

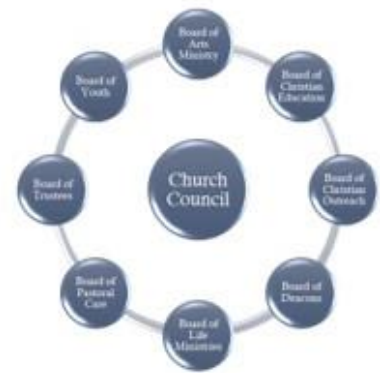
2023

Board Restructuring: Preparing for What's Ahead

Proposed Structure – Five Boards



Current Structure – Eight Boards



One in a Series of Articles about Board Restructuring
Countryside Community Church
11/30/2023

Board Restructuring: Preparing for What’s Ahead

Introduction

Given the significant changes Countryside has experienced over the last five years—from relocating to the Tri-Faith Commons to the departure of tenured clergy to the impact of the pandemic—members of the Church Council set priorities for 2023 to ensure a vibrant, healthy Church. The priorities included connecting with new and existing members, exuberantly welcoming visitors and friends, and thoroughly reviewing our governance structure.

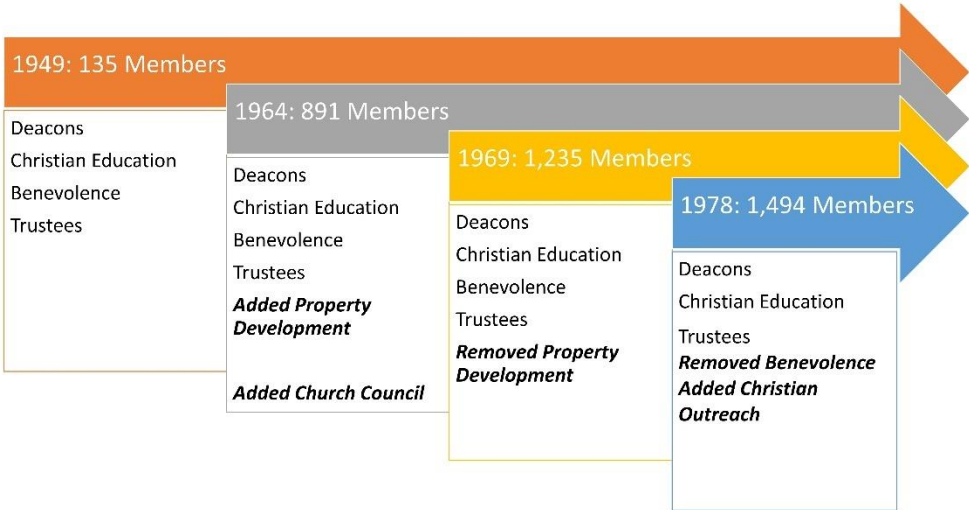
On February 23, 2023, members of the Church Council took action to establish an independent task force to evaluate our current board structure and recommend changes, if appropriate, to enhance the effectiveness, adaptability, and alignment of the church's governance structure with its mission and goals. The council's action followed the work started by another committee in 2018 before our relocation to the Tri-Faith Commons. This article summarizes the task force's key findings and recommended board structure.

The 2023 Board Restructuring Task Force included five members and one staff liaison: Mary Johnston, Mary Beth Link, Margie Bolte, Jane Frey (Chair), and Dan Loven-Crum (Staff Liaison). The members brought great knowledge, organizational experience, and understanding to the task. Each served on various boards and committees; two members were Church employees, and all are actively engaged with Countryside. The task force met weekly from March through September. Their research comprised historical data, such as the timing of each board's formation and the number of board members required, as well as the membership roll, feedback from the Nominating Committee, current board functions, and the findings from the previous committee,

Key Findings

The number and types of boards correlate to the membership roll (number of members) and staff.

- Initially, there were four boards, Deacons, Christian Education, Benevolence, and Trustees, and the membership was 135.
- The Church Council was added in 1954.
- In 1978, there were four boards—Deacons, Christian Education, Trustees, and Christian Outreach—plus the Church Council, with 1,494 members.



- Between 2006 and 2012, four boards were added: Arts Ministry, Youth, Pastoral Care, and Life Ministries. The membership ranged from 1,721 members in 2006 to 1,474 members in 2012, and there were at least two called ministers and 12 full- and part-time programming employees on staff.

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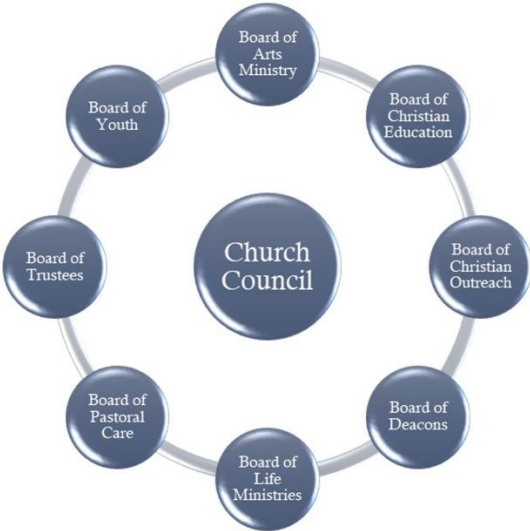
- Currently, there are 1,090 members of record, and the staff includes one minister and seven programming staff, three of whom are part-time employees.



