

# Bylaw Changes: Informational Packet (REVISED)

January 14, 2020

## Contents

Church Size Theory and Covenant ..... 2

Bylaw Changes ..... 8

Transition Plan for Elder Elections and Ministry Team Leadership ..... 9

“Ask Alban: The Right Board Size” ..... 13

“How to Design Small Decision Making Groups” ..... 15

Applying Combination Math to Covenant’s Bylaw Proposal ..... 19

“Board Size and Nonprofit Governance” ..... 22

Frequently Asked Questions ..... 25

## Church Size Theory and Covenant

A valid question would be: why should we take action based on a field of research called “church size theory?” We’ve made it this far without it, why pay attention now?

### **Confronting our Past**

First - we should pay attention to any research that might help us grow. We have made long-term financial commitments because 15 years ago our elders believed that God was calling us to grow to twice our average size, so that we could eventually reach 600 people every Sunday with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Instead, we still have the long-term financial commitment (4 million dollars remaining on our mortgage) but we are reaching the lowest number of people on a Sunday since 1986. We have declined every year for 7 years in worship attendance. This last year in 2019 our average worship attendance was 242 people. That’s a decline of roughly 35 percent in worship attendance since our maximum average worship attendance in 2003 of 373. Of those who are attending, very few of our youth attend worship. Very few singles in their 20s and 30s attend worship. A modest number of young families attend worship (though there is some hopeful growth in this area). Our faithful “Generation X” and late “Baby Boomers,” who have been attending and giving sacrificially are now traveling more frequently to keep in touch with adult children and aging parents and are attending less. Our early Baby Boomers and Silent Generation - including several members who are 100 years old - continue to participate strongly. We are averaging about 15 funerals a year but are beginning to see net membership growth again. However, our worship attendance has not yet rebounded.

To summarize, our 15-year vision was to double in size. Instead, during that period we shrank by a third.

### **Church Size Theory is Highly Explanatory for Covenant**

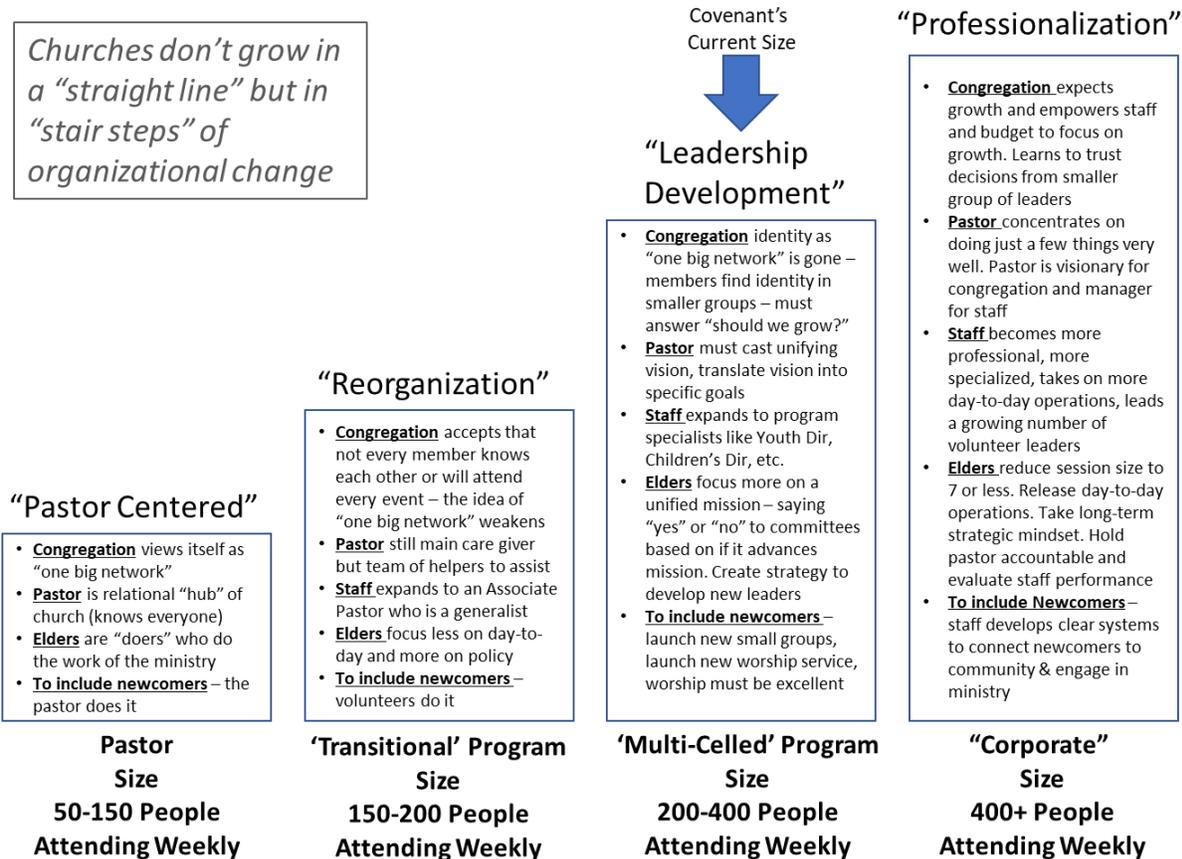
Second - the research from Church Size Theory maps closely with Covenant’s own attendance history. In other words, their theory matches our data. Because this theory explains our past with clarity, we ought to pay attention to any insights it might offer our future.

Church size theory was originally pioneered (against all expectations!) by an episcopal priest who was working as a consultant on evangelism for the Episcopal Church in the 1980’s. His name is Arlin J. Rothauge and his book “Sizing up a Congregation for New Member Ministry” pioneered this area of research. So this theory does not come out of a “fundamentalist” or “non denominational” background, but straight out of our own mainline context. The most respected consulting group for mainline churches (like Presbyterians (USA)) for many decades has been the Alban Institute. One of their consultants, Susan Beaumont, specialized in this field and has worked with many PC(USA) churches in implementing its findings. Her book “Inside the Large

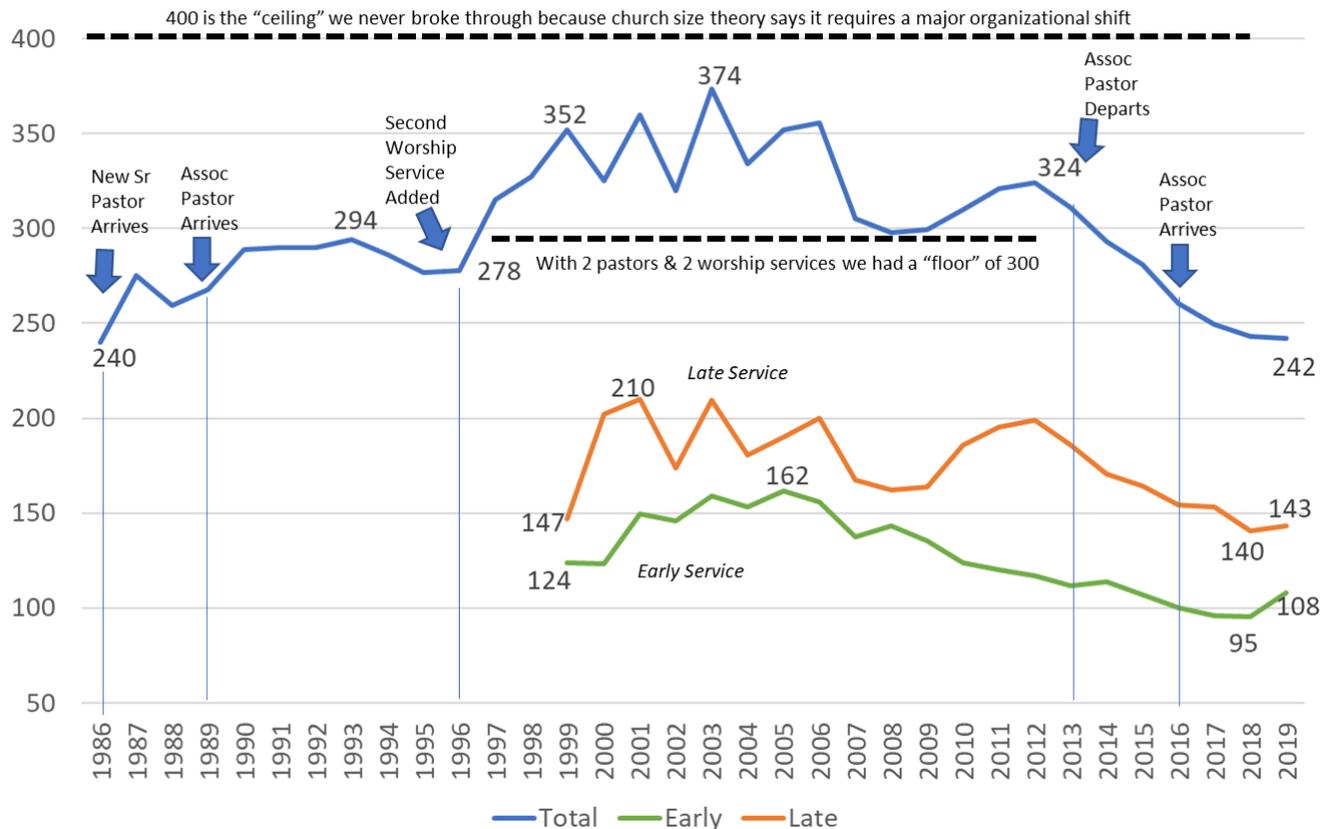
Congregation” (The Alban Institute, 2011) is a masterwork and well worth reading for those interested in further study. Beaumont crystalizes the core observations of Church Size theory by arguing that worship attendance on Sunday morning is directly proportional to a congregation’s behavior in 5 key areas:

