out a proposed new system of governance for six months to a year before making it permanent. You may need to make small changes to your bylaws or other documents, but keep these to a minimum. Usually it is possible for your existing bodies, using the powers they already have, to act according to the proposed plan temporarily. The task group then evaluates the trial run, taking note not only of whether people liked or didn’t like it (some discomfort is inevitable) but whether it addressed the concerns and goals that motivated the inquiry in the first place.

Assuming all goes well, the task force then presents the proper motions to make lasting changes to the congregation’s governance. As with all actions that come after thorough process, wide discussion, and responsive leadership, one sign of success will be that someone asks, “Didn’t we vote on this already?”

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The following article is located at:
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/outreach/articles/simplechurch.html>

THE SIMPLE CHURCH

by Thom S. Rainer
from *Outreach* magazine, May/June 2006

Are you in a church that seems so incredibly busy that nothing seems to get done? Are the people in the church weary from activities? Do the ministers rarely get a break from their seven-day-a-week responsibilities?

If you've answered "yes" to any of the questions above, welcome to the crowd. Many churches today are becoming busier—and less effective.

Our team recently conducted a major research project that examined the activities of churches in North America. Our conclusion was basic but profound: Simple churches are more effective in both evangelism and discipleship; busy, activity-filled churches are less effective in these areas.

Simple Church Defined

When our team talks about a simple church, we have a very specific definition. It is *a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth.*

This definition has some weight to it, so let's walk through it one phrase at a time.

A simple church is designed. It's not carelessly thrown together or haphazardly planned. The ministry doesn't "just happen"; it's thought-out, structured and designed with care.

A simple church is designed around ... meaning that the programs and ministries revolve around something. They're not just plugged into the church calendar. Everything is designed around something. And that something is not a nebulous, abstract concept.

The design revolves around a straightforward and strategic process. The process is simple and easy to grasp. The leaders know it, and the people understand it. The process is intentionally kept simple. It's not lengthened or changed every few months. Complexity is not welcome. The church chooses to stay simple and rejects the multitude of new programs and models offered to it.

The process is also *strategic*, closely knitted to the church's purpose or vision. The process is built for execution to impact people. It's designed to be sequential so that people can move through the process.

The simple process moves people. People are attracted to Christ and the church, and are then moved to points of attachment. Ministries and programs in a simple

church are used as tools to promote this movement.

People are moved through the stages of spiritual growth. The movement has an intentional and intended end result: Changed lives are the bottom line. A simple church understands that people are at different places in their spiritual journeys and that spiritual growth is a process. The church is designed to partner with God to move people through stages of spiritual growth.

Sadly, most churches miss this truth. They are not simple. They have not designed a simple process for discipleship. They have not structured themselves around the process of spiritual transformation. And as a result, they are making little impact.

These churches need an extreme makeover. They desperately need a new design for church ministry. We make these statements with confidence because our research indicates that the simple church strategy is effective. A simple process makes a major difference.

First Steps to Simplicity

The beginning of the simple church revolution is to decide what your church really needs to reach people for Christ and to move people to become more devoted followers of Him. The tough task is to eliminate everything else that makes no difference in this process.

Start with defining your process of disciple-making. Align all that your church does around this process, and get rid of the programs and ministries that don't facilitate or nurture that process.

It may take some time to move your church to simplicity, but the result is worth the wait. In a simple church, lives are changed. Your church is effective.

Let the revolution begin!

This content originally appeared in the May/June 2006 issue of Outreach magazine, the gathering place for ideas, insights and stories of today's outreach-oriented church leaders. For more ideas and information, visit outreachmagazine.com. For your free 3-issue mini subscription to Outreach magazine, [click here](#).

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TWELVE PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE THAT POWER EXCEPTIONAL BOARDS

Exceptional boards add significant value to their organizations, making a discernible difference in their advance on mission. Good governance requires the board to balance its role as an oversight body with its role as a force supporting the organization. The difference between responsible and exceptional boards lies in thoughtfulness and intentionality, action and engagement, knowledge and communication. The following twelve principles offer chief executives a description of an empowered board that is a strategic asset to be leveraged. They provide board members with a vision of what is possible and a way to add lasting value to the organization they lead.

1. CONSTRUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP

Exceptional boards govern in constructive partnership with the chief executive, recognizing that the effectiveness of the board and chief executive are interdependent. They build this partnership through trust, candor, respect, and honest communication.

2. MISSION DRIVEN

Exceptional boards shape and uphold the mission, articulate a compelling vision, and ensure the congruence between decisions and core values. They treat questions of mission, vision, and core values not as exercises to be done once, but as statements of crucial importance to be drilled down and folded into deliberations.

3. STRATEGIC THINKING

Exceptional boards allocate time to what matters most and continuously engage in strategic thinking to hone the organization's direction. They not only align agendas and goals with strategic priorities, but also use them for assessing the chief executive, driving meeting agendas, and shaping board recruitment.

4. CULTURE OF INQUIRY

Exceptional boards institutionalize a culture of inquiry, mutual respect, and constructive debate that leads to sound and shared decision making. They seek more information, question assumptions, and challenge conclusions so that they may advocate for solutions based on analysis.

