

Structural Task Force Report and Recommendations

to

The Session

of

Lewinsville Presbyterian Church

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Structural Task Force (STF) Report and Recommendations to Session

The Structural Task Force (STF) was established on November 7, 2015 during the annual Session Retreat. Members are Pam Deese, Mary Frase, Tom Mellor, Roy Mitchell, Joe Parisi and Rev. Scott Ramsey.

Purpose – To review the existing Ministry Group and staff structure and, where appropriate, recommend revisions to those structures with the goal of improving collaboration and communication between Session, staff and the various Ministry Groups consistent with the Strategic Plan adopted by Session on May 13, 2014, and the previously published October 15, 2013, document titled “Background, Considerations and Findings Utilized in Developing the Strategic Plan.”

Timing – Written report with recommendations to be presented to Session no later than April 2016.

Methodology – Review the current Ministry Group (MG) structure in detail, meet with each MG and separately with each MG chair to gather information regarding current functions and observations for improvements in procedures and processes, review recommendations made by each MG to the Strategic Planning Committee during its 2013 interviews, evaluate the individual tasks of each MG, and prepare a report to Session.

Approximately twenty-five individual meetings were held between members of the STF and Ministry Group Chairs, members, Session Liaisons and staff from December 2015 through March 2016. The STF met regularly and exchanged written updates regarding their MG inquiries. We did not include in our report an assessment of the Deacons and Stephens Ministers, the Lewinsville Presbyterian Church Foundation, the Lewinsville Retirement Residence or Chesterbrook Residences, Inc. because the STF did not consider them to be within our Charter.

Ministry Group Analyses – Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (LPC) currently has eight Ministry Groups (MGs). To the extent these MGs were considered to have similar functions or constituencies, and thus a potential for overlap in their purposes and/or constituencies, e.g., Youth, Older Adults, Tysons, the same STF team was assigned, e.g., CE, Mission and Service and PL&C. As set forth in the current Session Handbook, and as noted below, the Management Ministry Group includes four separate committees (Administration, Finance, Personnel and Stewardship). The STF teams assigned to the MGs were as follows:

1. Christian Education – Tom Mellor and Mary Frase
2. Mission and Service – Tom Mellor and Mary Frase
3. Parish Life and Care – Tom Mellor and Mary Frase
4. Communications (new) – Joe Parisi and Tom Mellor
5. Faith and Public Policy (new) – Joe Parisi and Tom Mellor
6. Tysons Initiative (new) – Joe Parisi and Tom Mellor
7. Membership – Pam Deese and Joe Parisi
8. Worship – Pam Deese and Joe Parisi
9. Management (includes Administration, Finance, Personnel and Stewardship) – Pam Deese and Mary Frase.

Executive Summary of Findings and Observations

In general, the STF observed that 1) Ministry Groups (MGs) are generally not familiar with the Strategic Plan and, therefore, do not include the goals of the Strategic Plan in their discussions and planning; 2) MGs are often not familiar with the Session Handbook's procedures applicable to each MG and are, therefore, not complying with requirements set forth in that document; 3) communication between MGs, between MGs and Session, and between Session and the Congregation is lacking in many areas and could be improved; 4) members of the MGs have enthusiasm regarding their volunteer assignments, are hardworking and devoted to their projects and LPC; 5) succession planning within MGs is absent; 6) membership, worship attendance and fund raising have been generally stagnant for the past five years; 7) MG members expressed strong interest in improving in these areas; and 8) the absence of two-way communication between MGs and Session may contribute to lack of objective goals, difficulty in budgeting and an absence of Session oversight with respect to LPC programs, staffing and outreach.

In more detail, our overall observations across Ministry Groups were as follows:

1. Structure and Leadership of Ministry Groups (MGs)

Two Ministry Groups have no Chairs and the views of the roles of the existing leaders of MGs tend to be rather narrow. More attention needs to be paid to the recruiting and rotating of MG and Committee Chairs. MGs generally have no succession planning in terms of replacing Chairs, which leads either to vacancies or Chairpersons experiencing burnout and/or lack of new perspectives. Minutes of meetings vary dramatically and could benefit from education in the form of guidelines and a template. There are few efforts to recruit younger members.

2. Functioning of Ministry Groups (MGs)

The MGs tend to be siloed and lack opportunities to communicate across MGs. Individual members are focused on the particular tasks/activities for which they are responsible and there typically is little coordination/communication across activities. One MG (Christian Education) currently functions as separate Committees, and in another MG (the Management Ministry Group) most of the Committees operate as separate entities.

3. Ministry Group (MG) Meetings

The MG meetings consist primarily of reporting of activities, which is why some groups meet infrequently. Also, the reporting function tends to emphasize backward-looking rather forward-thinking. In the absence of familiarity with the Strategic Plan, the MG meetings focus on the nuts and bolts of current activities and there is little discussion of the bigger picture of the role/potential role of the MG in the life of the church, or of ways in which MGs might work together or with others in the church or larger community. Coordination between MGs generally happens through staff. There is limited use of email to address minor issues.

4. Role of the Ministry Groups (MGs)

The MGs appear to be driven by short-term objectives. They appear to function primarily as vehicles for ensuring that current activities of the church continue to happen relatively smoothly, i.e., as structures for keeping going what we are already doing.

5. Session Liaisons to Ministry Groups

Session liaisons tend to be observers at Ministry Group/Committee meetings rather than active participants as a representative of the Session and its interests and

priorities. Session liaisons do not play a major role in helping meetings focus on strategic and substantive matters rather than reporting of ongoing activities.

6. Role of Staff

Staff support of the MMGs is not necessarily aligned to facilitate implementation of the Strategic Plan. Staff has assumed roles that lay leaders and/or the MGs may handle and vice versa. The Christian Education MG is staff managed. The Management Ministry Group, on the other hand, has had to assume staff roles largely due to the absence of a church administrator. Coordination and communication among MGs tends to occur at the staff level almost exclusively. While staff has a role in facilitating such communication/coordination, it should also be happening at the level of the MGs themselves.

7. Strategic Plan and the Role of Session

There is a lack of focus/visibility/accountability/communication for activities growing out of the Strategic Plan. In essence, Session has not taken a leadership role with respect to the Strategic Plan. Until it is a Session priority, it will neither be a MG priority nor a congregational priority.

8. Budgeting and Stewardship

The timing for these important processes is out of alignment. There is insufficient time for preparation of the budget, a lack of Session direction to MGs regarding preparation of MG budgets, and an absence of MG discussion with the Finance Committee in preparing the budget. Further, Stewardship campaigns become compressed and are forced to estimate their expected results long before final results are known in order to allow a budget to be prepared by the first of each calendar year.