- (1) Senior Clergy Leadership,
- (2) Staff team design & function,
- (3) Governance & board function,
- (4) Congregational attitude and engagement of new members,
- (5) Forming & executing strategy

## Summary of Church Size Theory



## Typical Weekly Worship Attendance at Covenant



Throughout Covenant’s 62-year history, attendance seems to have hovered between 250 and 350 - though attendance records prior to the 1990’s are spotty. Communion counts indicate that when Hal Oakley arrived in 1986 attendance was typically around 240 people.

Church Size Theory would explain several of the key “catalysts in Covenant’s growth and decline over the last 33 years.

- (1) Hal arrives in 1986 and engages category (1) “senior clergy leadership,” which gave Covenant a “boost” from 240 to 275, but was not sustainable without the support of an Associate Pastor
- (2) The arrival of an Associate Pastor in 1989 and other key ministry staff that followed showed Covenant engaging the category (2) “staff team design,” this permitted Covenant to grow to almost 300 in worship, but they again hit a ceiling in 1993 and pulled back.
- (6) The launch of a new worship service in 1996 radically expanded the congregation’s ability to reach new members, engaging category (4) “Congregational attitude and engagement of new members,” this initiated a 17-year period where Covenant served

over 300 people every weekend. The congregational strategy of two worship services and the staff model of 2 pastors sustained this 300+ level of worship attendance. At its very best, in 2003, Covenant had 374 people on average attending. It looked like we would break through to 400, and we hoped that we would grow to 600 when our building was expanded. However, 400 proved to be a ceiling that we did not break. This 400 “barrier” has been widely experienced by many churches. Church size theory suggests that major shifts must happen in all five organizational categories before a congregation can consistently welcome more than 400 people in worship.

- (7) In 2013 Covenant took a step backwards in Church size theory when the associate pastor departed and the budget did not permit hiring a new associate pastor until 2016. During these three years, our organization in category (2) “Staff Team design and function,” took a step down the staircase. We operated more like a church of 150 people in attendance, which have only one pastor. The mismatch between our large size and small staffing model resulted in rapid decline in worship attendance.
- (8) With the arrival of an associate pastor in 2016, Covenant once again engaged category (2) “Staff Team Design and Function” by having two pastors. The decline stabilized at roughly the historic 62-year floor of around 250 in worship. In fact, decline continued but at a slower rate, ending almost exactly where Hal began at 242 in worship attendance at the end of 2019.

### **What Does Church Size Theory Suggest for Our Future?**

In looking at our past we see that we were able to grow very faithfully when we engaged just three of the five categories that Beaumont outlines. I underline them on the list here:

- (1) **Senior Clergy Leadership,**
- (2) **Staff team design & function,**
- (3) Governance & board function,
- (4) **Congregational attitude and engagement of new members,**
- (5) Forming & executing strategy

Simply by having strong leadership from the Senior Pastor (1), having an Associate Pastor to share some of the Senior Pastor’s load (2), and launching a new worship service (4), we were able to grow to 374 and consistently sustain attendance over 300 for almost decades. That’s incredible! We should feel very proud of this achievement in faithfulness to God’s calling to share the gospel.

Church Size Theory would suggest that if we simply do the same thing over again, we will get the same result.

If we work hard for the next 10 years with 2 pastors and 2 worship services, we could probably expect 375 to be our very best year of attendance and for a more sustainable average of around 300.

However, we should also expect that without making some organizational changes, we will also be equally as vulnerable if a financial crisis meant we could not afford 2 pastors. Just like in the 2013-2016 period, we would see our church decline down closer to 150 until we could afford to hire a new associate pastor.

And what about our goal of reading 600 people on a Sunday? This seems large (and it is!) but it's really only two "full" worship services in our current sanctuary that seats 375 people.

To break beyond our historic "400 ceiling" that we experienced in 2003, Church Size Theory would urge us to engage the missing 2 categories: (3) Governance & Board Function, and (5) Forming and executing strategy.

The proposed bylaw changes for the January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the congregation at 9:45 in the Sanctuary are the current Elder's plan for doing exactly this.

During 11 months Covenant's session took an online course by a pastor, Carey Nieuwhof, who has successfully used Church Size Theory to grow churches, called *Breaking 200 without Breaking You*. They read research from Susan Beaumont and others. Every month every elder prayed over the five bibles in our sanctuary that represent the next five people that our congregation will reach for Christ and read the parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15:3-7. We read the Deuteronomy 1:9-18, where Moses realizes that he needs to change the organizational structure of Israel, He introduces a corporate model of governance with leaders of thousands over leaders of hundreds over leaders of fifties over leaders of tens.

After many long hours of discussion and conversation, the session has a plan to renovate our "Governance & Board Function (3)" and our approach to "Forming and Executing Strategy (5)."

### **"Governance & Board Function"**

In accordance with recommendations of Church Size Theory, they are proposing that the Session be reduced from 14 people (12 elders and 2 pastors) to 8 people (6 elders and 2 pastors). This smaller size will help the Session to make complex decisions effectively and efficiently. Similarly the board of Trustees will be reduced from 12 people to 9 people. The reporting structure between these two powerful governance bodies will be streamlined by merging the Administration team into the Trustees. The Session will be a small decision-making group when it needs to be, but will be in constant communication with the board of Trustees and will meet jointly with the Board of Trustees at critical moments (like budget development) to ensure that a wide and wise cohort is weighing in from the congregation.

## **“Forming and Executing Strategy”**

One of the most effective and powerful groups in our recent past has been the Special Ops Team. The Special Ops Team is responsible for many of our most successful Strategic Planning initiatives. This group acted as highly-talented and highly-dedicated team that began documenting all of our ministries and systems into a manual of operations, digitizing all of our records and policies, executing a congregation-wide survey of our culture (the CHAT survey), and clarifying our mission, vision and strategic goals. This is also the group that orchestrated the pastoral transition plan that resulted in a wonderfully smooth glide into a new senior pastorate.

We have a great track record here in creating strategy. But now we need to take a next step in *executing* our strategy.

The current proposal is that the Session itself would take on the responsibility of strategic planning that was formerly carried out by Special Ops.

As the highest governing body in the church, this will mean that once strategy is understood and agreed on by the elders, they can immediately enact policies to execute these strategies.

We believe that by empowering the session to form and execute strategy we will see progress in this challenging growth area.

We invite you to attend one of the many listening sessions with the elders or pastoral office hours with the pastor. It is our sincere prayer that together we will all prayerfully work to implement our mission:

*To make disciples of Jesus Christ who love God, love one another and serve in the world.*

## Bylaw Changes

### **BYLAW CHANGES** **(REVISED RECOMMENDATION 1/14/2020)**

Explanatory Note: Based on the feedback received during the first 4 listening groups, the session met on Tuesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> and revised their recommended amendment to make the requirements stricter for approving an action so that the voice of the congregation is protected. The amendment now requires that at least three (3) ruling elders vote in favor of any action to for it to pass.

#### Article 16. THE SESSION

##### Current

The Session shall consist of the Pastors (or a designated moderator) and twelve (12) Ruling Elders in active service, to be accomplished by electing four (4) elders per year.

##### Revised

The Session shall consist of the Pastors (or a designated moderator) and **six (6)** Ruling Elders in active service, to be accomplished by electing **two (2)** elders per year.