5. INDEPENDENT-MINDEDNESS

Exceptional boards are independent-minded. They apply rigorous conflict-of-interest procedures, and their board members put the interests of the organization above all else when making decisions. They do not allow their votes to be unduly influenced by loyalty to the chief executive or by seniority, position, or reputation of fellow board members, staff, or donors.

6. ETHOS OF TRANSPARENCY

Exceptional boards promote an ethos of transparency by ensuring that donors, stakeholders, and interested members of the public have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding finances, operations, and results. They also extend transparency internally, ensuring that every board member has equal access to relevant materials when making decisions.

7. COMPLIANCE WITH INTEGRITY

Exceptional boards promote strong ethical values and disciplined compliance by establishing appropriate mechanisms for active oversight. They use these mechanisms, such as

independent audits, to ensure accountability and sufficient controls; to deepen their understanding of the organization; and to reduce the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse.

8. SUSTAINING RESOURCES

Exceptional boards link bold visions and ambitious plans to financial support, expertise, and networks of influence. Linking budgeting to strategic planning, they approve activities that can be realistically financed with existing or attainable resources, while ensuring that the organization has the infrastructure and internal capacity it needs.

9. RESULTS-ORIENTED

Exceptional boards are results-oriented. They measure the organization's progress towards mission and evaluate the performance of major programs and services. They gauge efficiency, effectiveness, and impact, while simultaneously assessing the quality of service delivery, integrating benchmarks against peers, and calculating return on investment.

10. INTENTIONAL BOARD PRACTICES

Exceptional boards purposefully structure themselves to fulfill essential governance duties and to support organizational priorities. Making governance intentional, not incidental, exceptional boards invest in structures and practices that can be thoughtfully adapted to changing circumstances.

11. CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Exceptional boards embrace the qualities of a continuous learning organization, evaluating their own performance and assessing the value they add to the organization. They embed learning opportunities into routine governance work and in activities outside of the boardroom.

12. REVITALIZATION

Exceptional boards energize themselves through planned turnover, thoughtful recruitment, and inclusiveness. They see the correlation between mission, strategy, and board composition, and they understand the importance of fresh perspectives and the risks of closed groups. They revitalize themselves through diversity of experience and through continuous recruitment.

Excerpted from The Source: Twelve Principles of Governance That Power Exceptional Boards. Washington, DC: BoardSource 2005. For more information or to order a copy of the complete book, please visit www.boardsource.org or call 800-883-6262.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

What does it take to be a good leader? The following are some characteristics of a good leader. No one can be all of these things. Each of us can be some of these things. Where do you fit?

MOTIVATION

The values exemplified by our seven principles are fundamental to everything we do.

DECISION MAKER

Good leadership is tested at the point where decisions need to be made in a crunch. This is where the leader needs to be sure of his/her vision and direction and then make clear decisions, even if the decisions are not popular with everyone. Hold your judgment until you know all the facts. Then, get off the fence and take the best stand you can.

DELEGATOR

The number one way for a leader to avoid burnout is to learn how to involve others. Involving other board members not only divides the workload, it also broadens the base of support for your congregation's mission statement.

SENSE OF DIRECTION

Who knows where we are going? The leaders should know and should be able to state it clearly. It is easy to lose the vision if the leadership does not keep a clear focus and sense of direction.

GOOD EXAMPLE

The best leaders are always the ones whose example is inspiring to others. Most specifically, you cannot expect others to give to the congregation if you do not. The example you set is crucial.

GROUP PROCESS

Most of the time it is easier to simply make a decision and "bully" your will on the group. But a good leader trusts that the group will, in time, work its way to a good decision and the belief that other people's opinions are valuable. A "one person show" seldom works long, even if the leader is "right" about everything.

SENSE OF HUMOR

No one likes to work with someone who cannot share a good laugh when it is appropriate. It is especially important for leaders to have a sense of humor about themselves. This makes people feel comfortable and ready to work.

INFORMED

A good leader knows the facts. A good leader knows the basics of stewardship through reading and staying informed. The UUA Bookstore and Alban Institute have a great collection of relevant materials.

INSPIRER

This is the intangible but important quality of leadership that gets people moving with vision and purpose. Little is accomplished in our world without enthusiasm. Enthusiasm channeled with the proper vision results in growth and forward movement.

LISTENER

A good leader really hears what another person is saying and responds sensitively to them. A good leader also makes sure that everyone else is hearing honestly and clearly what another person is saying. This reduces conflicts and encourages participation by everyone.

MEDIATOR

A good leader has the ability to help people with opposing views to see the other person's view and, if possible, come to a good compromise. Sometimes a good compromise is not possible, and the leader has to help one side or the other learn to live with a defeat – a difficult, but essential task.

ORGANIZER

What does it take to get from here to there? The answer is simple; planning and organization. A good leader constantly holds up to the group the need for the people, money and structure to get the job done. Faith and works go together. Organization is a faithful act that gets the work done.

PREVENTING BURNOUT IN BOARD MEMBERS

by Lawrence Peers

A focus on routine tasks or unending crises tends to take over the agenda of congregational boards or governing bodies. Over time, board members may become disenchanted with their roles or burned out by long meetings that lack direction and vigor. Over time, a notable opportunity has been missed for developing strong leadership to guide the congregation in living out a renewed sense of mission and purpose. Moreover, these leaders can feel "spent"—rather than renewed for future leadership positions.