9. Book of Order and Session Handbook

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order and the Session Handbook should guide the policies and organization of most of what Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (LPC) does. However, this is often not the case. At least three factors contribute to a lack of congruence between the way LPC does things and what is in the Handbook. 1) The Handbook is incomplete in its coverage and is occasionally inconsistent with the Book of Order. The text discussing the various Ministry Groups varies widely in length, content and specificity and some topics are not covered at all. 2) There are inconsistencies in the Handbook within and across sections. In some cases, this appears to have occurred because one section was updated, but not a related section. 3) Many Church leaders are not familiar with or do not follow the content of the Handbook.

Specific Findings and Recommendations are set out hereafter in their separate sections of this report. They are designed to address the above Findings and Observations.

Christian Education (CE)

Background

The Strategic Task Force (STF) reviewed the Strategic Plan and Section 4 of the Session Handbook on the Christian Education Ministry Group. The STF found that there is no description of the structure and operations of the Christian Education Ministry Group in the Session Handbook other than it “provides for the planning and operation of the many education programs of the church”, and that there is a Children’s Ministry, a Youth Ministry and Adult Education. It further states that there is a full time Director of Christian Education and a full time Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries under the supervision of the Director of Christian Education. In Section II.B of the Strategic Plan there is an emphasis on faith formation, which goes beyond traditional Christian education.

As noted, the CE Ministry Group is composed of three principle sub-groups: Children, Youth and Adult Education. The CE Ministry Group has not met during this program year, reflecting the lack of a chairperson. The three subgroups have been operating independently, but other than lay Sunday School teachers, there does not appear to be much lay leadership in either the Children or Youth areas. There is reference to a Youth Council, which no longer exists. Adult Ed is the one area where there is current active lay leadership and some of the members have been part of the group for many years. To the extent that there is coordination across the three subgroups or with other Ministry Groups, it occurs at the staff level. Not meeting on a regular basis inhibits aggressive implementation of Strategic Plan initiatives, such as increasing attendance, taking more advantage of the web, offering more mixed age programs and focusing on Christian Formation, rather than just on traditional Christian education.

Discussion

Communication and coordination between the Adult Education program, the Faith and Public Policy (F&PP) Ministry Group and the Older Adult Council (OAC)

generally occurs because formal representatives to these groups exist. However, communication between Adult Ed and the larger CE program is limited and occurs only through staff. There is some communication between Adult Ed and the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and there have been efforts at doing inter-generational programs involving youth. Adult Ed did not find the Ministry Group meetings, when they occurred, helpful or engaging as they focused primarily on the Children's program. Adult Ed has brought under its umbrella both the Lenten Studies and the Salzman Lecture, which previously were separate committees.

The fact that the overall group no longer meets curtails out-of-the-box brainstorming and programming. For example, while the staff have generated and coordinated some new church-wide programs, lay involvement in generating and carrying out such activities, including ones that might appeal to new members and young families is limited. Prior to this program year, for several years there had been a Sunday morning CE track for young families, called the Family of Faith, but the group lost its leader/teacher and has not continued as a class this year. The highly intellectual content of many Adult Education offerings intimidate and discourage some potential attendees.

The Young Adult Catalyst Group was established in response to the Strategic Plan. It operates as a stand-alone committee, meets infrequently, sees itself as playing a similar role to the Older Adult Council (OAC) and not as a programmatic group, and is not visible to most LPC members. It was not included in the 2015 annual report.

The Directors of Christian Education and of Youth and Young Adult Ministry have been discussing new approaches to minister to young families (defined as those with children in sixth grade and younger), youth and young adults. They intend to address the lack of lay involvement in children's Christian Education and youth programming. However, their vision is much broader, extending to an integrated ministry intended to build community among these three populations using elements of education, worship, mission, fellowship and music. There is some overlap in the three population groups. While some activities might be designed specifically for one of the three groups, the audience for others would be broader. There have been some preliminary discussions with members of young families,

including some members of the Young Adult Catalyst Group, about possible directions for efforts for such families.

Recommendations

1. Appoint a Ministry Group chair and vice-chair. Re-designate the three subgroups as Committees and appoint chairs of each. Hold regular meetings of the overall Ministry Group and each committee. The meetings should include discussions of the Strategic Plan, overall strategies, and coordination across the various areas and with other parts of the church.
2. Broaden the Adult Education offerings to appeal to a broader spectrum of the congregation, including young adults, young families and those early in their faith journeys. The membership of the Adult Education Committee should include individuals with interest in or expertise in these areas.
3. Discussions about young families and young adults are still in the preliminary stages and should continue under the direction of the Head of Staff. Recommendations should be presented about the future directions and organizational structures for these ministries to Session no later than the 2016 Session Retreat.
4. The Head of Staff should work with the Director of Christian Education and the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries in developing the above.

Faith and Public Policy (F&PP)

Background

The Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group (F&PP) was established in accordance with Section III.D of the Strategic Plan to provide public policy discussion from a faith perspective. Section W-7.4001 of The Book of Order indicates that God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to share with Christ in establishing God's just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world. F&PP seeks to further this mission. STF reviewed the Charter for this Ministry Group recently approved by Session. F&PP has been operating in accordance with its Charter, meeting regularly and providing a public forum for civil public discourse regarding issues of social justice. F&PP has one Ruling Elder and one lay person as co-chairs but currently has no staff support.

Discussion

STF reviewed F&PP's composition, its Charter and its success in formulating agendas of public policy topics and speakers. Its Charter serves as a model for other Ministry Groups in setting forth its Mission, Principles and Structure. Of particular note is the last section of the Charter entitled, "Coordination and Collaboration," which calls out the need to liaise with other Ministry Groups, the Session, the Pastors and others.

There are approximately fifteen members on the F&PP, and there is an informal link with the CE Ministry Group by way of one of the committee members. Not every member of the Group attends every meeting. The F&PP has a very precise list of Goals and Objectives that could also serve as a model for other Ministry Groups to use to track initiatives and progress. The F&PP has a representative who attends Tysons Interfaith Partnership (TIP) meetings, and the Group is focused on the Tysons Initiative, as discussed in the Strategic Plan.

Recommendations

1. Merge F&PP into the Mission and Service Ministry Group and change the name to the Faith and Public Policy Committee. There are opportunities for collaboration and communication between these Groups, especially with regard to community outreach via the Tysons Initiative.
2. Establish a goal, by the Session, to make Lewinsville Presbyterian Church a regionally acknowledged center of excellence for Faith and Public Policy issues.

The Tysons Initiative

Background

Finding Number 4 of the Background Paper to the Strategic Plan outlined the Tysons Initiative. It also suggested the Tysons Interfaith Partnership of area churches, businesses, and other stakeholders as a vehicle to enhance the spiritual life for residents and workers in the Tysons area in keeping with Section W-7.4001 of The Book of Order in encouraging the mission of Jesus Christ in service to the world. The Strategic Plan noted that many opportunities exist for Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (LPC) to provide services to both residents and workers, including English as a Second Language (ESL), day-care services and other initiatives. The Tysons Initiative does not have a formal Charter, and there is no section in the Session Handbook establishing this initiative, its structure, membership, principles, goals or objectives.