#### Section 5. fa QUORUM.

##### Current

Six (6) Ruling Elders plus the Pastor (or designated moderator) shall be necessary to constitute a quorum. As an exception, for meetings to receive new members, two (2) Ruling Elders plus the pastor (or designated moderator) shall constitute a quorum.

##### Revised

**Five (5)** Ruling Elders plus the Pastor (or designated moderator) shall be necessary to constitute a quorum. As an exception, for meetings to receive new members, two (2) Ruling Elders plus the **P**astor (or designated moderator) shall constitute a quorum. **Three (3) ruling elders must vote in favor of any action that is approved by the Session.**

#### Article 18. THE TRUSTEES

##### Current

The Board of Trustees shall consist of twelve (12) active Communicant Members. Its membership shall be grouped in three classes which shall be as far as possible of equal size.

##### Revised

The Board of Trustees shall consist of **nine (9)** active Communicant Members. Its membership shall be grouped in three classes which shall be as far as possible of equal size.

## Transition Plan for Elder Elections and Ministry Team Leadership

### **Proposed Schedule of Elder Classes**

Each bar on this chart represents one (1) elder. The columns each represent one year of service. So if a bar is three (3) columns long that indicates that this elder will serve for three (3) years. The transition plan proposes that four elders currently serving extend their terms by one (1) year to create a smooth glide path to transition our teams and safety policies. These “bonus year” extensions are indicated by the dotted line and the “+1”

Elders	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Class of '19									
Class of '19									
Class of '19									
Class of '19	David Stumbaugh			+1					
Class of '20									
Class of '20									
Class of '20									
Class of '20 → '21					+1				
Class of '21									
Class of '21 → '22						+1			
Class of '21 → '22						+1			
Class of '23									
Class of '23									
Class of '24									
Class of '24									
Class of '25									
Class of '25									
TOTAL ELDERS			11	8	6	6	6		

### **Current Elders by Class**

Class of '19	Class of '20	Class of '21
Williams	Icenogle	Tucker
Sumbaugh	Mowrey	Greg M.
Herrington	Herriott	Huttula
Barnes	Pendergrass	

**Explanation of the transition plan continues on next page, refer to this diagram for reference.**

## Explanation of Transition Plan

### Changes In 2020

- The session decreases from 11 to 8 as 3 Elders from the class of 2019 rotate off and a vacancy from the class of 2021 remains unfilled
- The Nominating Team recommends that the congregation extend the terms of four elders for one year rather than proposing new elders during 2020 because of the transitional nature of this year:
  - David Stumbaugh extends his term one year from the class of 2019 to the class of 2020 since he is currently the only non-staff Youth Elder. He will maintain our safety standards and policies for Youth during this transitional year to ensure the ball is not dropped in this critical area.
  - One elder from the class of 2020 extends their term one year into the class of 2021
  - Two elders from the class of 2021 extend their terms one year into the class of 2022
- After these changes, in 2020 there will be
  - 4 elders in the class of 2020
  - 2 elders in the class of 2021
  - 2 elders in the class of 2022
- During the 12 months of 2020, each elder works to gradually transition their team from being Elder-led to being led by a different leader in the congregation. This leader will serve as Vice-Chair under the guidance of the Elder-Chair in 2020. This new leader will then be promoted to full Chairperson of their team once the Elder deems they are ready. The plan for each team is as follows:
  - Admin is merged into Trustees and will eventually be led by the President of the Trustees
  - Outreach will eventually be led by the Outreach Director
  - Children’s Discipleship will eventually be led by the Children’s Director
  - Youth Discipleship will eventually be led by the Youth Director
  - Adult Discipleship will be renamed “Leadership Development” and will eventually be led by a volunteer
  - Worship will eventually be led by a volunteer
- Going forward, staff members related to the Senior Pastor (like Alison Kling) will receive their annual performance reviews from the President of the Trustees.
- David Stumbaugh maintains the safety standards of youth as Youth Elder & Ashley Huttula maintains the safety standards of children as Children’s Elder

### **Changes in 2021**

- The session decreases from 8 elders to 6 elders as the four elders in the class of 2020 rotate off.
- The Nominating Team proposes a slate of 2 new elders for the class of 2023 to be elected by the congregation.
- The Ministry Teams are now fully being run by their new leaders. The elders may visit to supervise these teams from time to time but they are not responsible for making an agenda and chairing these meetings. Team Leaders continue to take minutes of their meetings and send reports to the Session.
- The Session designates a Youth Elder and Children's Elder from among their number who will monitor the safety policies of our Youth and Children closely.

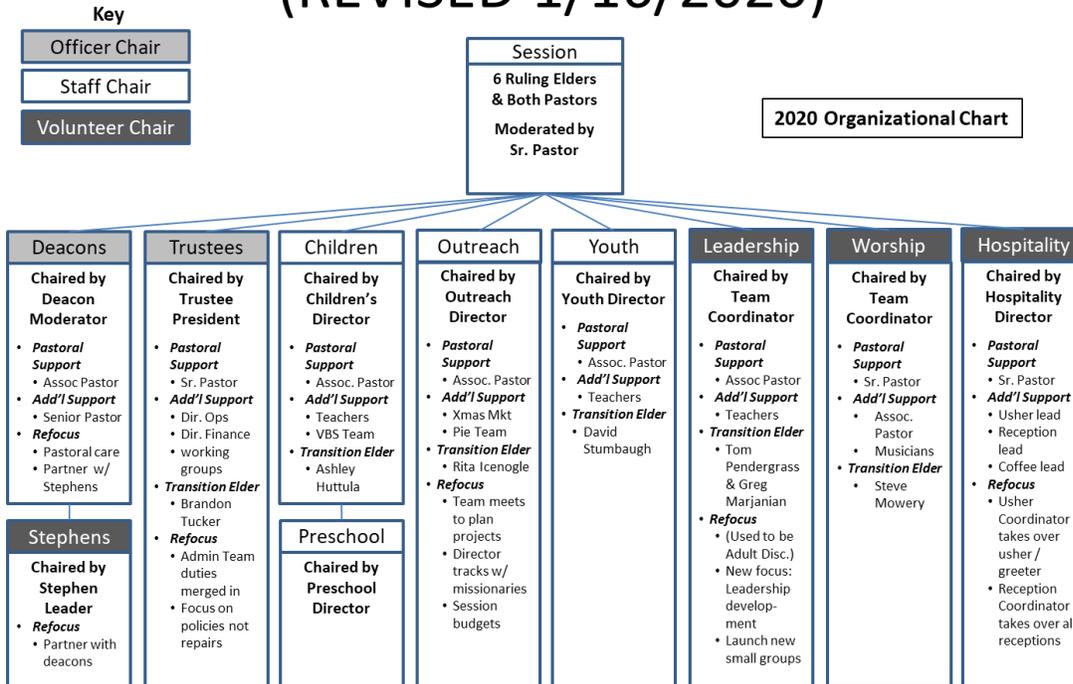
### **Changes in 2022**

- The session maintains its new size of 6 elders as 2 elders from the class of 2021 rotate off.
- The Nominating Team proposes a slate of 2 new elders for the class of 2024 to be elected by the congregation.
- This is the final year of 2 elders from the original transition plan serving their "extended" terms. There are now 4 "new" elders serving in addition to these two "old" elders.
- The Session designates a Youth Elder and Children's Elder from among their number who will monitor the safety policies of our Youth and Children closely.