Charles Olson, in his book *TRANSFORMING CHURCH BOARDS* (Alban Institute, 1995), considers the possibilities of developing the board as a "community of spiritual leaders." He writes:

Strategically speaking, the board, or council, is a crucial arena for congregational renewal and revitalization efforts. If the board can move beyond "business as usual" into the experience of active and energized faith, it will model and lead in ways that impact the whole church. If the board becomes a community of spiritual leaders, the church is bound to feel its effect (p. 76).

A shift to seeing the governing board as a "crucial arena for congregational renewal and revitalization" requires not only a new perspective but also a commitment to practices that embody this approach in the agenda and in the board's deliberative processes. Can we imagine ways that boards can do their work while strengthening their own religious lives and capacities for reflection, analysis, and vision?

Yes. I know it is possible. In leading retreats with dozens of congregational boards, I find it helpful to understand the event as an opportunity to launch new practices that the board will continue afterward. During the sessions I stop periodically and ask the board to list "implications for our ongoing practice." At the end of the retreat, we review the list, and members commit to the practices that they believe will make the greatest difference for their work. A review three to six months later allows the board to assess what it has learned by engaging in new practices—and how it can sustain the commitment to transforming its work.

Suggested Practices

Any new practice in our lives (for example, an exercise program, regular meditation, or daily prayer) is hard to sustain. As soon as a board feels overwhelmed by too many items on the agenda or by a crisis, it usually reverts to "business as usual," with predictable results. To sustain a new practice, one must continue, no matter what, until it is mastered. A board might consider adopting some of these:

1. Begin the meeting with a time of prayer, meditation, or reflection on Scripture to remind the board that its work is sacred. Sometimes I've observed a board beginning with prayer or reflection but then rushing into its agenda to get to the "real work." When done well, this worship-full beginning is not merely another agenda item to check off but a way to set the tone and context for the board's work.

2. Provide time for a board member to share briefly some highlights of her own faith journey and what this congregation means to her. Even if this sharing takes five minutes of meeting time, it is time well spent. It helps members to appreciate and understand one another beyond their roles on the board. It reinforces the connection between a member's personal life mission and the mission of the congregation.

3. Recognize that some significant decisions require time for theological reflection and interpretation in the context of the congregation's mission. Often we move from identifying a problem to determining a solution with no steps between. Occasionally, we need to ask: How does our faith tradition inform this decision? How do we interpret this decision in light of our mission statement? A congregational board's decision making should strengthen the leadership's ability not only to analyze the data, but also to reflect on that information through the resources of faith and the stated mission of the congregation.

4. Take a meta-view of some decisions. Alice Mann, in her book *CAN OUR CHURCH LIVE?* (Alban, 1999), poses three formative questions whose answers shape a congregation's development and revitalization: "Who are we?" "What are we here for?" "Who is our neighbor?" It is helpful to pause before taking action and ask, "How does this specific decision articulate our response to these three questions?"

5. Advocate for your ideas—but also be willing to be influenced. Often board members feel that they must represent a particular constituency, or advocate for a point of view—no matter what. It takes spiritual discipline to be open to the influence of another's ideas, experiences, or data. The balance between advocacy and a willingness to be influenced provides an atmosphere of dialogue that can enrich decision making as well as transform decision makers.

6. Pause for reflection or prayer before or after a decision. Sometimes we rush from one task or agenda item to another. Pausing occasionally before or after a decision allows participants to put the action into a meaningful spiritual context and to share further reflections. Asking for spiritual guidance can become part of the spiritual discipline of a board as well as of its individual members.

MORE EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

What to do when.....

The meeting goes off on a tangent:

Try saying to the group, "I'm not clear on how this relates to _____ (the topic)."

The group can't come to a decision and the discussion is going round and round:

Try throwing out a decision for reaction – it will tend to surface the items that still need discussion and focus the group. For example: "How about if I try to pull all of this together for you to reach to – We agree to present the question to the Religious Education Committee and ask them to make a recommendation to the Board by next month."

The group is at an impasse:

Ask the group: What do we agree on? What do we disagree on? If you can find the source of the disagreement you can move the group forward. The sources usually fall in to one of these categories:

1. Facts – what has happened
2. Methods – how should we do what we need to do
3. Goals – what is our objective, what are we trying to accomplish
4. Values – what do we believe is important in this case

Merely finding the real source of disagreement will focus the discussion so that you are working on the real issues, and will often help to resolve it. Ask yourself and the group, "What do we need to do to move forward?" It may be that more information is needed, or that others not present must be brought into the debate. It may be that another, overarching, question must be answered first.

Other questions that may help break a log jam"

- What do we know for a fact?
- What do we sense is true but have no data for yet?
- What don't we know?
- What is unknowable?
- Then again, what do we agree on?
- What do we disagree on?

The meeting is unproductive for whatever reason or you feel tense, confused or uncomfortable, even angry:

Try this exercise in mindfulness and reflection. It may help you stop in the midst of a difficult situation, take a quick reading of your current reality, and help you engage others in a thoughtful and constructive way.