Discussion

LPC's Pastors and other lay leaders have been attending Tysons Interfaith Partnership meetings. Congregation members have also been providing ESL training to Tysons residents. Members of the Children and Families Task Force, under the umbrella of Christian Education, are currently helping students at Westgate Elementary School, offering mentorship and reading assistance. These initiatives include energetic individual efforts, but they have not become a regular part of the conversation with other Ministry Groups, Session or the congregation at large.

Becoming a larger and more regular part of the on-going activities of LPC can help publicize efforts, attract and coordinate resources and provide the needed services to the stakeholders, as many opportunities exist for collaboration and communication with the other Ministry Groups. As the other Ministry Groups make the Tysons Initiative a part of their conversations, additional opportunities should become apparent.

Recommendations

1. Merge the Tysons Initiative into the wider umbrella of the Mission and Service Ministry Group as the Tysons Initiative continues to provide a spiritual connection to services provided to Tysons residents and workers.
2. Identify a liaison in each of the other Ministry Groups with an intentional direction related to the Tysons Initiative, e.g., the Worship Ministry Group may investigate opportunities for worship services that may attract residents and workers from the Tysons area.
3. Direct the Mission and Service Ministry Group to include in its Charter the Tysons Initiative.
4. Session adopt a set of goals, objectives and metrics (both long and short term) to track initiatives and progress.

Mission and Service Ministry Group (M&S)

Background

The STF reviewed the Strategic Plan and Section 7 of the Session Handbook. The Mission and Service Ministry Group (M&S) meets on a regular basis and maintains minutes. The Associate Pastor attends M&S meetings and provides a high level of staff support. The group has no vice-chair nor is there any plan for succession. There are two youth members who play an active role in the Ministry Group. M&S meetings discuss meaningful issues and make decisions in addition to reporting about various activities. Some M&S members are open to changing the church's structure while others are skeptical of the wisdom of such change.

Discussion

There are mission-related activities that do not lie within the present scope of M&S. Two examples are new activities that have grown out of the Strategic Plan, such as English as a second language (ESL) volunteers at Tysons (part of the Tysons initiative), and Westgate School activities (under a new, independent group, Children and Families). Also mentioned was the way in which activities related to LRR and Chesterbrook are scattered across several groups, e.g., Worship, Parish Life and Care, the Older Adult Council and the Summer and Winter Mission Projects do not fall under M&S. There was ambivalence about what the appropriate relationship should be with the new Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group.

M&S is heavily focused on programmatic initiatives. It has undertaken several new activities in recent years, which have been generated through ideas presented to it by others. However, some of these commitments are supported by one person or by a very limited number of people who are willing to lead the activity. This may raise issues regarding sponsorship of any specific project in the absence of champions on their behalf.

Recommendations

1. Merge the Tysons Initiative, Children and Families and the Faith and Public Policy Ministry Group into M&S to ensure that M&S is aware of what is going on in these three areas. They could continue to meet separately (as the Older Adult Council does within PL&C), but all three should have representation in M&S meetings in order to coordinate their programs with the larger M&S Ministry Group.
2. Merge the Summer and Winter Mission Projects into M&S. The Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries should provide staff support to M&S to enhance communication between this program and M&S in general and in support for youth members. This should also enhance youth participation in other M&S programs, such as Stop Hunger Now, SHARE and Homestretch that appeal to youth.
3. Add a vice-chair and establish a defined succession plan. The responsibilities of the Chair and vice-chair might be divided between funding and programmatic activities. Recruit and rotate new youth members and consider how their role can be used more effectively to increase youth and family participation in mission activities.

Membership Ministry Group

Background

Section F-1.0302 of the Book of Order instructs that the Church seeks to include all people and that to be one with Christ is to be joined with all those whom Christ calls into relationship with him. Sections II.C and III.A of the October 15, 2013, Background Paper leading up to the Strategic Plan recognized declining membership in Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (LPC) as our congregation ages and recommended taking aggressive action to slow, stop, and reverse this trend. Despite discussing many initiatives that may lead to increased membership, however, it did not articulate specific goals and objectives related to membership growth.

The Membership Ministry Group has not received direction from the Strategic Plan or from Session regarding initiatives and programs to increase membership. Additionally, while Section 6 of the Session Handbook describes the responsibilities of the Membership Ministry Group, many of these documented responsibilities are outdated or in conflict with other Ministry Groups' functions. Nor does the Handbook provide guidance with regard to the Membership Ministry Group's structure, composition, principles, goals or objectives. Indeed, the Session Handbook does not even articulate a goal of attracting new members!

Discussion

Despite the recognized need to actively attract, recruit, and enlist new members at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (LPC), the Membership Ministry Group has not met for at least ten months and does not have a Chairperson. Past members of the Membership Ministry Group with whom STF spoke have great enthusiasm and ideas for activities for the Group but expressed concern that they did not want to overstep or infringe on functions performed by other Ministry Groups. While acknowledging the need for renewed focus on recruiting new members via evangelism or otherwise as a key need of the church and a key activity of this Group, they also discussed and lamented a lack of a sense of direction.

The past members indicated that there was no designated staff member or Session liaison to the Group and felt that many of their past suggestions regarding different initiatives designed to attract newcomers, e.g., experimenting with different service times, experimenting with holding Sunday school at the same time as a service, experimenting with advertising, etc., did not find appropriate channels for evaluation or action. They also reported that they did not have a clear understanding of what LPC wants to do in the Tysons area.

Recommendations

1. Merge the Membership Ministry Group into the Membership and Congregational Care Ministry Group, which is the new name of the Parish Life and Care Ministry Group. Inclusion of the membership functions and activities as a Committee under the Membership and Congregational Care Ministry Group will emphasize the importance of attracting new members and help provide a seamless integration of church-goers from their initial visit, to membership and in due course to their on-going participation in the congregation of LPC.
2. Redraft the membership portion of the Session Handbook to reflect this new structure and to provide specific guidance regarding the Membership Committee's establishment, structure, composition (including designated staff and Session liaisons), principles, responsibilities, goals and objectives.
3. Session identify one or two key initiatives for the Membership Committee to undertake and have the Membership Committee provide recommendations to the other Ministry Groups regarding initiatives and actions designed to achieve those initiatives.
4. Establish metrics for the Membership Committee to direct, assist and encourage them in seeking new members.

Parish Life and Care Ministry Group (PL&C)

Background

The STF reviewed the Strategic Plan and Section 8 of the Session Handbook. Parish, Life and Care (PL&C) meets on a regular basis (approximately every other month), maintains minutes (including minutes from the Older Adult Council), and is generally well staffed. The Associate Pastor attends PL&C meetings and provides staff support. In May 2002, in an attempt to foster a stronger visitor outreach and new member integration program, a separate Membership Ministry Group was formed from elements of PL&C. (It is discussed above in the Membership section of this report.)

PL&C meetings primarily consist of reports about various activities. It is responsible for a substantial number of activities, but those responsible for each activity operate independently from one another.