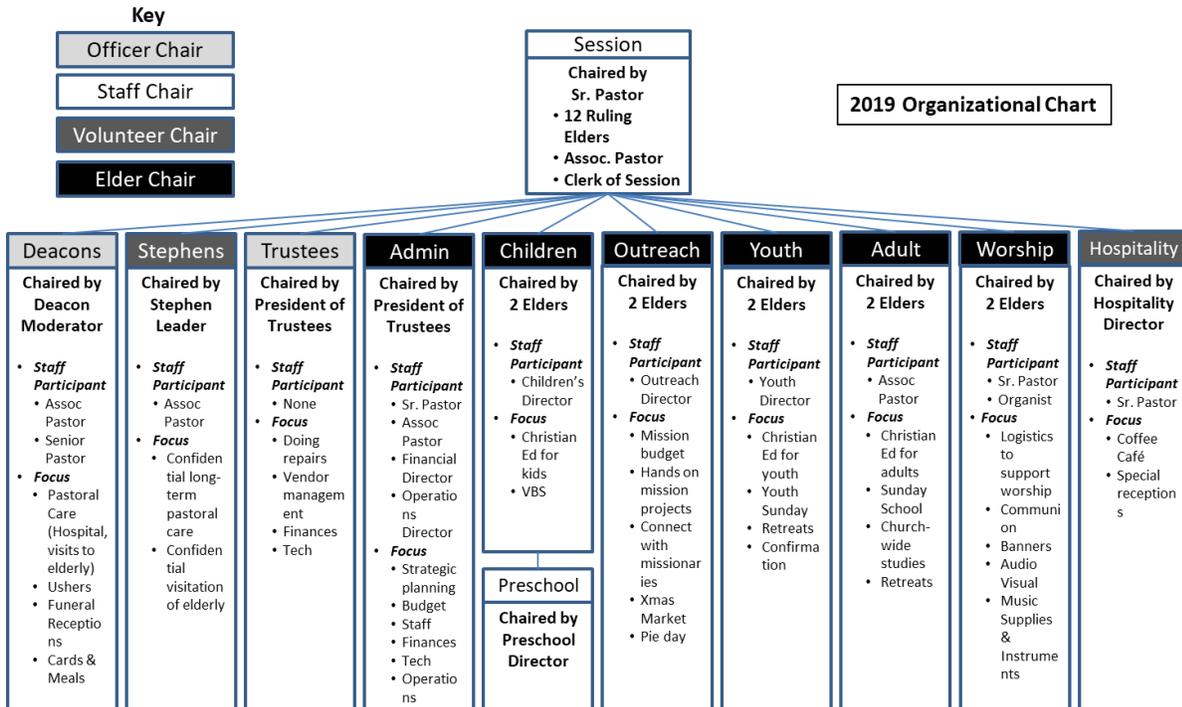
### **Changes in 2023**

- The session maintains its new size of 6 elders as 2 elders from the class of 2022 rotate off. These are the last of the elders who wrote this transition plan.
- The Nominating Team proposes a slate of 2 new elders for the class of 2025 to be elected by the congregation.
- The session is now entirely composed of "new" officers
- The Session designates a Youth Elder and Children's Elder from among their number who will monitor the safety policies of our Youth and Children closely.

# 2020 Team Organization (REVISED 1/16/2020)



# 2019 Team Organization/Leadership



## “Ask Alban: The Right Board Size”

*Congregations*, 2011-04-01, Volume 1 2011, Number 1. Accessed from <http://www.susanbeaumont.com/ask-alban-the-right-board-size/>

by Susan Beaumont

**Q: I’ve always heard that the governing board of a congregation should grow smaller as the church becomes larger. Why is that? Is there an ideal size?**

**A:** Effective boards in every size congregation must tend to three types of work: **fiduciary** (tending to the stewardship of tangible assets), **strategic** (working to set the congregation’s priorities and seeing that resources are being deployed in accordance with those priorities) and **generative** (problem framing and sense making about the shifting environment of the congregation).<sup>1</sup>

In the large congregation, many of the fiduciary responsibilities of the board are better delegated to others. The board can never abdicate its responsibility for fiduciary oversight, but it can rely on board committees and the staff team to do much of the fiduciary work on its behalf. As congregations grow larger, governing boards must increasingly focus their time on the strategic and generative work of the congregation if the congregation is going to thrive. This type of work is best accomplished by smaller decision making bodies, with specific skill sets in strategic leadership.

The board of the multi-celled congregation (200-400 in weekend worship attendance)<sup>2</sup> is often consumed by fiduciary work. The staff team is not yet large enough to assume the full managerial responsibilities of the church, and lay leadership is still actively involved in the management of ministry. Governing bodies in this size congregation are often representational in nature, consisting of the people who are doers and managers of the ministry alongside the staff team. Much of the monthly board meeting is wrapped up in planning for and reporting on ministry management. This board often needs to make special provisions for strategic planning work, outside of the context of their monthly meetings.

The governing board in the professional-sized congregation (400-800 in weekend worship attendance) is intuitively drawn toward a more balanced focus between fiduciary and strategic work. The largest struggle of the board is figuring out how to be more strategic and generative on a regular basis. The staff team is becoming highly specialized and is better able than the board to tend to operational management. The board must avoid micro-managing the staff. Congregations in this size category feel the need to reduce the size of the board in order

to move away from reporting out/operational management and into more strategic and generative work.

Healthy congregations in the strategic-sized category (800-1,200 in weekend worship attendance) have generally learned some things about delegating the fiduciary work of the board, in service to more time spent on strategic and generative work. The governing body in this congregation has typically been downsized to create a more nimble decision making body. The voice of the staff team is represented by the senior clergy leader and the executive pastor. Other professional staff members attend board meetings only when invited, to evaluate or reflect upon a particular aspect of ministry that rests within the staff member's sphere of influence.

**What size is the right size?** A group trying to engage in effective strategic decision making faces two key challenges. The first is the management of communication. The second is decision making accuracy. Generally having more people in a group will increase the likelihood that someone will have the information needed to make the decision and someone will propose a correct choice or solution. However, more people produce more opinions that have to be communicated and discussed. This makes the management of communication process more difficult, which ultimately ends up reducing decision making effectiveness.

The difficulty of managing communication within a small group is roughly proportional to the number of possible social interactions within the group. With two people there is only one possible social interaction. With three people there are three possible two-person interactions and one three way interaction for a total of four possible interactions. The number of possible social interactions begins to explode in groups with more than five people.

Most of us cannot imagine reducing our governing bodies down to 5 individuals, but the closer we can get to that number, the more effective our problem solving will be. Larger groups require skillful leadership and formal structures in order to function effectively. Formal structures, such as parliamentary procedures, work by deliberately stifling many of the possible social interactions. Unfortunately, this can also stifle creativity which is critical for strategic and generative work, and it also insures that most decision making will be dominated by the most politically influential individuals in the room, whether or not they have the best ideas.<sup>3</sup>

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#### Notes

1. Richard Chait, William Ryan, Barbara Taylor. *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons. 2005. Pages 6-10.
2. The size categories referenced in this article originally appeared in the Summer 2008 issue of *Congregations* in an article entitled "Beyond Corporate: New Insights on Larger Churches."
3. "How to Design Small Decision Making Groups," found at <http://www.intuitior.com/statistics/SmallGroups.html> on 08/03/2010.

## **“How to Design Small Decision Making Groups”**

*The following are excerpts from a longer article located on <http://www.intuitor.com/statistics/SmallGroups.html> . The following offers a mathematical illustration of Susan Beaumont’s sociological observations that the optimal size for a decision-making group is 5. The full article contains additional rules for optimizing small-group decision-making processes. Incidentally, the formula cited here to find the number of possible relationships in our current session size of 14 (12 elders and 2 pastors) yields several thousand possible combinations. This high number of possible alliances models the complexity inherit in our current structure.*

### **Introduction**

Teamwork and group decision making are hot buzz words. Giant corporations spend millions annually teaching employees how to work in groups and hold effective meetings. Yet, anyone who has attended a decision making meeting probably feels that a camel is indeed a horse designed by a committee. When decision making teams work, they work very well and when they don't they consume inordinate amounts of time only to yield weak results. Simple applications of probability and statistics can shed light on how to stack the odds in favor of success.

This discussion will focus on decision making groups working with partial information where there is a definite difference between selecting a good and bad alternative. For example, this could be a decision about how many toys to produce for the Christmas market. There is only partial information since actual customer behavior cannot be known until well after the decision is implemented. Making the wrong number of toys can result in a substantial loss of profit.

Such groups have two key problems. The first is management of communication. The second is decision making accuracy. Generally having more people in a group increases the likelihood that someone will propose the correct decision. However, more people means more opinions and ideas that have to be communicated and discussed. This makes management of the communication process more difficult and can end up reducing group effectiveness. The best ideas may never even be heard.