Moments of Awareness

1. What is happening right now? What am I doing right now? What am I feeling right now? What am I thinking right now?
2. What do I want right now? Often just asking this question will change your own behavior.
3. What am I doing right now to prevent myself from getting what I want? Make a choice to change or not.
4. Take a deep breath and move on.

The meeting is contentious, heated or just scattered and unfocused, people aren't listening to each other or side conversations have broken out:

The facilitator, leader or any participant can call for a moment of silence, pointing out that the group has drifted out of focus and may need a moment or two for reflection. Depending on how long the meeting has been in some form of disarray, the silence may need to be longer. You may want to suggest that members focus on their breathing for a few moments. You may also want to have a period of mediation with soft music in the background.

MEETING CHECKLIST

PUBLICITY/PROMOTIONS/NOTIFYING

<u>Who responsible</u>	<u>By when</u>	<u>Notices to whom</u>	<u>Phone calls</u>	<u>_____</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

AGENDA AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

_____	copies of agenda	_____	_____
_____	previous minutes, com. rep.	_____	_____

RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE THE MEETING

_____	leadership assignments	_____	_____
_____	record keeping	_____	_____

MEETING SPACE

_____	size, shape, room set up	_____	_____
_____	location, transportation	_____	_____
_____	heating, AC, ventilation	_____	_____

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES FOR THE MEETING

_____	tables (number, size & shape)	_____	_____
_____	chairs (comfort and number)	_____	_____
_____	newsprint, tape recorder, pencils	_____	_____
_____	name tags, tents	_____	_____
_____	copies of previous mins/reports	_____	_____

JUST BEFORE THE MEETING

_____	seating arrangement	_____	_____
_____	equipment (easels, screens, etc.)	_____	_____
_____	materials (paper, pens, etc.)	_____	_____
_____	refreshments	_____	_____
_____	agenda available	_____	_____

AT THE MEETING

_____	facilitation, running	_____	_____
_____	documentation – recording	_____	_____
_____	operation of equipment	_____	_____
_____	process review, stop sessions	_____	_____

END OF MEETING AND AFTER

_____	collect unused materials	_____	_____
_____	remind people of their commitments	_____	_____

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from a board meeting are the permanent record of that meeting. They provide information about when the meeting occurred and the actions taken. Historically, the secretary writes the minutes, but today it is more common for a staff member to have that role. Some organizations follow strict rules regarding the format, while others may be more informal. Regardless of how the minutes are written and presented, the elements included should be carefully considered.

WHY MINUTES ARE NECESSARY

Minutes are a necessary legal document, but they are also a practical means of conveying information about what action was taken at a meeting. Some common uses of minutes are:

- reference material
- board history
- legal review
- orientation

WHAT SHOULD MINUTES INCLUDE?

While content can vary based on the organization, the basic elements of good minutes include:

- name of the organization
- date and time of meeting
- board members in attendance, excused, and absent
- existence of a quorum
- motions made and by whom
- brief account of any debate
- voting results
- names of abstainers and dissenters
- reports and documents introduced
- future action steps
- time meeting ends
- signature of secretary and chair

HOW MUCH DETAIL IS NEEDED?

The minutes are not a transcript, nor should they try to be a verbatim account of the meeting. They should be simply a record of the decisions made and the action taken. When there is a debate or discussion to be recorded, only the major points for and against the issue at hand should be included. It is important for

members to be able to have meaningful discussions without being concerned about individual liability; therefore, names or direct quotations should not be recorded in relation to the debate.

Enough information should be provided for minutes to be a useful resource. Someone looking at the minutes should be able to understand what decisions were made and the reasons why. Skeletal minutes that only include the motions and whether they passed do not provide an adequate record.

TAPING THE MEETING

Making an audiotape of the meeting can be a useful tool for the person writing the minutes, for long or involved meetings, but it should not replace the written minutes. If the person uses tapes, the board should have a written policy of how to deal with them after the minutes are written in order to protect board members from legal liability. If tapes are destroyed, a policy should state so.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Minutes are a legal record of a meeting. They can be used in court if questions of legal liability around a program or policy arise; therefore, they should be an accurate reflection of what occurred at a meeting.

If minutes provide the right information, they can be helpful to the organization during a legal review. Any actions or questions around a specific legal issue should be included, with appropriate detail provided. Issues such as a conflict of interest should be noted along with the action that board member took. Individual board members who disagree with a board decision and are concerned about personal liability should have their dissent noted in the minutes.

AFTER THE MEETING

After the minutes are written, they should be circulated to the board prior to the next board meeting. Members should then review them for any mistakes or missing information. If minor corrections can be made prior to the next meeting, then approval of the minutes can be part of the consent agenda. Otherwise, corrections should be addressed at the next meeting, and any changes should be voted on. The minutes are then approved, signed by the secretary and the chair, and archived. The archives of minutes should be organized and easy to locate.

REFERENCES

Outi Flynn, [MEET SMARTER: A GUIDE TO BETTER NONPROFIT BOARD MEETINGS](#) (BoardSource 2004).

SOME IDEAS FOR LARGE MEETINGS

BY ROGER W. COMSTOCK

Here are some suggestions for running large meetings using Robert’s Rules, but providing for a maximum of fairness and communal feeling.