The church comprises eight boards with at least 82 seats, varying in membership from six to 24 individuals per board.

- The Nomination Committee must fill at least 33 board seats annually, excluding youth positions and vacancies. In 2022, they successfully filled 47 board seats.
- Board members must be church members, serving on only one board at a time. Members are reluctant to commit to three-year board terms, making filling board seats and maintaining board membership difficult.
- Board members play crucial roles in governance and are primary contributors to volunteer work within the church.
- There is a common assumption that to contribute to a board's work, one must be a board member. This leaves little room for non-board members, visitors, and friends to participate in the work of the Church.
- Staff members often serve as liaisons for multiple boards, increasing their workload and burdening their after-hours schedule.

Current Board Structure



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Summary of Findings

The history illustrates a pattern of board expansion and adjustment in response to membership fluctuations, with modifications in the number and types of boards over the years. Currently, the church operates with a smaller membership base and a scaled-down staff compared to previous periods.

History also demonstrates that the number of board seats has expanded to ensure enough volunteers to support the various functions of each board. Changing the focus of boards from volunteer supply to governance could reduce the number of board seats and expand volunteerism to non-board members, friends, and visitors without the three-year board commitment. It also streamlines the decision-making process, making boards more agile and responsive to the needs of the Church.

Recommendation

On July 12, 2023, the Board Restructuring Task Force presented their findings to board and council members, with more than 60 in attendance. Their recommendation proposed a new structure:

- Reduce the number of boards from eight to five
- Align like functions to increase collaboration and operational efficiencies
- Include integral functions that align with the Church’s mission, such as UCC designations, the Tri-Faith Initiative, and congregational care
- Create subcommittees, known as teams, chaired by board members and staffed by volunteers, to increase member and non-member engagement, inclusivity, and diversity of participants.

After the presentation, attendees participated in a facilitated discussion to generate initial responses to the proposed structure, identify the pros and cons, and consider the next steps, including ongoing vetting of the proposal at the board and Church Council meetings.

Proposed Structure



New Structure Descriptions

These descriptions culminate in feedback from the task force and board and Church Council members over several facilitated discussions during board and council meetings. As a reminder, members may attend board and council meetings.

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Social Justice and Outreach

Members of this ministry address the needs within our church family, community, country, and the world and oversee UCC designation teams that help our congregation’s action align with our mission and the UCC values. This encompasses areas as diverse as homelessness, hunger, the environment, and racial and economic issues. It includes, but is not limited to, the following Teams:

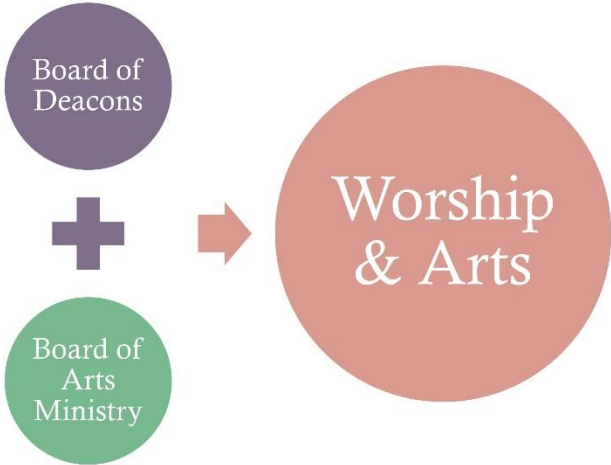
- Designation Teams: Includes education, book clubs, and small groups that support and deepen our understanding of the designations.
 - Accessible to All (A2A) Team
 - Anti-Racist Church Team
 - Open and Affirming (ONA) Team, including PRIDE
 - Future teams
 - Creation Justice
 - Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged for Mental Health (WISE)
 - Intercultural and Multiethnic
 - Immigrant Welcoming
- Social Justice and Action Team, such as Faith in the Environment and the Community Cupboard
- Special offerings Team: select organizations to receive donations from the Christmas and Easter Offerings and select recipients of the Box and other special offerings throughout the year.
- Community Engagement Team provides opportunities to deepen Countryside’s relationship with its Tri-Faith Commons faith partners and other organizations within the greater Omaha community.