Following the implementation of the Strategic Plan in May 2014, PL&C worked to implement several recommendations as called out in Section II.C of the plan and Section G.5 of the associated Background Paper. Progress has been slow due to committee vacancies.

Discussion

PL&C consists of a number of important but seemingly unrelated activities such as the Card Ministry, Cradle Roll, PL&C callers, hospitality teams to prepare and serve coffee, the blood drive, etc. Some important Church functions that were formerly under PL&C and moved to the Membership MG when it was formed are either being done by staff, or not being addressed at all. Examples include coordinating the Greeters Program (staff support only); visitor follow-up (staff support only) and the Shepherds Program (currently suspended). The Shepherds Program was designed to help new members integrate into the life of the Church. It worked by matching current members with new members in the same demographic.

The Volunteer Coordinator lay position is also vacant. Volunteer data information is being input into the Fellowship One database, but is not being used to recruit volunteers because no one has the ability to access the data and the Fellowship One software is very cumbersome. At this point, Fellowship One is an impediment to PL&C carrying out its responsibilities. Staff and lay leadership need training or the tool itself should be evaluated and perhaps replaced by a more user-friendly system that links with other LPC databases.

The Cluster database has been reviewed and re-organized and will soon be incorporated. This is being done in close collaboration with the Management Ministry Group (MMG).

Recommendations

1. Merge the Membership Ministry Group back into PL&C as a Committee in order to provide a higher profile for New Member initiatives, provide for better follow up and integration into LPC, improve communication and re-invigorate activities such as Visitor Outreach, the Shepherds Program and the Greeters Program.
2. Change the name of the Parish Life and Care Ministry Group to the Membership and Congregational Care Ministry Group to highlight the importance of attracting and keeping new members and provide greater focus for all related activities.
3. Merge the Young Adult Catalyst Group into Parish Life & Care as a Committee to provide greater opportunities for overall integration into LPC activities.
4. Establish priorities, key initiatives, metrics, etc. for the Membership Committee working with Session to direct, assist and encourage them in seeking new members.
5. Work with the Management Ministry Group on a Task Force to review the suitability of Fellowship One for continued use by LPC.

Worship Ministry Group (WMG)

Background

Sections G-1.0101 and W-7.0000 of The Book of Order remind us that a congregation reaches out to people, communities and the world to share the good news of Jesus Christ and to gather for worship. The October 15, 2013, Background Paper leading up to the Strategic Plan recognized that changing demographics necessitate considering changes in worship services at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church (LPC). Finding No. 5 of the Background Paper discussed adding services in different formats and times to appeal to younger prospects and current members, using technology in the services, such as video, audio, and photographs, altering the seating in the sanctuary, offering communion more frequently and involving younger members more frequently and widely in the worship services.

The Strategic Plan expands these initiatives suggesting the involvement of a cross section of the congregation in the leadership of worship and encouraging more active congregational participation during the service. The Background Paper and Strategic Plan discuss many initiatives that may lead to invigorated worship but do not articulate specific goals and objectives related to adapting worship services and membership growth. Additionally, while Section 9 of the Session Handbook describes the responsibilities of the Worship Ministry Group, it does not provide guidance with regard to the Worship Ministry Group's composition, succession, principles, goals or objectives.

Discussion

The Worship Ministry Group meets regularly and includes a wide cross section of members with different interests and responsibilities. The Session Handbook documents the functions of the Worship Ministry Group, but the Group indicated that there are no job descriptions of the members. Nonetheless, the Group carries out the tasks outlined in the Session Handbook. The Worship Ministry Group Session liaison reports to the Group the discussions and actions of the Session but the Group do not receive copies of the Session minutes. The Group reported that

the church staff provides strong support and helps coordinate functions. There does not appear to be a succession plan for the Worship Ministry Group.

The Strategic Plan weaves worship initiatives into the plan and encourages additional experimentation with worship services. The Session has not identified specific directives and/or initiatives for the Group. For example, there has been no real focus on involving children, youth or young families in the overall worship service. The primary responsibilities of the Worship Group and worship's central place in the life of the congregation cause the Group to be very inward looking.

Recommendations

1. Encourage the Worship Ministry Group to reach out to the other Ministry Groups with an eye toward adapting worship services to appeal to a broader constituency, e.g., attract young families, residents and workers from the Tysons area and other potential new members.
2. Session, in cooperation with the Worship Ministry Group, identify one or two key initiatives for the Group to undertake in support of appealing to a broader constituency and to track initiatives and progress, including the initiatives identified in the Background Paper and Strategic Plan.

Communications Ministry Group (CMG)

Background

The STF reviewed the recommendations in Section IV.D of the Strategic Plan to establish a Communications Ministry Group, but there is no corresponding section in the Session Handbook outlining its structure and composition, its principles, nor its goals and objectives because it was only recently established. The Communications Ministry Group provides oversight for all communications vehicles at LPC. It is currently responsible for overseeing the web site, the monthly bulletin, the newsletter, digital displays, pew rack information, calendars, the youth fellowship newsletter, the children's newsletter, the Facebook page and many other forms of internal and external communications, as well as developing a consistent and unified brand message and appearance.

Discussion

The role of the Communications Ministry Group is to provide needed support to other Ministry Groups (MGs) but operating as a standalone MG has not served the goal of improved internal and external communications well. There is an absence of coordination between MGs on the topic of internal and external communications and little awareness of the desirability or goal of consistent brand messaging. The absence of a church administrator may be impacting the work of this MG.

Recommendations

1. Merge the Communications Ministry Group into the Management Ministry Group umbrella, remove the designation of MG and make this group a Committee. This would allow it to better coordinate other Ministry Group requirements, foster both internal and external communication improvements and provide the chair of the Communications Committee with

a regular schedule for meetings with other chairs within the Management Ministry Group.

2. Designate a current staff member to provide staff support directly to the Communications Committee and other Ministry Groups and Committees within LPC requiring communication services.
3. Revise the Session Handbook to outline the responsibilities of the Communications Committee. Note that Section II.E.4 of the Management Ministry Group already contains certain related information.

Management Ministry Group (MMG)

Background

The Management Ministry Group (MMG) has not been operating as described in Section 5 of the Session Handbook.

Pages 501-2 of the Session Handbook are inconsistent about whether the Chair of MMG must be a Ruling Elder currently on Session and whether there is a co-chair who is also an Elder currently on Session. There is also inconsistency on page 501 as to whether the Chair of MMG is assigned by the Pastor or appointed by Session. Similarly, there is inconsistency on pages 501-2 as to whether there are to be four or five Committees under the MMG, i.e., Administration, Finance, Stewardship, Personnel, and possibly Staff/Pastoral Support. There is also inconsistency between pages 502 and 545 as to whether the Chair of Personnel must be a sitting Session member.

Currently the MMG Chair is not a Sitting Session member, there is no co-chair, the Chair of the Personnel Committee is not a sitting Session member, Administration is actually functioning as MMG and there is no Staff/Pastoral Support Committee. The Session Handbook also calls for liaison with other Ministry Groups, which does not appear to be happening, nor is there a definition of the function and duties of Session Liaisons.