These can **be presented by the Chair at the beginning of the meeting** as methods of operation which she/he **proposes to use, in the absence of objection from the floor.** Most groups will readily accept these suggestions.

1. No one will be called upon to speak for the second time before everyone who wishes to speak has spoken once.
2. People are asked to **speak for themselves**, not for what they think others think. Also, people are asked to be careful of the feelings of others in the way they phrase their remarks.
3. People are asked to **limit their comments** to two (three) minutes. If the issue is likely to be difficult, you may want to devise a method of timing the comments and providing a warning when there are thirty seconds left.
4. As chair, pledge to try to call on people from different sides of the issue alternately.
5. When the parliamentary maneuvering begins to get complicated through the use of amendments and substitution motions and so forth, the Chair can declare the meeting to be a “Committee of the Whole.” In this status, the issues can be discussed and consensus reached without the need for motions. After that has been accomplished, the chair can then declare the formal meeting resumed (Committee of the Whole status is finished) and the appropriate motions to codify the consensus can be made and voted.
6. The motion to **“Call to (or for) the question”** is legitimate under Robert’s Rules, but is often destructive of a church community. It requires an immediate cessation of debate and a vote (majority rules) on whether or not to continue debate. If the debate is terminated in this manner, folks will often leave the meeting feeling angry and unappreciated. To circumvent this, the Chair can announce (before the meeting begins) that she/he will take a call to the question as a request to consider whether to continue debate, not as an absolute vote. S/he can then ask for a show of hands of those wishing to continue and then do one of two things: (1) make a judgment as Chair whether there is sufficient interest to continue (even though such) interest may be in the minority, or (2) allow each of those who raises his/her hand to make his/her statement; then end the debate. These rules are helpful when controversial issues are presented.

TYPES OF DECISION MAKING

Minority Decision

PLOP – results when a member of the group makes a suggestion that is completely ignored by the rest of the group. The member who made the suggestion feels that no one is listening.

SELF-AUTHORIZED DECISION – occurs when one member of the group suggests a course of action and then immediately proceeds as if the course had been accepted by the group. The assumption is that since no one disagreed, they must approve. This leads the group down blind alleys. Even if there is agreement in the rest of the group, resentment results because this is never checked out.

HANDCLASP – occurs when one member of the group makes a suggestion that elicits a response of support and permission to proceed from another member. Acceptance of the idea is not tested in the group as a whole. This is a powerful method of control in a group which limits participation of others and consideration of alternatives.

KILL – happens when a suggestion offered by one member of the group is rejected at once by one or more powerful members of the group.

MINORITY SUPPORT – occurs when a minority of the group ramrods through a decision of their own that the majority does not support. This leads to little future support of the group as a whole.

Majority Decisions

SIMPLE MAJORITY – occurs when a decision is made by voting. A common mistake is made when the group assumes that because the majority made the decision, the minority will come along willingly. Often the minority is resentful and is willing to give no more than token support.

NEAR CONSENSUS – occurs when the group has tried to include every member in the final decision. All members may agree, but some may have serious reservations regarding the decision. Although promising support, they may withdraw it at critical times.

TRUE CONSENSUS – happens when all members of the group have contributed to the decision, feel that they have been listened to and heard, and are more satisfied with the decision than with any of the other alternatives. The probability is high that significant weight has been given to significant conditions affecting the decision and that there is great support from ALL group members.

CONSENSUS

Attitudes Which Impede Consensus

1. **Competition:** foster both distrust and inequality as members try to outdo each other in performance, power and prestige. It focuses on weaknesses rather than strengths of other's contributions.
2. **Lack of Interest in Others:** thinks that a person's role in a group is to contribute their own ideas, skills, experiences, insights and that the responsibility ends there. It lowers commitment o working out the group's problem.
3. **Owning Ideas:** thinking that ideas are the speaker's property. Criticisms and suggested changes become personal affronts and defensive arguing.
4. **Suppressing Feelings and Conflict:** we are taught to think logically and that conflict is harmful. We attempt to resolve conflicts quickly by compromising and reflecting to fully explore the concerns.
5. **Relying on Authority:** listening to the advice of the experience needs to be balanced with active involvement of all group members. Relying on other's authority may lead group members to deny responsibility for the decision.

Attitudes Which Support Consensus

1. **Cooperation:** members perceive themselves as having mutual goals and share information and resources. Members tend to like and trust each other. There are no "right" or "wrong" choices. Exploration of the alternatives is fostered.
2. **An emphasis on Mutual Trust:** When you trust each other, information is not concealed or distorted. Defenses are dropped. You can also trust that others are listening and attending to what you say so that you don't have to continually repeat and defend your ideas.
3. **Common Ownership of Ideas:** An idea that develops in a group using consensus is considered property of the whole group, not just the person who first articulated it. Ideas can build upon each other. When ideas are considered property of the group, everyone can feel involved in the development of a decision. Criticisms are of ideas, not of the people who expressed them.
4. **Valuing Feelings:** recognizing the importance of feelings and allowing for their expression helps the group develop a clearer understanding of its own process. Including the emotional factors as well as the logical ones gives the group a better chance of reaching a decision that is satisfactory to all.