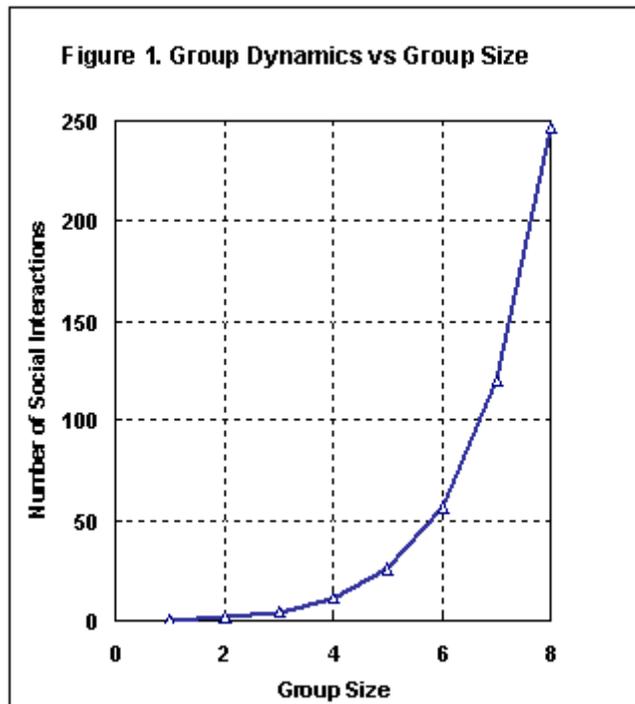
### **Management of Communication**

The difficulty of managing communication is roughly proportional to the number of possible social interactions. With two people there is nothing to manage since there is only one possible social interaction. With three people there are three possible two-person interactions and one

three way interaction for a total of four. With a four person group there are six possible two way, four possible three-way, and one possible four way interactions for a total of eleven.

The total number of possible social interactions for any sized group is simply the sum of all possible combinations taken two at a time or higher. These are calculated for 2-person interactions using the following Formula:

$$\sum_{x=2}^n \frac{n!}{x!(n-x)!}$$



As can be seen by figure 1, the number of possible social interactions begins to explode in groups with more than 5 people. Large groups require skillful leaders and formal structure in order to function effectively. Formal structure, such as parliamentary procedure, works by deliberately stifling many of the possible social interactions. Unfortunately, this can also stifle creativity and insures that decisions will be dominated by the most politically skillful individuals even when they don't have the best ideas.

### Best Possible Decision-Making Accuracy

Probability can also be used to evaluate decision making accuracy. This can get complicated so we'll make some simplifying assumptions as follows:

1. There is partial information available on all possible alternatives. Obviously, if there's no information available then decision accuracy is random. If complete information is available then the decision accuracy should depend only on having enough time and expertise to evaluate the information.
2. All alternatives can be clearly categorized as good or bad. Those categorized as good are clearly superior to those categorized as bad. Selecting a good alternative is a good decision by definition. There can be no ties. A decision is either good or bad.
3. The probability of successfully identifying a superior alternative is not influenced by the number of alternatives. If bad alternatives greatly outnumber good ones then it does not make the good ones harder to identify. In real life many bad alternatives can be quickly eliminated.

Each group member has the same probability of successfully identifying a good alternative. A decision making group should contain qualified people who have the ability to discuss and analyze the alternatives. When only partial information is available there typically are no experts with the special ability to consistently guess the right answer. If such an expert existed then there would be no accuracy advantage in using a group.

Adoption of 60% average accuracy rule of thumb is not based on a mathematical proof but is reasonable. In many cases a 50% average accuracy could be achieved by coin tossing. It's unlikely for human decision making to be worse on average than 50% accuracy unless fraud or deception is involved. 60% accuracy seems more reasonable without being overly optimistic about humankind's abilities.

Assuming an average decision making accuracy of 60% allows us to calculate the probability that no one in a group will identify a good alternative. Obviously if this were true then the group could not possibly make a good decision. The probability of no one in the group identifying a good alternative is found as follows:

$$P_0 = (0.4)^n$$

Where  $n$  = the number of people in the group.

The best possible decision making accuracy of the group would be  $P_g = 1 - P_0$ .

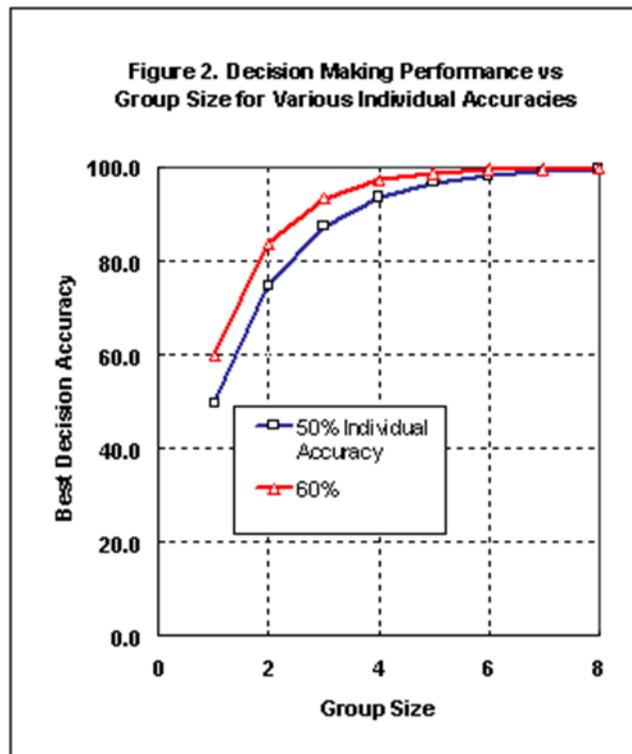


Figure 2 shows a graph of the best possible decision making accuracy vs group size. To achieve this level requires that the decision be made unanimously following an extended discussion. The Rules for Optimizing Small Groups shown at the top of the page must be followed to achieve this performance. These rules are designed to insure that all options are identified and that they are fully discussed. If the group is composed of qualified individuals with the basic knowledge to make the decision and they behave in a rational manner, a single enlightened group member should be able to persuade the group to select the right alternative. On this basis the only way the group would fail is if no one in the group selects a good alternative.

### Conclusions:

For the unanimous decision making style a group of five will have a 99% accuracy assuming 60% individual accuracies and that a single person with the right answer can convince the others. Even with only 50% individual accuracies the group accuracy will average 96.9%. Adding additional members will not greatly improve accuracy. However, additional members will significantly increase group management problems since the number of possible social interactions increases rapidly.

The data presented does not mean that every group has to contain exactly five members. There are other factors to consider such as the implementation of decisions. This often requires buy-in by the stakeholders. Placing stakeholders in the group can speed

implementation. However, important decision making groups should not be expanded unless there is an overriding reason to do so.

## Applying Combination Math to Covenant's Bylaw Proposal

By David Kling

Using the combination formula provided above in the article "How to Design Small Decision Making Groups," the number of possible "alliances" within a certain committee size can be calculated. The article claims that this calculation models the complexity it will take for a committee to reach an accurate, consensus-based decision.

Have you ever been in a committee meeting and felt like you didn't understand something or you didn't express yourself fully? Did you ever stay behind in the parking lot afterwards and talk to one or two others from the group about it?

That's what this calculation models. How many combinations of people could stand around in a parking lot after the meeting and re-hash the discussion or decision that was made by the larger group.

In smaller groups, such parking lot conversations are less necessary because there is more time per person to discuss and ask questions. Consider that for our current session size of 14 people (2 pastors plus 12 elders) and our average session meeting time of 2 hours, that if this time was divided evenly among each participant then everyone would have only 8 minutes and 30 seconds to speak their mind. For our proposed group of 8 elders (2 pastors plus 6 elders) this jumps to 15 minutes per person. The parking lot conversation is not needed because participants have adequate time in the meeting itself.

To see the possible number of alliances (parking lot conversations) for the options to covenant, we have to look at session sizes where there are 2 pastors plus a number divisible by 3 (so that 3-year classes are evenly distributed). The lowest such numbers are sessions that are 5 (2 pastors + 3 elders), 8 (2 pastors + 6 elders), 11 (2 pastors + 9 elders) and our current size of 14 (2 pastors + 12 elders).

The word in statistics for "alliance" or "parking lot conversation" is "combination." You use the following formula to determine the possible number of combinations (which you can play with yourself at

<https://www.calculatorsoup.com/calculators/discretemathematics/combinations.php>)

$$\frac{n!}{(r! (n - r)!)}$$

Where “r” is the size of the subgroup, and “n” is the total size of the session. So, to find out how many possible parking lot conversations can happen in unique groups of 2 out of a session size of 14, you would find:

$$\frac{14!}{(2!(14-2)!)} = 91$$

This calculation is performed for all subgroup sizes up to 14 and the results are tallied to find that there are a possible 16,383 alliances that can be formed on our current session – only *one* of which is total consensus, an “alliance” of all 14 members all in agreement. Put a different way, consensus represents only 0.006% of the total possible combinations of supporters for a given proposal at session. Understandably, it often takes considerable time for the group to come together in unison to decide upon complex decisions.

The schedule of possible “combinations” for each session size “n” that is available to Covenant is shown in the following charts, with the current proposal of a session size of 8 (2 pastors plus 6 elders) shaded in gray.

