

Proposal to Modify Organizational Plans for Grace UMC Leadership Structure

Submitted to Grace UMC Charge Conference June 7, 2021



Summary

According to the Book of Discipline ¶ 247.2, the Church Council chair and pastors of Grace UMC propose a modification to our church governance structure. Where we have been governed by Finance, Staff Parish Relations, and Trustees committees, combining with other representatives to form a Church Council, we propose the church be governed by a single board of leaders, the Grace Leadership Board.

I. Overview

In a vote on May 2, the Church Council voted to shift to a new lay leadership structure for Grace UMC as soon as July 1. This decision was based on several observations including but not limited to how difficult it can be to make important decisions or to do generative work as a 30-member representative Church Council. Given the challenges we face and the mission we have been given, a move to a single board structure will allow us to invest more time and energy into mission-focused governance.

At present, Grace is led by three standing committees including the Trustees, the Finance Committee, and the Staff/Pastor Relations Committee (SPRC). Representatives of other committees of the church combine with the chairs of these three committees to form a representative Church Council.

The Church Council has decided to make a structural shift which will combine the responsibilities of the above committees into a single governing board of the church (the Grace Leadership Board or “Board”).

This model of church governance is becoming quite common among churches of all sizes in the conference. Most recently Warrenton UMC, Sydenstricker UMC, and Burke UMC in our District moved to this model of governance. This model enables important decisions to be made efficiently, in alignment with our mission and vision, so that the ministry of the church can be executed by the laity.

The Board is a 10-member board of Grace UMC church members (plus the senior pastor ex-officio) who lead the ministry of Grace UMC in two primary ways. First, the board directs the vision, plan, implementation, and evaluation of Grace United Methodist Church’s mission and ministry. Second, it provides for the administration of the church including monitoring and managing her finances, facilities, and staff, especially to be in compliance with the requirements of the United Methodist Book of Discipline.

II. Board Make-up/Composition

1. The board shall consist of 10 voting members. The Senior Pastor (an eleventh Board member) is required by Book of Discipline to be on this Board. The Associate Pastor or Deacon will participate fully in partnership with the Senior Pastor. There will be representation of one lay member of annual conference, a lay leader, the church treasurer, a youth, and a young adult in compliance with the Book of Discipline ¶ 252.5.
2. The term for board members will be 3 years. The 10 elected members board (9 adults and 1 youth) will be nominated by the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee and approved by an annual church conference.
3. Members will be elected in 3-member classes. The youth member will be elected annually, serving no more than 3 years. Once a board member has rotated off the board, they shall take a sabbath year off before being elected again.
4. *First Year Only* – As we nominate the first board members, they will be placed in 3 classes of 3 with different terms. (One class will rotate off in June 2022, one in June 2023, and one in June 2024).
5. All voting members of the Leadership Board will be members of Grace UMC. People related to one another may not be voting members on the Leadership Board at the same time. Staff or family members of staff may not serve as voting members on the Leadership Board in compliance with the Book of Discipline requirements for SPRC.
6. The nine adult lay members of the Board (elected by the Board every July) will be legally registered as the Trustees of the church in compliance with the Book of Discipline.

III. The Work of the Board

1. The board meets monthly (with possible exception of December) unless a called meeting is needed. If the leadership board needs to take action before the next meeting, the members will be contacted, a vote taken and actions will be reported at the next Leadership Board Meeting. Votes can be taken electronically when needed. If the Chair calls a meeting and less than 60% will be in attendance, the meeting will be rescheduled.
2. The Board is responsible for the duties outlined by the Book of Discipline for the Staff/Parish, Finance, Trustees, and Church Council committees summarized in the “Overview” section of this document.
3. Board members will sign a mutual covenant in July each year to hold one another accountable in their Christian journey and board responsibilities.
4. When needed, the Leadership Board may appoint temporary work teams on a task-oriented basis with a member of the Board participating on the team. These differ from standing ministry teams in that they only work as a team to achieve a particular objective and are then dissolved. Any such team will work until that objective is completed and the results/recommendations shall be presented to the Board for acceptance/approval as needed.
5. The Board will review relevant church-wide policy documents annually (e.g., Personnel Policy, Financial Policies and Procedures, and Child Protection Policy) or appoint another person or body to do so.
6. The following information will be provided in a monthly board meeting packet to the Board and available to the congregation one week before their scheduled meeting:
 - a. Monthly Agenda

- b. Pastor's Report highlighting key ministry decisions from that month and what is on the horizon before the next meeting.
- c. Financial Report
- d. Facilities Report

IV. Board Member Responsibilities

1. Be present and participate in all Grace Leadership Board meetings "whenever not prevented."¹
2. Before each monthly meeting, review the meeting packet and agenda. Arrive prepared to engage fully.
3. By the grace of God, strive to live as a role model for the rest of the congregation
 - a. By your prayers (developing a regular prayer practice)
 - b. By your presence (especially in weekly worship)
 - c. By your giving (approaching or exceeding a tithe)
 - d. By your service (on the Board and beyond the Board)
 - e. And by your witness (with the help of God, reflecting Christ in all you do and finding ways to help more people encounter, engage, and embrace Grace).

V. Sample Board Meeting Agenda

1. Opening Prayer/Spiritual Formation - 15 minutes
2. Review of New People - 5 minutes
3. Review/Measurement/Evaluation of any active objectives - 5 minutes
4. Packet and Consent Agenda items - 5 minutes
5. Generative and Strategic Work -30-45 minutes
6. Communication and Action Items - 5 minutes
7. Closing Prayer

VI. Ministry Teams

This leadership structure is designed to help the church achieve its mission. The Board has primary responsibility for guiding that process, but the work of ministry toward that end will be executed by staff and Ministry Teams. In the former structure many committees functioned as ministry teams (executing ministry) and in the new structure not much will change. People will be able to remain in ministry. Some new Ministry Teams are being formed anew to account for aspects of the work of Trustees and Finance especially. These Ministry Teams and their leaders do not need to be elected by Charge Conference. For that reason, Ministry Teams and their membership will be reported at the Fall Charge Conference. Until then, ministry committees should remain in ministry during the transition.

Conclusion

The Church Council chair and pastors of Grace UMC propose this modification be accepted by the June 2021 Charge Conference and implemented, with the help of God, as of July 1, 2021.

¹ This phrasing is how often John Wesley told members of Methodist societies to attend worship.