5. Valuing Conflict: conflict in itself is neither “good” nor “bad”. It merely signifies that disagreement exists. Cooperative effort in dealing with conflict encourages diverse viewpoints to emerge that test the strengths and weaknesses of an idea.
6. Valuing the Contributions of All Members: expecting and encouraging this fosters a sense of competency and responsibility in group members.
7. Making an Effort to Equalize Power: with this comes an enjoyment in working together and a desire on the part of individuals to contribute. It is important to learn from history (experience) while at the same time not closing off consideration of new ideas. This is a difficult balance to maintain.

SOME TIPS TO HELP YOUR BOARD FUNCTION BETTER

Planning Meetings

- Schedule meetings regularly at a fixed time each month. You can always cancel a meeting that is not needed.
- Take the time to prepare and agenda listing all business to come before the meeting. If others are to bring business, make sure they've done their homework properly so that the board's time is well used. Ask committee chairs to prepare their reports in writing.
- Time out the agenda. If there is too much to do, figure out which items can wait or be handled by committees. Be sure the business you tackle is appropriately board business.
- Look to the Personal Comfort of the board members and others present. Think about the seating, lighting, temperature and the like. Plan any food and drink to be served.
- Plan how and when guests will be recognized. In a larger church, it's a good idea to introduce guests.

Running the Meeting

- Start on time!
- Consider some sort of formal coming together to start the meeting, a reading, a meditation or the like. After all, this is a church group. No more than five minutes is needed.
- Work for consensus.
- The chair must balance the right to speak with the need to keep moving. The chair can:
 - Ask people to seek recognition before speaking.
 - Cut off anyone who monopolizes the conversation.
 - Make sure everyone has a chance to be heard.
 - Insist that only one person talk at a time.
 - Interrupt to rechannel the conversation if it starts to drift away from the issue at hand.
 - Ask for a motion if needed to help clarify an issue.
 - Summarize what has been said to date as a way of helping to clarify.
- Be sure to have periodic breaks. Most people cannot work longer than about one hour and a half without interruption.

Reporting

- Minutes should ordinarily record the actions taken, not the details of the discussion. Occasionally it will be important to record positions taken by individuals, and/or the rationale behind certain decisions.
- A summary of the meeting should be published in the church newsletter for all to see. Report the actions taken, not the items discussed.

Board Retreats

- The primary function of any board retreat should be teambuilding. Your board will function much better if members know each other as people.
- Hold the retreat away from home to avoid interruptions. Give careful thought to the logistics of food, drink, lodging and transportation.
- Allow adequate time, usually Friday evening through Sunday noon. Include time to play and to worship together.
- Consider inviting both old and new board members. Consider inviting committee chairs as well.
- Plan the agenda to address the broader questions for which there is not adequate time during normal board meetings.
- Consider inviting an outside facilitator to help work through the more complex and/or difficult issues.

SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS AS A BOARD MEMBER

1. **Identify and cultivate relationships**

Seek to create opportunities for building relationships among board members and in the district members in order to enhance your understanding. Maintain contact with people so you can assess the pulse of the congregation.

2. **Learn about every aspect of board function**

Read materials that are available. Develop the reputation of being purposefully curious. As a board member, you owe it to yourself and your congregation to become familiar with all aspects of board stewardship. Review past board minutes and materials pertaining to UU boards.

3. **Be alert and active**

By definition, a board member cannot be passive. How can you direct anything if you're just sitting there waiting for someone to tell you what to do? Pay attention to what's happening. Ask questions. Begin to discern the board culture and how things are done. We will help you as much as possible.

4. **Work as a team**

You are a crucial "player" along with other board members. Share new ideas with them and seek to be a team player.

5. **Be open-minded**

Listen to the suggestions and ideas of others. Communication is a two-way process; running rough shod over others is not consistent with the culture of how we do things.

6. **Be visible**

An essential for all leaders, if they are going to be effective, is visibility. You can't lead if no one ever sees you and/or they won't ever know you're there. You should carry the vision to others regularly. Demonstrate support and gratitude for the work being done back in congregations. Answer questions, hear complaints, pick up the mood of the members and try to spot the early warning signs of trouble. You should attend and support congregational events. If you are otherwise active in the community, you should be conscious that you are a walking advertisement for your congregation.

7. **Follow through on commitments**

Many board members are not new to leadership. Requiring that board members simply come to meetings and validate decisions crafted by the board is not our mode of operation. We need commitment of time and energy. We need a willingness to see the job through. We need willingness to face the times of discouragement that engulf every district at least occasionally. Being aboard member takes a lot out of you, but it is also a rewarding experience.

BUILDING BETTER BOARDS BEGINS WITH EVALUATION

Regularly evaluating the structure and operations of the Board of Directors is vital to ensuring success. This process will help to identify issues which need to be addressed in order to strengthen the board and this ensures a healthy congregation.

Evaluation may be conducted by a special committee, the Executive Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Committee in Trustees, or the Board as a whole. Results – and the strategies to address the areas needing improvement – should be reviewed with the full Board.