In a group of n = 14		In a group of n = 11		In a group of n = 8		In a group of n = 5	
if r =	# of Combos	if r =	# of Combos	if r =	# of Combos	if r =	# of Combos
1	14	1	11	1	8	1	5
2	91	2	55	2	28	2	10
3	364	3	165	3	56	3	10
4	1,001	4	330	4	70	4	5
5	2,002	5	462	5	56	5	1
6	3,003	6	462	6	28		
7	3,432	7	330	7	8	<b>Total Combo</b>	<b>31</b>
8	3,003	8	165	8	1		
9	2,002	9	55	<b>Total Combo</b>	<b>255</b>		
10	1,001	10	11				
11	364	11	1				
12	91	<b>Total Combo</b>	<b>2,047</b>				
13	14						
14	1						
<b>Total Combo</b>	<b>16,383</b>						

I can be seen clearly why Susan Beaumont prefers session sizes of 5, with only 31 possible “parking lot conversations” to manage. However, the session of size 8 that is shaded in gray shows significantly less complexity at 255 total combinations than the 16,383 generated by our current session size. For this reason, a session size of 8 is a good compromise between “reducing complexity” while still “gathering different perspectives.”



## **“Board Size and Nonprofit Governance”**

*From <https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/board-size-nonprofit-governance/> . The key insight from this article is that it cites a study by the acclaimed Bain Capital Private Equity that identifies 7 as the ideal board size, with each additional member beyond 7 decreasing the board’s effectiveness by 10%. This would suggest our current board size of 14 (12 elders plus 2 pastors) is 70% less effective than a board of 7. Our proposal for a session of 8 (6 elders plus 2 pastors) will be only 10% less effective than a board of 7.*

Written by Nick Price, September 13, 2017

With the large number of different types of organizations that can file for nonprofit status, it’s easy to see how a non-profit board could be a board of one or 51. As volunteers become invested in an organization’s cause, their passion grows, causing some people to seek a leadership position. Serving on the board gives them a leadership role while offering them valuable board experience. Nonprofit boards sometimes worry about being able to get enough people on their boards, and they elect or appoint everyone who’s willing to serve. That’s frequently how nonprofit boards become too large.

For many nonprofit board directors, serving on a nonprofit board is their initial exposure to all that goes into board service. With the new regulatory demands on corporate boards, nonprofit boards are also seeing their fair share of scrutiny and increased expectations. Today’s regulatory bodies expect nonprofit boards to perform governance according to regulations and law, even when they are novices.

Similar to corporate boards, nonprofit organizations are beginning to question their board composition, diversity and size. Changes are on the horizon as nonprofit boards seek to work as efficiently as possible so they can focus on the organization’s mission and still meet regulatory requirements.

### **Is There an Average Size for Nonprofit Boards?**

BoardSource, a nonprofit board leadership and educational corporation, did a survey in 2000 and found that the average size of nonprofit boards, not including churches, was 17 directors. The number decreased slightly to 16 members in 2007, and the median number is 15. BoardSource notes that these statistics tell us that the average board size of nonprofits is slowly decreasing, and that the average size is still more than most experts recommend.

State laws determine the minimum number of board directors, which is usually two or three. Depending on the state, there could be a board of one, but it might be difficult to attain 501(c)(3) status with just one board member.

Nonprofit organizational budgets are sometimes a factor in the number of board members. Nonprofit organizations with budgets of over \$10 million have an average of 18 board members, whereas nonprofit organizations with budgets of less than \$1 million have about 14 board directors.

Arts and cultural organizations like ballet, dance, museums and performance organizations tend to have larger board sizes and robust sponsorships. Certain other nonprofit organizations guarantee representation to their constituencies as determined by geography, political office or some other relationship to the organization, and they also commonly have larger boards. Examples of such nonprofits are universities, chapters or national nonprofits, and political groups such as Women's Institute for Leadership.

With regard to board size, evaluating the pros and cons of board size can help get it right.

### **Pros and Cons of Smaller Nonprofit Boards**

The pros of smaller boards strongly outweigh the cons. Smaller boards tend to meet more often because it's easier to accommodate everyone's busy schedules. Board discussions are generally shorter and more focused than those of larger boards, which typically leads to faster and better decision-making. Since smaller boards spend much time together, they form close bonds, and are typically willing to give everyone a fair say.

There's one glaring negative to smaller board size for nonprofit organizations. Being an all-volunteer board, board members are usually volunteering for additional events and activities because of the lack of other volunteers. Board members who serve on the board and invest much of their time and energy in volunteering as well often feel overworked and overburdened and believe these activities take too much time away from family and paid work.

### **Pros and Cons of Larger Nonprofit Boards**

While getting lots of board members around the conference room table is difficult with so many schedules to consider, having many board directors shares the load of fundraising and other activities.

Having larger numbers of board members gives boards the advantage of "institutional memory," where longtime board members remember much of the organization's history. Larger numbers of board directors bring a larger network, as directors are likely to know many local business professionals such as lawyers, bankers and accountants.

Board dynamics also differ with larger boards. Board discussions are typically longer with larger boards, as they bring forth a greater variety of perspectives. On the flip side, having many opinions around the table allows quieter members to kick back and disengage, causing them to feel like their voice has no meaning. It's also easier for cliques to form with larger boards, which can isolate some board members even further. Many large boards alleviate some of these problems by using an executive committee as a steering committee.

Having many board members places a larger burden on the executive director, who is required to meet all of their expectations. Larger boards also tend to have more committees, which means the nonprofit will need to hire more paid staff to manage them.

### **Finding the Right Size for a Nonprofit Board**

Finding the right size for a nonprofit board is somewhat the same as finding the right size for a corporate board. Both types of corporations need to answer two questions — 1) what do they need to accomplish? and 2) do they have the right expertise on the board to achieve it?

**According to a study by Bain Capital Private Equity, the optimal number of directors for boards to make a decision is seven. Every added board member after that decreases decision-making by 10%. Nonprofits can use that as a starting metric before considering the organization's life cycle, mission and fundraising needs.**

Boards that have national, state and local affiliates will likely need larger numbers of board members at the national level.

It's generally best to have an odd number of board directors, although the bylaws may state that they can use the board chair's vote as a tie-breaker.

Large nonprofit boards that need to pare down the size of the board may change their bylaws to state smaller numbers. Most nonprofit boards have staggered terms. As board members' terms end, the idea is to not replace them with new directors. Directors stepping down from the board may be interested in reinvesting their time in a committee or in other volunteer service.

Board members can disengage quickly when they don't find meaningful purpose during their tenure on the board. Nonprofit boards that assess board composition strategically will make the most of board members' talents and expertise.

It's not enough to look at board numbers in isolation. Before changing the organization's bylaws to reflect smaller numbers, nonprofit boards would do well to assess whether their board issues stem from some other source, such as a lack of commitment or a lack of leadership.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why are we changing?

To provide the most efficient and effective leadership for Covenant and to position ourselves to be more outward-reaching to the local community.

- There has been a steady decrease in our attendance numbers the last several years. We want to stimulate growth to once again connect new people to Christ.
- Again, we want people to know Christ! In today's culture, people are less likely to find us; we must reach out to them.
- Research into *how* churches grow has revealed the somewhat surprising finding that churches structure their organization *smaller* in order to grow *bigger*. The ideal size suggested by research is between 5 and 7 people (including the pastor). Because we need to include the associate pastor as well according to our constitution, we recommend a total size of 8 (6 elders and 2 pastors).
- A questions we have asked is "who is looking after the church *as a whole*. Our current model of using elders to lead our committees fosters a silo mentality. Collaboration can be missed due to specific focus in ministry areas.
- The Session currently uses the Elders as the part of the workforce in the committees they oversee. This shift is seeking to enable the Elders serving on Session to be more focused on the spiritual needs of the *whole* Congregation.

### 2. What's so bad about how we are doing things now?

There is nothing bad about the way we are doing things. That's part of what makes this recommendation difficult. We're good. We have great people, a strong staff, and some great ministries. We are a very stable congregation. We currently have roughly the same number of people attending worship as were attending 33 years ago in 1986 (about 240 people). That's amazing! Most churches have declined over this same period.

*But*, we think Covenant has untapped potential in our leaders and resources. We believe that we can reach more people for Christ and become a growing leader in Huntsville for the Kingdom of God. Our research suggests that the next step on this journey is reorganizing our boards to be smaller and more streamlined.

### 3. Isn't there an increased risk that we will "lose control" of the church by concentrating power in a smaller group of people and handing more power to the pastors?