Worship and Arts

Members of this ministry support the congregation’s worship and arts experience, including leading teams that prepare and serve during worship and oversee the multidisciplinary arts programming for all ages. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Worship Planning: under the leadership of the Senior Minister, this team meets weekly to plan and coordinate worship services.
- Communion, prepare the elements and serve communion
- Liturgists, identify lay volunteers to read scripture, call and response, and make announcements
- Usher Team coordinates volunteers to serve as ushers during worship
- Offering: collect the offering and account for the loose offerings
- Baptism: prepare the elements for baptism
- Music programs: oversee and support the choral and instrumental groups for all ages, such as Countryside Community Church Choir.
- Multidisciplinary arts programs: oversees, supports, facilitates, and sustains artistic programming and coordinates volunteers



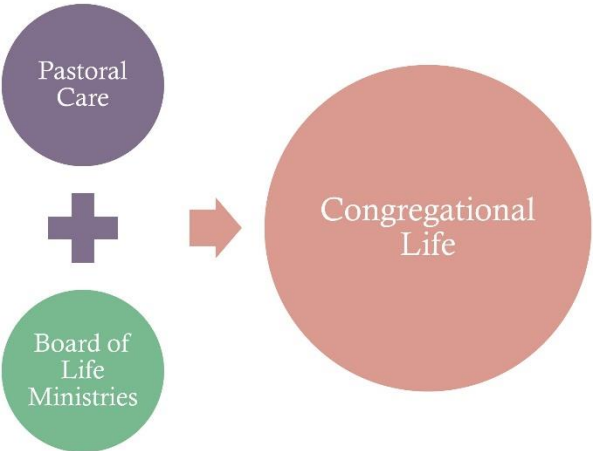
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- Recruit, engage, and retain volunteers to support the worship teams and program participants

Congregational Life

Members of this ministry support the many phases and life events of our congregants. It encompasses visitor and member welcome, membership, and fellowship and provides pastoral care to members during times of stress, hardship, and crisis or as requested. It includes, but is not limited to:

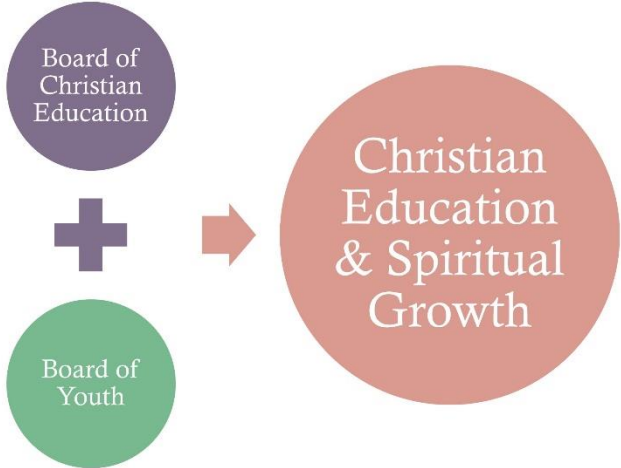
- Visitor Welcome Team
- Greeter Team
- Membership Team, oversees new members and membership management in conjunction with the staff
- Care Team
- Agape Team
- Stephen Ministry
- Fellowship, including all-church events, small groups, such as Journey Groups and book clubs, social groups, and health and wellness programs
- Life Events, such as the coordination of weddings, baptisms, and funerals in conjunction with the Senior Minister and staff and the administration of baptism and confirmation in conjunction with membership management.
- Community Assistance Fund management following the policy and in conjunction with the staff liaison
- Pray groups, including text groups



Christian Education and Spiritual Growth

Members of this ministry guide, oversee, and support educational opportunities for all ages – children, youth, and adults. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Children's Education
- Youth Education, including confirmation
- Adult Education
- Lecture Series, such as Center for Faith Studies
- Management of the Church Library
- Reviews and oversees the Abuse Prevention Policy
- Oversees and supports curriculum development in conjunction with the staff
- Acquires curriculum and supplies, as needed, to support educational programming in conjunction with the staff
- Recruit and train volunteer teachers and facilitators

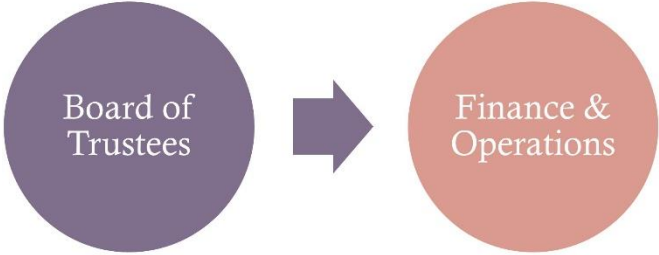


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Finance and Operations

Members of Finance and Operations are the fiduciaries of the church, responsible for handling the church's physical assets, legal contracts, and financial assets. Responsibilities include:

- Finance and Investments, set and review financial policies and procedures, review investments with the Treasurer and investment advisor
- Stewardship, lead year-round giving and annual stewardship campaign to encourage member giving
- Contracts, review and evaluate new and renewal contracts, such as insurance policies, maintenance contracts
- Property and Building, oversee and advise capital maintenance program and ongoing repair and maintenance of the property and the building
- Charitable Foundation, nominates and selects members of the Foundation board and provides guidance regarding policy and use of funds
- Budget oversight, reviews and accepts monthly financial reports, ensures funds are used as budgeted, reviews requests for additional funds outside of the annual budget



Board and council members continue to vet the proposed structure during meetings. Members are encouraged to attend Church Council meetings to learn more about the proposed change in structure. Additionally, there will be opportunities to learn more about the proposed structure change in sessions after worship. Watch for dates and times on the announcements and the weekly newsletter, the C-10. Future articles will cover the process for the congregation to consider adopting the proposed structure and the implementation plan.