

Session and Finance and Maintenance Committee

Session Starter #20

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Prayer

Lord of the church, you have called us to be the people of God in the world and to give to you our offerings of praise and service. Hear us as we pray for this court of your church and for the people who have come here to serve you, to worship you, and to celebrate your presence among them. Grant that what is done in this place today may be for the good of the church, that your will may be done, that your name may be glorified, that your saints may be equipped to live faithfully in the world, for you alone are holy, O God, blessed Trinity. Amen.

Book of Common Worship, p. 295

Introduction

The session may establish a committee of finance and maintenance to be responsible for such affairs, thus dispensing with the need for a board of managers.

Book of Forms, 113.6.5

Scripture

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word."

Acts 6:1-4

A Brief Commentary

The Hellenists (Grecian Jews) felt they were being treated unjustly. The disciples called a "congregational meeting" to deal with the issue. It was agreed the disciples should devote themselves to distributing the bread of heaven instead of bread of flour. Other wise and spirit-filled members of the community were selected to ensure the fair distribution of food.

Reflection

We find in this passage a model for a division of responsibility within a community of faith. While recognizing God is served through all our good labours, some are chosen to assist with pastoral leadership while others are entrusted with more hands-on responsibilities.

Discussion

In Presbyterian churches, this division of labour is often split between a session and a board of managers. A board is chosen by the congregation at its annual meeting. While there ought to be close cooperation and communication between session and board, a board often experiences a degree of independence as it carries out its work during the year. An alternative to choosing a board is having the session establish a committee of finance and maintenance. This committee would function like any other session committee and be assigned the same responsibilities as a board.

Some congregations find this committee structure improves communication and reduces the misunderstanding and conflict that can arise between a session and a board that do not communicate well. Other sessions find that a great deal of their time is spent on matters of bricks and mortar when finance and maintenance is more directly part of their work. Whether a congregation chooses to operate with a committee of finance and maintenance or a board of managers, it is vital that responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined, communication is strong, and the ministry of the church moves forward faithfully and effectively.

Questions:

1. What are the pros and cons of working with a board or committee in this congregation?
2. How can we improve the system we presently use?