

DARFIELD BAPTIST - A MINISTRY-LED CHURCH

prepared by Paul Cossey

At the AGM in February 2012 the church agreed to trial another structure for the church. This is sometimes described as a Ministry-led church. The reason for that is that its structure endeavours to allow ministry leaders to develop and grow ministries that are needed by the church. Our trial this year has been very encouraging and the feedback reflects an endorsement of the changes and that the structure is supportive and allows for personal and ministry growth.

I have appreciated that the Elders and in turn the Membership have trusted me and allowed this trial. Thanks for being willing to try things and listen to me, to trust me and my leadership and give it a go.

Below are some comments from leaders and members of the congregation, followed by an outline of the structure that we would adopt in our policy manual. It also includes a diagram that endeavours to highlight the way the church works together around Vision, Values, Alignment and Trust.

“Our meetings have a lot more focus and aren’t as long.” “We feel like we’re all on the same page and work as a team.” “This is a supportive environment and I like that we get together as Ministry Leaders.” “We’ve got people serving in their area of gift and passion and that makes all the difference.” “Communication has improved (though not perfect). There seems to be a lot more freedom and less suspicion.”

The effectiveness of any church structure can be evaluated in terms of how that structure relates three entities:

- authority
- responsibility
- accountability

There are three broad options:

1. SMALL CHURCH STRUCTURE (not confined to only small churches)

This separates authority from responsibility and has no accountability.

Many Baptist churches have been based on this structure. The person doing the work has responsibility to do it and is accountable but has no authority. This approach has, as its ethos, a basic lack of trust in people, so those given responsibility for ministry have committees or church officers over them (authority), and no one is held accountable for the ministry. You cannot hold a committee accountable for anything.

2. DICTATORSHIP STRUCTURE

This marries responsibility with authority, but has no accountability.

It is a common structure in independent churches where the pastor runs the church and is not answerable to anyone.

3. LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Marries responsibility, authority and accountability.

The person is empowered to do the task for which he/she is responsible and has the authority to do it in the best way possible but is accountable for the outcomes. This is the “ministry-led” model, and can function in any sized church above about 70 attending.

Who are Ministry Leaders?

In the ministry-led model, ministry-leaders are not just the paid pastoral team. Ministry-leaders will include volunteers, part time and full time paid people.

Ministry-leaders are defined by their giftedness to fulfil the responsibility given them for the ministry areas in the life of a congregation. There are key ministry areas a church needs to have. These areas relate to the expectations people have of church – both Christians and seekers.

The key areas are :Life Groups and Church Care – Pastoral care provided primarily through Life Groups; critical pastoral needs; men's & women's groups; Alpha; discipleship & ministry growth; incorporating new people.

Children's ministries – includes Sunday programme for 0-12

Youth – high-schoolers, intermediates programmes; 24/7

Community Ministry – serving and outreach arms of the church

Worship and music – including creative ministry for weekend and special services

Preaching / Services – Sunday services teaching/preaching ministry

Admin Team – Finance; Property; Secretary; Technology; Personnel

Missions – overseas mission support; short term teams; local mission support

A healthy, growing church will identify leaders who are recognised for their gifting in these areas and who are committed to working together towards the church's vision – that is, the church will know who is responsible for these ministries and give them authority and freedom to lead them, holding them accountable (through the pastor) for the outcomes of these ministries.

Some churches may have one person filling more than one of these responsibilities.

The people responsible for these areas are treated as 'staff'. That means each person is:

interviewed by the pastor and approved by the elders for their appointment

meet regularly with the pastor and combined Ministry Leader Team Meeting

have ministry descriptions

have budgets to spend in their ministry area

can recruit a team of people they lead and train

They have responsibility and authority in these ministry areas – they do not have committees, elders, deacons courts, etc over them.

What does it look like?

Church members

Appoint the Elders

Appoint the Pastor

Affirm the vision

Can be appointed as Ministry Leaders

Affirm Ministry Leader Appointments

Serve as team members within ministries they are gifted and passionate about

Approve the budget

Make major property decisions

Receive reports from Elders and Pastor

Church Elders

Prepare the vision with the pastor

No portfolios – they represent the church's vision as a whole

People of good Christian character

Practically committed to vision through giving, ministry involvement

The Elder's functions are to:

Support the pastor and ministry-leaders. Keep them focussed and aligned

Are "Keepers of the vision" and dream the future

Agree to and support the presentation of goals

- Talk about “ends” not “means”
- Hold the pastor accountable to the goals
- Relate to ministry-leaders – who may be invited to visit an Elder’s meeting
- Advise pastor on ministry appointments
- Report to the church

The Pastor

- Works with Elders to set vision and ensures the church stays on track
- Leads the ministry leaders and holds them accountable for the agreed goals
- Is the caster of the vision
- Is the main recruiter for the vision
- Is the primary preacher
- Develops leaders who develop leaders

The Ministry-Leaders

- Form the Ministry-Leaders Team with the pastor
- Are responsible for their area(s) of ministry
- Develop other leaders and a team who help them achieve their ministry goals

How Does it Work?

The following process marries accountability into the responsibility/authority mix. Without this kind of process, staff-led churches will degenerate into dictatorship model.