	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
MAKE-UP OF THE BOARD			
1. The Board understands that it is ultimately responsible for attracting funding resources to ensure the financial viability of the congregation/district.			
2. The Board is representative of the community and the congregation's/district's constituencies.			
3. The bylaws limit tenure and ensure rotation of board members.			
4. The Board is comprised of new and experienced trustees to guarantee both continuity and new ideas.			
SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT OF DIRECTORS			
5. There is written nomination process which includes identification of necessary skills to support the institution and an interview process.			
6. Expectations and qualifications of board members are clearly articulated, verbally and in writing.			
7. The Nominating Committee or Committees on Trustees meet throughout the year in order to identify and cultivate candidates for consideration.			
8. The Nominating Committee solicits candidate suggestions from staff, trustees, donors and other key constituents.			
9. The Nominating Committee annually assesses the performance of incumbents and distinguishes between those who should be invited to continue service and those who should be thanked and released upon completion of a term of appointment.			
10. In addition to general skills of trusteeship, each candidate for nomination is asked to use a specific skill/expertise on behalf of the organization.			
11. A member of the nominating Committee personally interview each candidate prior to submitting the name in nomination. The interview process reviews mission, program, constituency, and goals; finances			

	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
and operations; expectations and qualifications of trusteeship; and the specific expertise of the candidate.			
ORIENTATION AND TRAINING			
12. An annual orientation is conducted for the entire Board of Trustees. Topics addressed include roles and responsibilities of staff and Board, overview of the services, and Committee operations.			
13. The organization distributes supporting information (i.e. Board Manual) to all trustees. This manual includes such items as: roster of Board and staff, Board job description, by-laws, year-end financial material, committee guidelines.			
14. Institution provides education/training opportunities to build trustee skills.			
BOARD OPERATIONS			
15. Congregation/District has clear and concise by-laws which describe roles, responsibilities and operations of the Board of Trustees.			
16. Board has a structure which includes officers and committees in order to transact business.			
17. Responsibilities and relationship between the Board and staff are clearly articulated.			
18. Board operates within a strategic plan, monitors adherence, and updates the plan regularly.			
COMMITTEE OPERATIONS			
19. The Board has active committees through which work is channeled.			
20. Committee responsibilities are clearly articulated and committees develop an annual work plan with specific assignments and timetables.			
21. Committees include Board and non-Board members.			
22. Committees report regularly to the Board of Trustees.			
23. The Board gives responsibility and authority to its committee and acts on committee recommendations.			
24. The Board's chair monitors the activity of committees through regular contact with committee chairs.			
THE BOARD AT WORK			
25. There are regularly scheduled meetings of the Board of Trustees.			
26. Meetings begin and end on time as per an agreed			

	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
upon schedule.			
27. Meetings follow an agenda			
28. Concise, accurate minutes are maintained and distributed in advance of the next meeting.			
29. Financial report, comparing income and expense to budget, is distributed in advance and reviewed at each board meeting.			
30. Fiscal year budget is reviewed and adopted annually and adjusted at least at the six-month interval.			
31. The Board helps raise funds.			
32. Each member of the Board gives according to their dictates so as to be able to say, "we have 100% giving on the board."			
33. Compilation of year-end fiscal activity compared to budget is reviewed by the full Board.			
34. Board meetings focus primarily on policy formulation, review of plans, fundraising and financial matters, and evaluation of the organization.			
35. Routine matters (information and items requiring action but little discussion) are handled quickly.			
36. Relevant discussion is encouraged and every member has the opportunity to participate.			
37. Board uses its time well; does not engage in committee work at meetings.			
38. The Board makes decisions and takes action.			
39. The Board is successful at dealing with conflict in decision-making.			
40. Board has a mechanism to assess the performance of the Ministry.			
41. The Board of Trustees evaluates its own results and processes regularly.			
42. Each board member has a good record of attendance at regular and special meetings of the Board and its committees.			
43. Individual board members accept assignments and carry them out in a timely and effective manner.			
44. The President of the Board discusses attendance and performance with trustees who are often absent or inactive.			
45. There is a mechanism to remove board members who are unable to carry out their responsibilities.			
46. Board members are aware of activities and trends within the community.			
47. New leadership is constantly emerging from Board and committees.			

	YES	NO	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
48. Within the Board, there are several individuals who can serve, in the future, as President of the Board.			
49. Board of Directors accepts change and seeks to stimulate it when appropriate.			
50. The Board deals well with conflict and decision-making processes.			

BOARD DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

To help board members assess boards and provide clues to more effective decision making.

The following are separate areas. Before each statement answer “Y” for yes, “N” for no, or “DK” for don’t know.

I. Board Structure

- ___ 1. The organization has a clearly stated and concise set of by-laws or constitution detailing structure, officers, committees, nominations, responsibilities, terms of office, etc.
- ___ 2. The Board has a set of policies or procedures which help outline ways to handle the business of the organization.
- ___ 3. A group is designated to make decisions (i.e. executive committee) when the board is not meeting.
- ___ 4. Some structure, detailed in the by-laws or as policy, helps to channel work among members (i.e. standing committees, ad hoc committees, task force, work groups, etc.)
- ___ 5. Assignments (charge to group) and responsibilities of a work group are written down enabling each member in the group to be aware of the work goal.
- ___ 6. Relationship between Board (officers and members) and staff (paid and/or volunteer) are clearly defined in by-laws, policy or procedures statement.
- ___ 7. Duties and responsibilities of Board and staff are specifically outlined.
- ___ 8. By-laws/constitution/policy spells out length of time a person can serve as board member and officer. Hopefully some plan for rotation is defined so new people are added to the group.