Discussion

Meetings of MMG over the past two years have not occurred on a regular basis nor on a consistent day of the month. When they have occurred, the meetings have primarily been concerned with matters of Building and Grounds. While members of Personnel and Finance usually attend the meetings and may report what is going on in their Committees, decisions in those areas are made in their individual Committees rather than in the MMG meetings, and those representatives feel that sitting through discussions of Buildings and Grounds or the Cemetery is not a good use of their time.

Not all of the Committees meet regularly and Chairs of the Committees are not rotated on a regular basis. Finance meetings are not held on a regular basis, and its work is carried out by the long-term Chairman of that Committee.

There has been a persistent problem of Session not receiving current financial reports due to lack of available time between the monthly close of LPC's books, review by the Church Treasurer and Session meetings which are held on the second Tuesday of the month.

Finance, Stewardship, and Personnel Committees operate independently of the rest of MMG, and of one another, and generally report directly to Session rather than via the MMG. Budget discussions begin well before the outcome of the annual Stewardship campaign is known and must be based on projections of expected income rather than actual pledges received.

The Session Handbook has inconsistencies regarding the structure of the Personnel Committee and its leadership. Additionally, the Personnel Committee has reported directly to Session on all personnel matters.

Currently, the Handbook has the Committee on the Pastorate (COMPAS) appointed by the Personnel Committee. This structure has divorced the Session from its important function of pastoral review. Additionally, Session members view the scope of the COMPAS report provided to the Session as inadequate.

The Administration function of the MMG is currently hampered by the lack of a church administrator.

The Administration Committee has the responsibility of maintaining and updating the Session Handbook, which it has not done recently. Recent updates have been prepared jointly by current and/or former Clerks of Session.

The Cemetery Committee is identified in the Session Handbook as the Archives and Cemetery Subcommittee with responsibility for reviewing and preserving church records, as well as managing the sale of plots and maintenance of the church cemetery. It appears that those responsibilities have been handled by a single individual rather than by a committee.

An absence of guidance from Session in the formulation of the annual budget potentially results in a budget with no strategic focus. The STF concluded that the Finance Committee requires early direction from the Session regarding budget priorities critical to supporting annual and on-going initiatives. Currently, Session provides no input to the Finance Committee in advance of the budget formulation process, leaving the Finance Committee to rely on historical budget allocations without consideration of strategic initiatives.

Current staff positions, as related to the MMG, do not align well with the Strategic Plan, staff job descriptions are outdated for LPC's current circumstances and there is concern and confusion about how staff positions need to be adjusted to conform to the Strategic Plan and LPC's current circumstances.

There is little or no staff or lay expertise in using the Fellowship One software and a widespread impression that it is so cumbersome and difficult to use that it would be better to start over and find a package that 1) is more user friendly, and 2) will communicate with other church software, particularly the financial software. If we continue to use it, staff and lay expertise/ownership must be developed.

There are numerous references in the Session Handbook to the responsibilities of a Church Administrator, but that position is presently vacant, the 2016 budget does not contemplate filling it and the duties have not been assigned to other staff members.

Recommendations

1. Revise the Session Handbook to eliminate inconsistencies in the structure and membership of MMG. Clarify whether Session members on Management Ministry Group and its committees must be currently sitting Elders.

2. Require that the Chairs of the Management Ministry Group, Personnel Committee, and Administration Committee be sitting Elders and that the Chair of the Administration Committee likewise serve as Vice-Chair of the Management Ministry Group.
3. Change the name of the Administration Committee to the Facilities Committee.
4. The Management Ministry Group is comprised of Chairs and Vice-Chairs (where applicable) of the Facilities, Finance, Stewardship, Personnel and Communications Committees. Require that all Committees meet on a regular basis (Stewardship only in Stewardship season) and provide all updates and recommendations requiring Session action on a timely basis to the MMG Chair and Vice-Chair.
5. Require that the Management Ministry Group (MMG) meet at least quarterly, or more often on an as needed basis for items that need to be coordinated across the Committees or approved by Session. All recommendations to Session must be reviewed and come as a recommendation from the MMG rather than directly from any given Committee, except with respect to confidential Personnel Committee matters, which are reported directly to Session.
6. The Committee on the Pastorate (COMPAS) should report directly to Session. COMPAS should consist of three sitting elders to be selected by Session rather than the structure currently set forth in the Session Handbook. The Session will work with COMPAS to identify the scope of the report that COMPAS will provide to Session.
7. As noted in the Communications section in this report, merge the Communications Ministry Group into MMG as a Committee.
8. Establish a Task Force, which includes representation from the Membership & the Congregational Care Ministry Group and other stakeholders, to review the suitability of Fellowship One for continued use by LPC. Train staff members and lay leadership on any software adopted and utilized.

9. Fulfill the functions of a Church Administrator either by hiring or assigning existing staff to serve in this capacity. The STF recommends that the Personnel Committee assist the Head of Staff in evaluating the existing job description for the Church Administrator position and revise it if necessary.
10. The STF recommends that the Personnel Committee assist the Head of Staff, in coordination with others of his choosing, in developing appropriate and reasonable metrics and goals to annually evaluate the staff.
11. Confirm that both the Treasurer and Finance Committee have reviewed LPC's monthly financial reports prior to submission to Session's regular monthly meeting.

Congregational Nominating Committee

Background

Section G-2.0401 of the Book of Order requires that ruling elders and deacons shall “express the rich diversity of the congregation’s membership and shall guarantee participation and inclusiveness.” It also states that the Nominating Committee must have “at least three active members of the congregation, and ... one ruling elder who is currently serving on the session... [and that] the pastor shall serve *ex officio* and without vote.” Section G-2.0802 specifically provides for election of a Pastor Nominating Committee.

Section 3 in the Session Handbook states that the Congregational Nominating Committee is chosen by the congregation. It is comprised of two Ruling Elders elected by Session, one of whom serves as Chairman, at least 4 at-large members elected from and by the congregation, and a representative of the Deacons. The Pastors serve *ex officio*. No member may serve for more than two years consecutively.

Responsibilities of the Nominating Committee include nominating Ruling Elders, Deacons, Nominating Committee members, members of the LPC Foundation, the Clerk of Session, the Church Treasurer, and Ministry Group Chairs. The Clerk, Treasurer, and Ministry Group chairs are elected by Session; other positions are elected by the congregation at its annual meeting. At the request of the Pastors, the Nominating Committee is also responsible to recommend 1) Ruling Elders for service on boards, agencies, and committees of Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly, and 2) church members for service on community boards and agencies. Neither the Background Paper nor the Strategic Plan addressed the Nominating Committee.

Discussion

The Nominating Committee obtains recommendations from the congregation. Additionally, in practice both the Deacons and the Lewinsville Presbyterian Church Foundation forward the names of nominees to the Nominating Committee for consideration. While the Session Handbook limits members of the Nominating Committee to two consecutive years of service, the current chair of the Nominating Committee has served for three years. There is currently no requirement in the Session Handbook that the Nominating Committee include a ruling elder currently serving on Session.