The process is: During September / October, the Elders and Pastor review the year and determine the over-all direction and goals for the church for the coming year. These are communicated to the Ministry Leaders. Around October / November, they write up goals for their ministry for the coming year, and discuss these with the pastor. Goals must be measurable, objective and specific. They should fall into three categories

- personal goals you can attain yourself
- goals that will be achieved by others, in your ministry area
- dreams – “if all went well, this could happen”

These goals should be aligned with the over-all direction and goals for the church and not be in completion with other ministries.

Once the ministry goals are identified with the pastor, they are presented by the Pastor to the Elders. The Elders may want to respond to the goals and, once agreed, to make appropriate budget recommendations.

When the Elders have approved the goals, and a budget has been set to achieve those goals, they are presented to the church annual meeting for affirmation through the approval of the budget. These goals and budgets now set the course for the Pastor/s and Ministry Leaders.

The ministry leaders get on with the job. Any evaluation of progress during the year occurs at the 1:1 meetings. The pastor’s role is to coach each ministry leader to enable them to achieve the goals. This will include a review with the pastor.

As a part of the review the Elders will hear how the goals have or have not been met by each leader. They can:

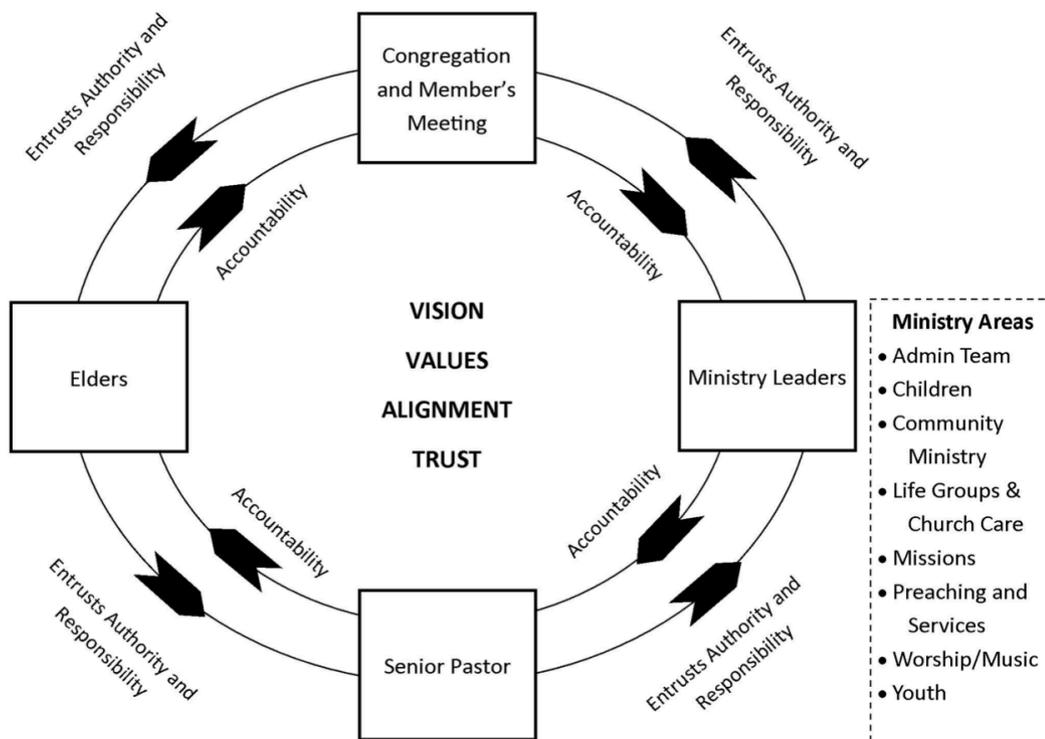
- Commend all who have achieved goals
- Put a leader on a further 1 year trial, or suggest another avenue of ministry if goals are well astray.

The pastor will also complete an annual review with the Elders who will evaluate their ministry and effectiveness in leading the ministry team.

Comments

1. This process means things cannot meander along without fulfilling the mission goals of the church.
2. While leaders are accountable from day to day to the pastor, the process means they are evaluated on how their ministries are going – on outcomes. They are free to function as they think appropriate. They are not subject to the whim or control of the pastor or anyone else. They are given time and support to make their ministry work.
3. The pastor is just as accountable as anyone else. The pastor is involved in:
 - setting the vision
 - selecting the ministry leaders
 - setting good goals
 - encouraging and coaching the staff team to reach the goals
 - answering to the Elders for the vision and mission of the church.
4. The Elders are accountable to the Annual Meeting by ensuring the church comes under the Headship of Christ, the church's vision is biblical and relevant and the Pastor is supported and resourced appropriately.

This may be illustrated in the following diagram:



The Membership entrusts the Elders to provide pastoral oversight and leadership for the church by following of a God-honouring vision. The Members approve the Annual Vision Document and Budget.

The Elders in turn entrust the Senior Pastor to entrust Ministry Leaders to lead teams of people in life giving ministry.

The Ministry Leaders entrust the congregation to serve in the various ministries for which they are gifted and passionate.

The accountability flows back in the opposite direction ie Teams are accountable to Ministry Leaders, who are accountable to the Senior Pastor, who is accountable to the Elders, who are accountable to the Members Meeting