II. Board Procedures

- ___ 1. Meetings are held at regularly scheduled intervals and such schedule is released at the first meeting of the year.
- ___ 2. Meetings are held at organization offices, or the place is announced with meeting dates and time of meetings.
- ___ 3. Stated time of the meeting is followed with the actual starting time announced. A serious attempt is made to end as scheduled.
- ___ 4. Agendas are set by the president, with help from executive committee or from staff. Agenda plus supporting material is distributed to members prior to the meeting.
- ___ 5. Minutes of board meetings are written and circulated with the agenda to allow adequate review for accuracy and completeness.
- ___ 6. Committee reports are written and given to the secretary at the time presented to the Board.

- ___ 7. Provision is made for handling board matters between regularly scheduled meetings. In addition, procedures are outlined to call additional emergency board meetings.
- ___ 8. If operations of the organization are handled by staff, special effort is made to acquaint the Board with the staff to foster cooperation and team work when necessary.
- ___ 9. In an organization composed of volunteers and staff, special effort is made to acquaint all organizational members with responsibilities/accountabilities of board – volunteer officers, board members, committees and staff.
- ___ 10. Board meetings are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect for the concerns and ideas of individual members and the realization that each member has a unique contribution to make to each board meeting. (if we all agreed all of the time, there would be no need for boards.)
- ___ 11. The president/chair (board or committee) conducts the meeting according to rules as outlined in the by-laws and orchestrates discussions to allow participation of all interested members without attempting to bias the discussion.

III. Nomination Procedures

- ___ 1. The Board nominating committee is aware of the mix of people the organization serves and reflects such diversity in its membership and its choice of nominees.
- ___ 2. The Board nominating committee solicits names of candidates for nomination from present organization members (staff and volunteer), client population (if they have one) and previous members.
- ___ 3. The Board nominating committee is aware of the responsibilities of the officers and board members, the goal of the organization and the needs of the board and the organization.
- ___ 4. The Board nominating committee is in session year round, analyzing the organization's future needs and screening possible nominees.
- ___ 5. The Board nominating committee has a procedural outline for informing possible candidates about the organization and its work goals.

IV. Orientation and Training

- ___ 1. The organization has in its procedures and policies, a statement concerning orientation and training of volunteers and staff.
- ___ 2. The organization provides written material for new members outlining goals of the organization; plan of work for the year; policies, procedures and by-laws; financial statement for present year; budget for present year; and any material that pertains to board responsibilities.

- ___ 3. When newly elected or appointed members attend their first meeting, special effort is made to begin the process of integrating them into the group.
- ___ 4. Board members are offered opportunities to participate in activities of the local organization. If the organization has affiliations with county, state, national or international groups, the Board and staff are offered opportunities to attend functions outside the group.

V. Board Members

- ___ 1. Board members come to meetings prepared to discuss items on the agenda and give constructive ideas for furthering organizational goals.
- ___ 2. Members of the board attend the meetings. If unable to attend, the president, secretary or appropriate person is notified.
- ___ 3. The Board conducts an annual evaluation of its work as a board and of the organization's yearly plan of work.
- ___ 4. The Board formulates yearly plans. In addition, the Board is made aware through committees or individuals of future needs the organization might serve.
- ___ 5. The Board is always conscious of its financial responsibilities and acts to keep its work/service most effective and efficient.
- ___ 6. The Board members are known for their participation in the organization and are active vocal proponents of the organization's goals.
- ___ 7. The Board has the ability to attract new members to the Board and committees, sustain interest of former members and keep continuity in its thinking and acting.
- ___ 8. Board members participate outside board meetings when their expertise is needed.

Reproduced from

Volunteer Consultants
Gretchen E. Stringer, C.V.A.
Clarence, N.Y. 14031-1408

EVALUATE YOUR BOARD

Thinking of the way in which your committee or board or board functions, rank each of the following items by placing the appropriate number in the blank in front of the item, using the following scale:

- 5 Yes, definitely
- 4 Usually, yes
- 3 More often than not
- 2 Sometimes
- 1 Rarely happens
- 0 Never happens

- _____ A. It's easy to get items on the agenda.
- _____ B. The same few people do most of the talking
- _____ C. Conflicts are smoothed over or avoided.
- _____ D. Once a decision is made, it is clear who is to carry it out.
- _____ E. At each meeting we review the decisions of the past meeting checking whether they were carried out and why or why not.
- _____ F. The same problems keep coming up month after month.
- _____ G. We consider many alternative solutions prior to making a decision about action.
- _____ H. Usually a motion suggesting action is made prior to much discussion about the problem at hand.
- _____ I. People talk differently outside the meeting than they do in the meeting.
- _____ J. Members check with each other to make sure they understood what was said.
- _____ K. Each individual speaks for himself rather than generalizing with statements like "we think" or "our people believe" or "everybody thinks".
- _____ L. Our committee or board seems to wander aimlessly and not be clear about our purposes.
- _____ M. Listing the agenda items to be considered and the ordering of these items is one of the first decisions we make at each meeting of our committee or board.
- _____ N. At our meetings chairs are arranged so that we can all see each other's faces.