Recommendations

1. Modify the Session Handbook to include a requirement, consistent with the Book of Order, that one of the ruling elders elected by Session to serve on the Nominating Committee must be currently serving on Session.
2. Establish a succession plan whereby the Nominating Committee Chair serves a one-year term and a Vice chair serves for one year prior to rotating into the Chair position. This would provide training and consistency in this important Committee while reducing the significant obligations on one person serving as Chair for a lengthy period of time.
3. Modify the Session Handbook to specify that the Pastors, who serve ex officio, do so without a vote, as required by Section G-2.0401 of the Book of Order.

Recommendations that Apply to All Ministry Groups

The Structural Task Force has a number of recommendations that apply to all of the Ministry Groups. Many of these address general observations noted at the beginning of this report.

1. The Chairs of all the Ministry Groups should meet together at least quarterly. The purpose of these meetings is to coordinate activities/planning across Ministry Groups, particularly with respect to the Strategic Plan.
2. Terms of office and succession plans for all Ministry Groups and Committees should be established.
3. The terms of Chairs of Ministry Groups and Finance, Personnel, and COMPAS Committees should not exceed three consecutive years.
4. All vacancies in Chairs and Vice-chairs should be filled.
5. A standard part of each Ministry Group meeting should include a discussion of the Strategic Plan and activities the MG is undertaking or planning with respect to recommendations in the Strategic Plan. The Session liaison to each Ministry Group should play a key role in these discussions.
6. Meetings of Ministry Groups should have a more substantive and strategic focus, such as planning new activities, establishing priorities, coordinating joint activities with other groups, and considering sun-setting activities. Information of a more routine nature can be shared among members electronically.
7. Each Ministry Group should develop a Charter that describes the purpose, goals, composition and structure of the Group for approval by Session. The charters for Faith and Public Policy Committee and the Older Adult (Council) Committee can serve as models for other groups.

8. Ministry Groups and Committees should be aware of and perform their respective duties as called for in the (revised) Session Handbook.

Recommendations about the Role and Operation of Session

The Structural Task Force found that Session tends to play a reactive, rather than a proactive role. In particular, the Session has not played a strong leadership role with regard to the Strategic Plan and the budget process. The recommendations below are intended to strengthen the Session's role.

1. The Session should work with each Ministry Group to establish annual goals, objectives, key initiatives and measurement metrics, including ones related to the Strategic Plan. Session liaisons can play a major role in facilitating this process and promoting consistency across groups in the level of detail and specificity in what is adopted.
2. Session should provide direction to the Ministry Groups to ensure that the Strategic Plan and other initiatives are considered appropriately in the goals and activities of the Ministry Groups.
3. Session should play a leadership role in budget preparation by establishing priorities consistent with the Strategic Plan and other initiatives at the start of the budget preparation cycle. Session should provide direction and communicate those priorities to the Ministry Groups and the Finance Committee.
4. A Task Force should revise the Session Handbook material for all Ministry Groups and committees to eliminate inconsistencies within the material for each group, to reduce variation across groups in what is covered and the amount of detail provided, and to reflect the recommendations of this Task Force. The role of Session liaison should be defined and duties identified.

5. Session should provide for education and training of all Ministry Groups and Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs to perform their respective duties as called for in the (revised) Session Handbook.
6. The agenda for every regular Session meeting should include time for discussion of the Strategic Plan and its implementation, and an Executive Session.
7. Session should consider the desirability of moving the annual Session Retreat from Fall to Spring, beginning in 2017. This may facilitate Session involvement in discussions of planning for the upcoming program year and begin discussions about setting budget priorities for the next calendar year.
8. Session should work with the Head of Staff, in coordination with the Personnel Committee and others of his choosing to realign the staff positions in accordance with the goals and implementation of the Strategic Plan and this Report.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the Structural Task Force found the leaders and members of Lewinsville Presbyterian Church Ministry Groups and Committees to be hard working and dedicated, but hampered by 1) a series of structural deficiencies, 2) inconsistent and confusing Session Handbook guidance, and 3) inadequate knowledge of, or considerations related to, the Strategic Plan.

Similarly, Session appeared generally reactive rather than proactive and has not yet taken a strong leadership role in explaining, pursuing and directing the Ministry Groups and implementing the Strategic Plan.

The Structural Task Force has prepared a separate document entitled “Session Action Requested” implementing the Findings and Recommendations in this Report and will be prepared to answer any substantive questions at the Specially Called Session Meeting scheduled for May 3, 2016.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service.