This is a valid question. But we believe that there is a counterintuitive effect at work: Bigger groups feel *less* responsibility to speak truth to power. It's the idea that if "everyone is responsible, then no one is responsible." Research suggests that when a

board is between the size of 5 people and 7 people that attendance, engagement, and quality of discussion is at its best. Our session is currently 14 people (2 pastors and 12 elders), twice the recommended size and therefore, perhaps, half as effective in “checking” the power of the pastors. This will typically mean that not every person around the table voices their opinion on every item of discussion. For the sake of time - and often because of human nature - discussion is often limited to a few voices.

This actually makes the church *more* vulnerable to manipulation from a pastor. With *more* people around the table, each individual elder feels naturally *less* accountable to keep the pastor in check. A pastor can “hide” behind a larger session but is “exposed” when they must look 6 elders in the eye and hear what each has to say on every issue. So, reducing the size of the Session should ultimately result in *more* vigilant accountability for our pastors - which is a good thing!

An important note to make is that our quorum size for elders is only decreasing by one. So that while, in the past, only 6 elders were needed to make a decision, we will still require 5 elders to make a decision. This means session meetings can *only* happen if 5 of the 6 elders attend. This higher attendance standard will ensure that there is a similar “minimum” number of voices around the table to represent the voice of the congregation.

#### **4. What about the elders? With only 6 elders, what if the congregation becomes concerned that the “wrong people” are governing the church?**

This, too, is a valid question. Fortunately, our constitution and bylaws have already placed checks and balances into our governance so that a congregation can always correct the composition of the Session through the Nominating Committee. Every January we elect 5 “at large” members of the congregation at the Congregational Meeting to serve on the Nominating Committee. These 5 “independent” voices make up the majority of the Nominating Committee. This means that the congregation has the strongest vote in choosing the slate (recommendation) of new elders. It should also be noted that the congregation is not obligated to elect the slate (recommendation) suggested by the Nominating Committee. At our Fall Congregational Meeting, if you do not like the 2 elders recommended, you may suggest alternative nominations for elders from the floor. The congregation then has the opportunity to vote by ballot to choose between the multiple candidates. So the congregation will have the opportunity every year to put forward the elders it feels are best suited to discern God’s will and preserve Covenant’s vision & culture.

**5. This is very different from other churches I've seen- if the research suggests this then why doesn't everyone do it?**

Yes what we're suggesting is unusual. Most churches are smaller than covenant and have a different set of leadership needs. With over 80 percent of Protestant churches at less than 200 in weekly worship attendance, that means most churches are not good "role models" if Covenant wants to be larger than its current 242 average worship attendance. To complicate matters, many larger Presbyterian churches (over 400 in weekly attendance) have big sessions of 12 or more elders. However, sadly, almost all of these large Presbyterian churches are now declining in worship attendance, so they, too, are not good role models to follow. Instead we are basing this recommendation on what the premier consulting group for Presbyterians - the Alban Institute - advises. If you want to be both large and growing then you should structure your session to be between 5 and 7 people ideally. Few churches do this. But it is a widely observed best practice among researchers.

**6. How is leadership changing?**

We are changing the role and reducing the number of Elders on the Session from 12 to 6. We are changing the role and reducing the number of Trustees from 12 to 9. The Administration Team will be joined to the Trustees in a single team. This new team of 9 will continue under the title of "Trustees" but with the additional responsibilities of the Administration team. Over time, the new "Trustees" will look and feel much like the old "Administration Team." Other teams will be transitioned to their respective Staff leader or to a new volunteer. By making our ministry teams less reliant on Session leadership we hope to actually increase participation and leadership from our general congregation.

This falls in line with our stated mission of growing disciples inasmuch as teams will seek out new people to share their gifts in service in the different ministries of Covenant.

**7. What about Committees? Without the direct leadership of an elder, how will the congregation correct committees when they make a decision that goes against our policies?**

The Session continues to be highest authority in the church with the power to veto and redirect the work of all other groups in the church, including the board of trustees.

**8. How has the role of Elder changed?**

In the past, each Elder had direct responsibility (chair) or secondary (vice-chair) for a major church committee: youth, children, outreach, worship, deacons, adult discipleship, and administration/trustees. Essentially they "represented" an area of

the church and reported on issues and achievements--they had a vested interest in achieving their committee goals and promoting their specific projects. This necessarily limited the amount of Session "man-hours" spent solving issues relevant to the long-term future of the *whole* church. In the future, the Elders will not oversee a committee, but rather look globally at the issues before them. Committee reports will continue to maintain an information flow from the more specific teams. Session members will then cast an integrated vision for all ministries at Covenant. They will be focused on how all the ministries work together - over the short and long term - to bring more people to know Christ as savior.

## **9. How does this help?**

Instead of individuals reporting on their respective committee's work, this new role will better facilitate Elders to focus on how all ministries and programming are functioning and plan on better ways to integrate them in a process of developing stronger spiritual leaders in our congregation and how to look outside our walls to the lost in our community.

This continues the trend set by the "Special Ops" team that chose some of Covenant's most strategic thinkers to help craft our long-term vision and streamline our processes. Essentially, the Session will take over the work previously handled by Special Ops in guiding the vision for Covenant's future.

Research suggests that the ideal group size to make strategic decisions is between 5 and 7 people.

So by realigning (1) the size and (2) the responsibilities of our Trustees and Session we hope to achieve a stronger focus on our vision: to make disciples.

## **10. Why do we propose reducing the number of Elders?**

We have examined research on leadership and growth in churches like ours. We have prayed and extensively discussed the idea of a smaller session. We believe this model will provide the means for us as a session to achieve Covenant's stated mission. This smaller session size will also allow for very close brainstorming and prayer meetings with our pastors which will, in turn, help us to discern God's plans for us as a church family. Smaller sessions have reported that their discernment is of higher *quality* when the number of elders is a lower *quantity*. Fewer elders means that every elder has an opportunity for in-depth discussion on every issue. Speaking logistically, a smaller group is more able to schedule additional meetings as needed when issues of importance come up.

We also feel this is a better stewardship of our “human” resources. By shrinking the number of people needed on the Session, Trustees & Admin Team, we will be freeing up more of our best people to directly engage our discipleship, worship, hospitality, visitation and outreach ministries. Our needs for leaders are rapidly growing in all these areas.

**11. How will we reduce the number of Elders when there are so many currently serving?**

The session can be naturally and gradually reduced simply by not electing any new elders in 2020. Instead several current elders will extend their terms by one year to readjust the class sizes to 2 in each class (for a total of 6 elders in 3 classes of 2 elders each). Next year in 2021 (and every year thereafter) the congregation will elect 2 new elders. By 2023 the session will have “flipped” with no elders currently serving on the board.

**12. Will reducing the number of elders give the pastors too much power? Will elders be less effective at “standing up to” the authority of the pastor, particularly if the pastor makes a mistake?**

We believe that it will be quite the opposite. As it stands, keeping the pastors accountable does not receive much attention during session meetings. This is partially because our elders do *so much* work on committees and other activities that they do not spend much time supporting the pastors’ spiritual health or evaluating whether the pastors are doing a good job in leading Covenant’s mission. This will become one of the *primary* responsibilities of session. By keeping the session size small (6 elders) each elder can personally check in with the pastors regularly and each elder will have plenty of time at a meeting to speak truth – even hard truths – to the pastors.

The pastors will be *more* accountable if we elect 6 confident and mature elders to (1) evaluate their effectiveness, (2) support their health and improvement, and (3) call them to account when they err. It is the responsibility of the congregation to elect elders who will have the skills to do this difficult job. But by keeping the session size small we also keep the standard for leadership high. The congregation will need to find only *two* people each year who will be powerful enough to be the “check and balance” against the power of the pastor.

**13. I’m concerned about our Children and Youth – who will ensure that we have proper safety procedures in place and that our Children and Youth volunteers are behaving responsibly?**

This is also a priority for the session. Every year the session will elect among themselves a Youth Elder and a Children’s Elder. It will be the responsibility of these two elders to meet regularly with the Youth Director and the Children’s Director to evaluate if they

are adhering to policies and maintaining adequate safety and security for our young people. These elders will also have intimate knowledge of our programming and volunteers in these areas and be vigilant in alerting the whole session when preventative or corrective action is necessary. The current Youth Elder, David Stumbaugh, and the current Children's Elder, Ashley Huttula, will continue to fill this role in 2020. In 2021 David Stumbaugh will rotate off session and a new Youth Elder will be elected by the Session. By 2023 Ashley Huttula will have rotated off session and they will then elect a new Children's Elder. The whole session will continuously keep the safety and security of our youth and children's programs on their agenda. Moreover, the Trustees will continue to work on the safety and security of the whole church – including systems to keep our kids safe. The trustees have already been working with the Security Task force to implement this changes. So we are committed to providing specific structure in both the Session and the Trustees to maintain safety standards for our youngest family members.