On Behalf of the Structural Task Force

April 12, 2016

Roy S. Mitchell, Chair

Pamela M. Deese

Mary J. Frase

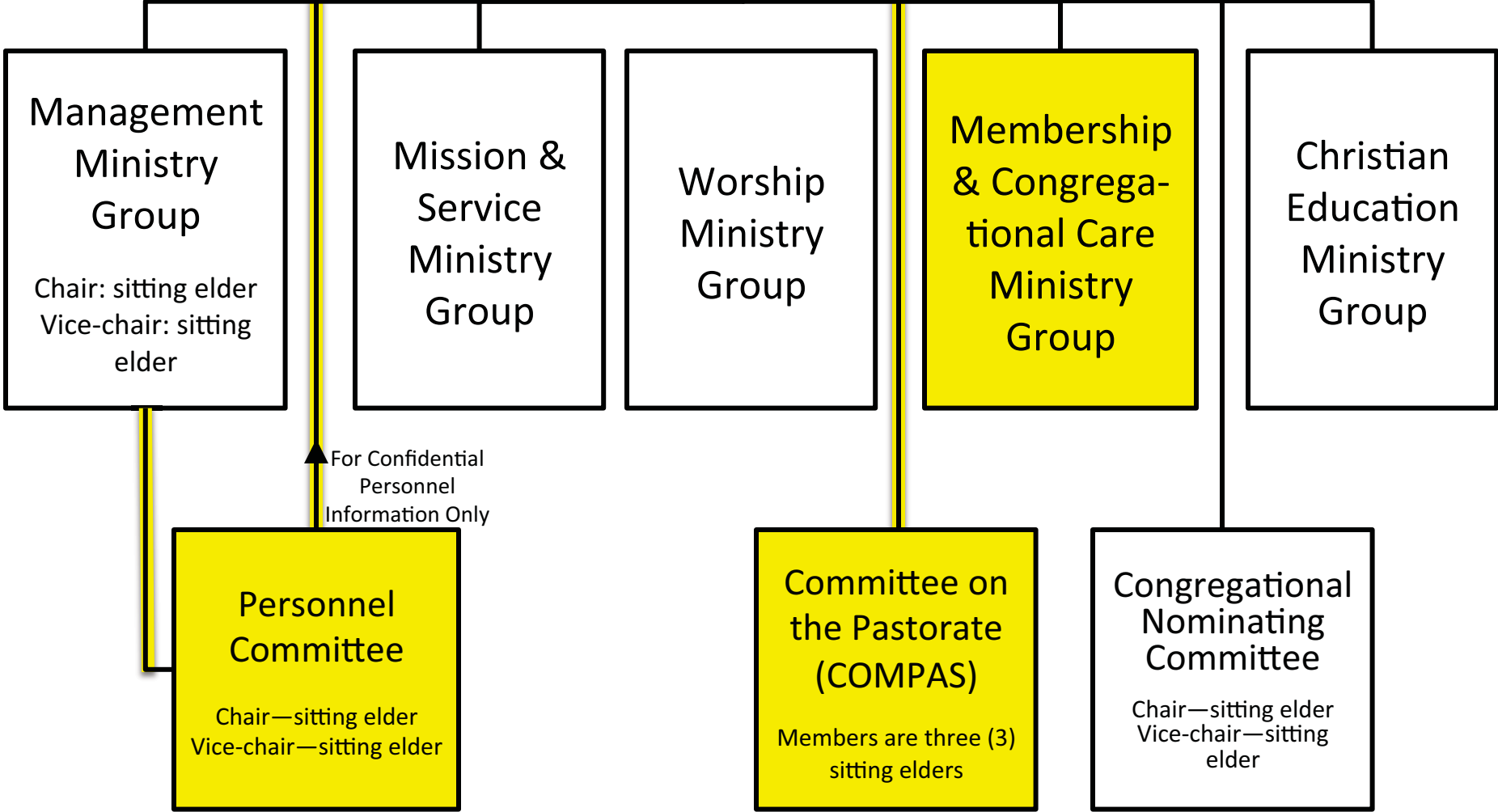
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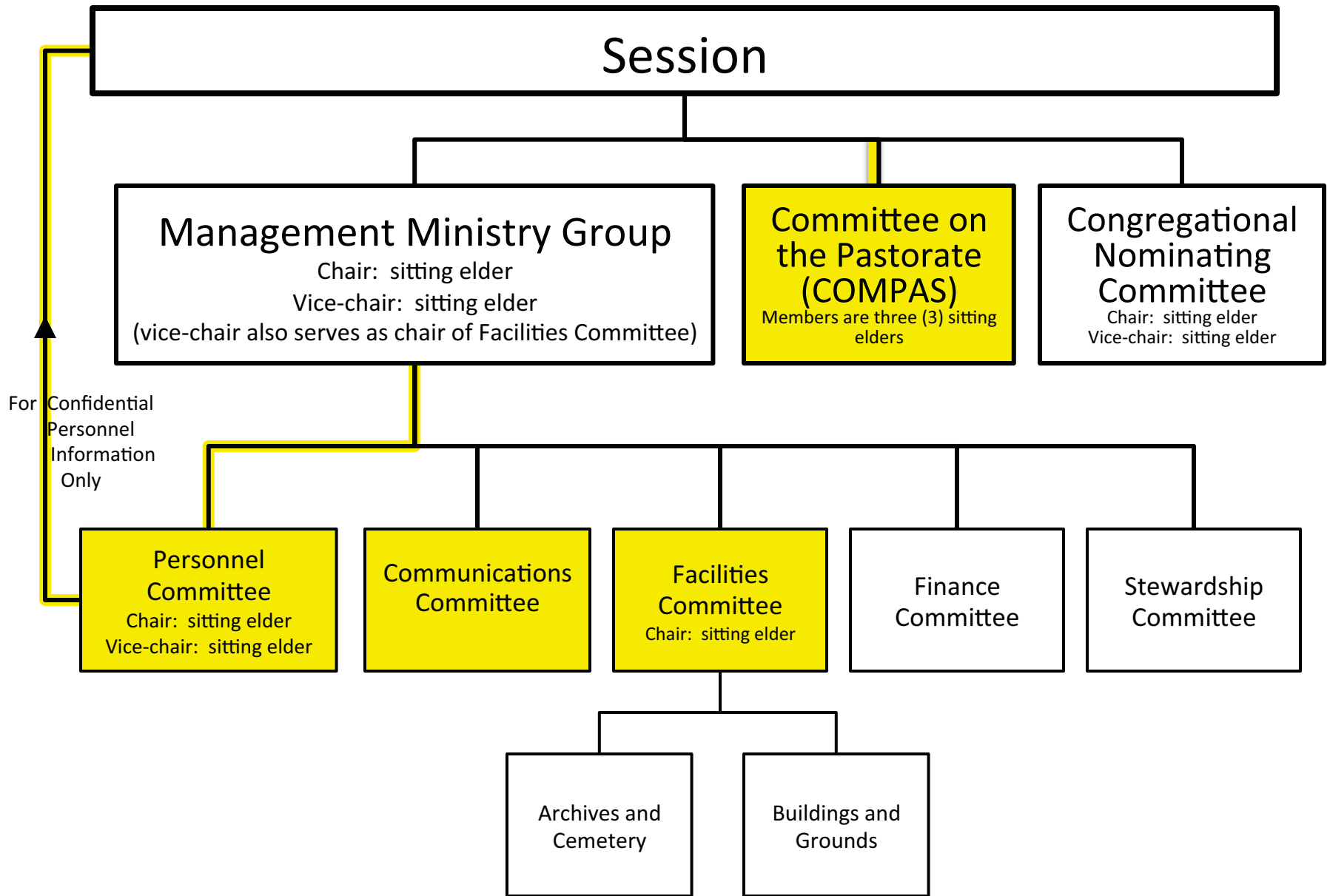
Joseph A. Parisi

In consultation with

Rev. Scott Ramsey

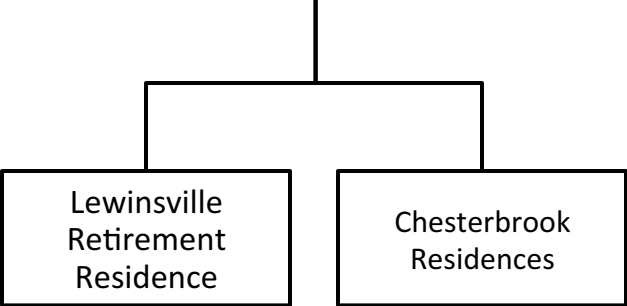
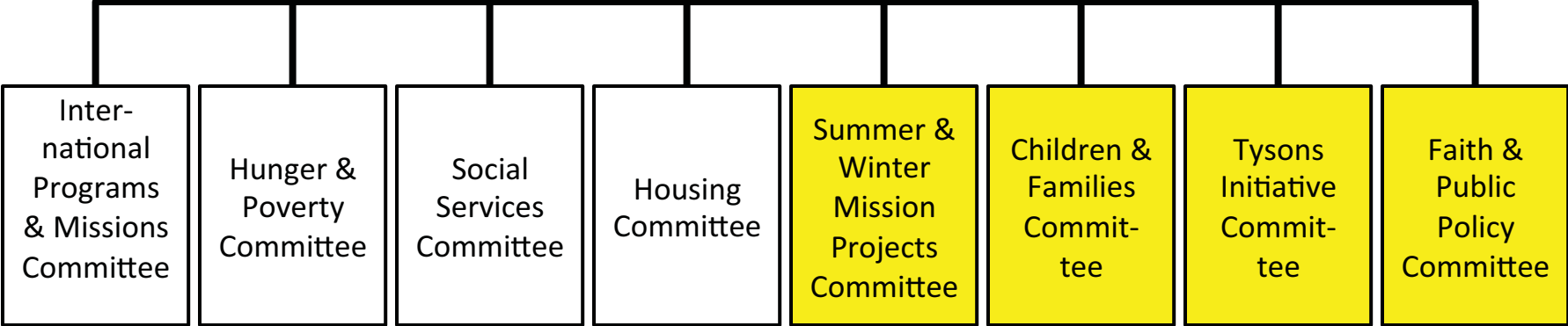
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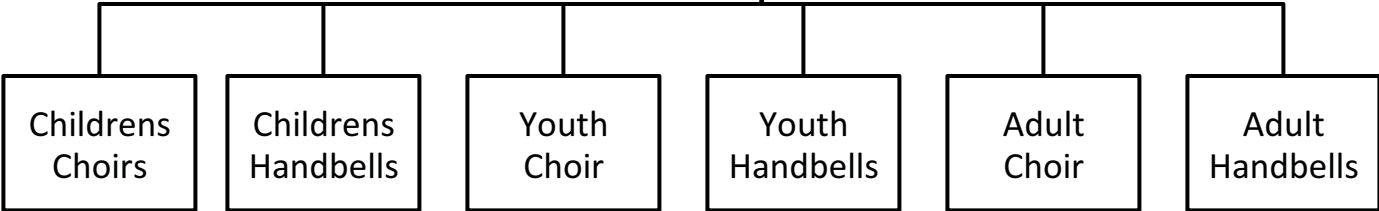
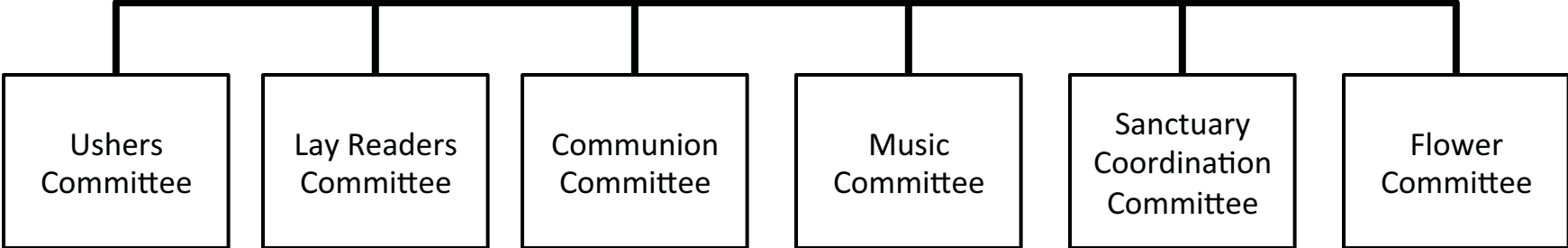
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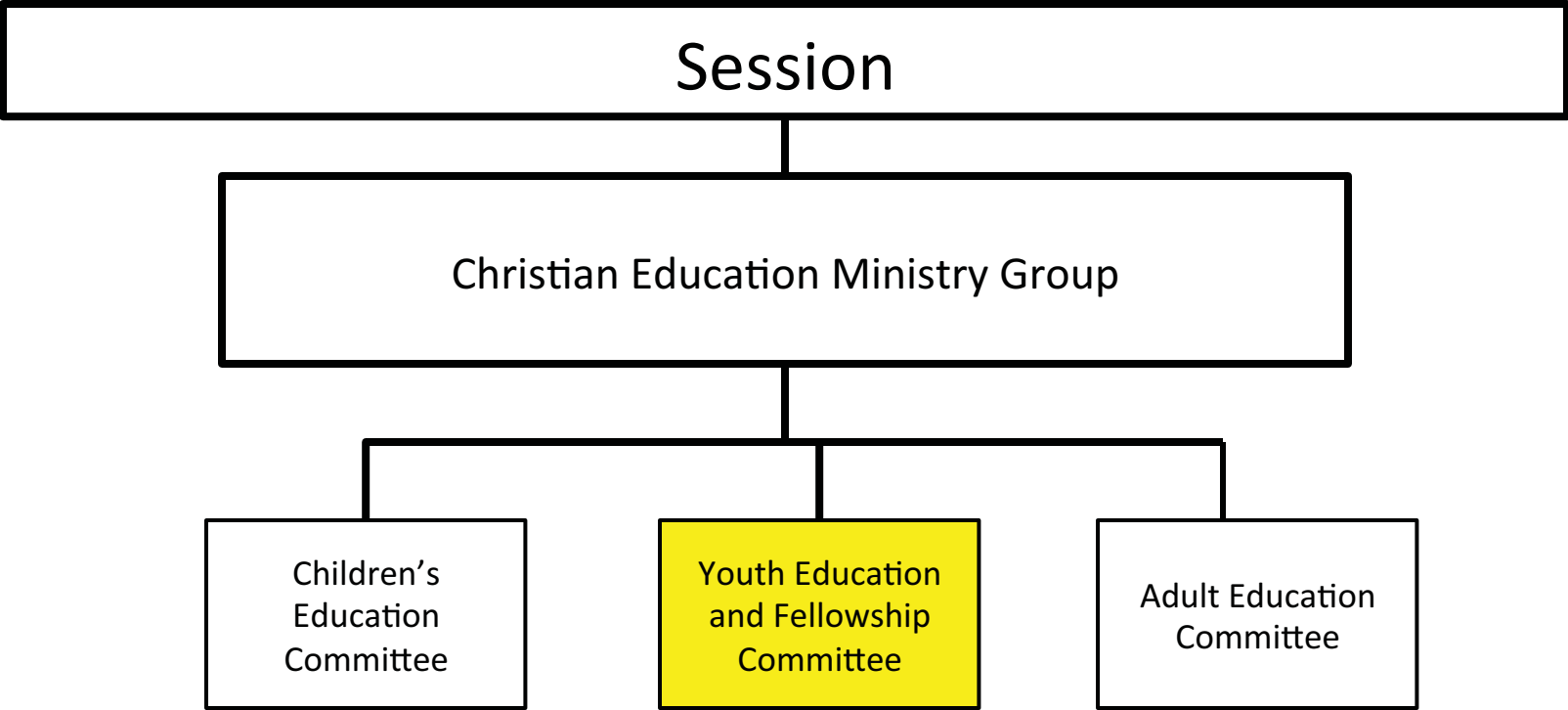
Mission & Service Ministry Group



Session

Worship Ministry Group





Session

Membership & Congregational Care Ministry Group