**14. How has the role of Trustee changed?**

The role of Trustee is becoming more similar to the role of the Administration Team and will be picking up that team's responsibilities. Historically our church has had *two* teams that were *both* charged with the fiduciary responsibility of our finances and facilities: the Trustees and the Administration team. In general to understand the distinction between the two teams, the trustees focused more on our building and grounds while the Administration Team focused more on personnel and programming. In the past this made sense. We relied on the Trustees to have a detailed understanding of our building's maintenance and expected them to personally do much of the repair-work or coordination with vendors. In April of 2019 we changed Katherine Bennett's role on staff to be "Director of Operations." Since then she has worked closely with both the Administration Team and the Board of Trustees to oversee the maintenance of the grounds and building and coordination with vendors. Meanwhile much work remains to be done in creating master plans and policies for the ongoing vision of our facilities, finances and staffing. We believe that a strong Board of Trustees can inherit the DNA of the Administration team and carry on with the important strategic work ahead.

**13. Why is the Administration team merging into the Trustees?**

These teams have actually been holding joint meetings for the last 12 months and have successfully been collaborating during that time. We are now formally merging these teams so that their collaboration can continue efficiently.

We are moving towards more of a corporate leadership model. that requires that we streamline the relationship between the administration team and the trustees into a single team that is staffed with high-capacity leaders with management experience. This will mean that ultimately the new team "feels" like the Admin Team but is elected by the congregation like the Trustees. The Trustees have always had fiduciary responsibility

over our operations and finances according to the Law of the State of Alabama. However, our main decision-making and strategic planning team has been principally located on the Admin team. While they were always accountable to Session and chaired by an elder, the Admin team was not elected by the congregation. With out growing need for leaders in so many areas, we hope that we will be able to take some of our high capacity leaders from those teams to serve in other ministries.

**14. Why aren't the Trustees continuing to take responsibility to do the repairs of the church themselves? Won't we save money by doing the work by volunteers?**

We will continue to have many opportunities for volunteers to serve God by providing their expertise and effort under the direction of Katherine Bennett our Operations Director. If you have a particular skill or passion related to the building or grounds please call the office and let her know! She'd love to hear from you.

At the same time, we are facing several challenges: our building is now more than double the size it was 10 years ago since the expansion. Moreover, the oldest parts of the building are now 6 decades old! This means that the repair needs are more extensive. to complicate matters further, when we replace outdated systems in the church, the replacement system is often best left to a professional due to the complexity and technology involved. All of these factors mean it is a good moment to change the role of the Trustee while still providing opportunities for our Operations Director to coordinate volunteers and professional vendors to maintain our property.

**15. How will the Board of Trustees relate to the Session?**

On matters of church-wide importance (like the final budget) the Session and the Board of Trustees will meet jointly. These joint meetings will happen regularly throughout the year and will provide a broader perspective at key moments. This means that there will frequently be 15 elected officers (9 trustees + 6 elders) meeting together to determine Covenant's direction. The Board of Trustees will now relate to the Session in the way that the old Administration Team used to operate. They will function as the primary partners for Session in developing strategic plans and policies for our operations and staffing. Session will often request that the Trustees do research and problem solving on important issues and then to make a recommendation for the Session's action. Session will delegate certain responsibilities to the Trustees within specific parameters.

**16. How do these changes affect our Teams and committees?**

The teams and committees will now be led by a combination of trustees, deacons, volunteers and staff. We think that likely the "volunteer" leadership will come from people currently serving on those committees. Chairs of each committee will be

responsible for reporting monthly to Session. Elders will be expected to review these reports and address any issues in Session meetings. This will actually allow us to *expand* the number of committees without worrying about if we can spare an elder to chair their meetings. A good example of this is the Hospitality Team, which is already chaired by a volunteer, Rebecca Boone.

**16. Where will leadership and oversight from our Teams and committees come from?**

Session will maintain ultimate oversight of all committees. Teams will recruit new volunteers and train new leaders. In addition, Adult Discipleship will be tasked with creating a leadership development process so that we can accelerate the training and placement of new volunteer leaders across the church.

**17. How will we transition to this new set-up?**

Session has developed a plan to help us move into this new organizational model smoothly over the next three years.

**18. How will this affect our budget/budget process?**

Each committee would have the opportunity to make budget recommendations; however, the Session would look at the overall budget needs and make decisions on final budgets within each area.

**19. Who provides oversight and support for our pastors David & Dave?**

Session members are responsible for holding pastors accountable to execute the agreed-upon goals of Session. In effect, the session supervises the work of our pastors. In addition, the other 27 Presbyterian churches in North Alabama Presbytery (our regional cohort) have the authority to provide further oversight, including formal disciplinary procedures for misconduct by our pastors. This kind of authority is typically controlled by the powerful "Commission on Ministry" that includes pastor and elder representatives from across the region. Bill McDowell currently represents Covenant on this important supervisory commission. When it comes to supporting our pastors, session, staff and Presbytery directly support the ministers.

**20. Who provides oversight and support for our program staff?**

The Senior Pastor is Head of Staff and handles all day-to-day supervision of the staff. This is not a change. The trustees will ensure performance reviews are carried out and that employee policies are being adhered to. This consolidates the responsibilities that formerly belonged to the Admin team. The Session is still ultimately over the Trustees and all staff.

In the particular case of employees related to the Head of Staff (in this case, Alison Kling) the President of the Board of Trustees will lead the formal annual review process and the Head of Staff will not be present. This, too, is consistent with our current practice.

**21. How does this affect my role in my Team, committee, or ministry?**

This bylaw change will have limited effect on the role of ministry teams. In fact - you will likely see improved communication and direction from the session for your team as the elders spend more time in prayer and strategic planning and less time managing individual teams. We are working to be more missional in our approach. This requires us to be more engaged in the community and more streamlined in our internal organization.

Some work will be shifted around or change its name. Here are some key examples: work done by trustees on maintenance is continuing to happen but under the direction of Katherine Bennett, our Director of Operations. The work of the Administration team is continuing, but now under the title of "Trustees." The work of Adult Discipleship will continue under the direction of the Associate Pastor, Dave Hunsicker but with a new focus on leadership development.

**22. Doesn't this plan make us more vulnerable to staff departures if we are transitioning several of our key teams to be chaired by a staff person?**

This is a good observation. Staff turnover is always a risk in any organization. We are going to do several things to mitigate this higher exposure to turnover. First, we will be working to make each ministry more "systems" driven and less "personality" driven. Each ministry will be developing documented processes for all key events and tasks. Wherever possible these masterplans and systems will be shared on our church wiki and in print form. We will strive to cross train staff and back-up leaders on all critical ministry tasks so that our most important ministries could continue uninterrupted if a staff person departed. This will be important not just for staff – but also for the volunteer-driven teams. Special Ops began this process several years ago. We have already documented much of the important work of the church – but we will continue to drive this forward during this transition. It is also important to develop strategies for quickly hiring and training effective interim staff following the departure of a staff person. The Trustees and Session will include this task in their staffing and budgeting discussions this year.

**23. Is this plan perfect?**

No this is not a perfect plan. But what we're doing is taking the best research available to us and the leading that the Holy Spirit is giving the Session right now. As

circumstances change this plan will change to. We don't think that this plan will "change the world" but we want to be ready for what God has next.

We are excited about what God has next for our church. We understand that this is different and change is hard. We have already been making changes in this church with respect to safety, facilities and staffing. We are now tackling change at the leadership level so that we can be faithful to the mission God has for our next season of service in his name.

**23. I have a question/opinion. Who can I talk to?**

A: We may need to have a covenant email address that can collect feedback and questions: [info@covhsv.org](mailto:info@covhsv.org).

All elders and pastors are wearing hawaiian leis during worship in January. If you see us wearing that colorful necklace don't feel shy about asking a question! We are also hosting 6 listening sessions during Sunday School and after worship.

The following elders are also specifically available for your questions if you'd like reach out: Pastor David Kling, Elder David Stumbaugh, Elder Ashley Huttula, Elder Steve Mowery, Elder Sandi Williams - you can request a time to speak with any of them by calling the church office at 256-881-4501.