

Organizational Plan S Paper No. OCCG-029

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Our traditional implementation of scriptural congregational organization typically leads to a board of director-style operation which often creates disenfranchisement of members. A plan offered here matches the scriptural requirements, but should give some ideas on to keep more members engaged in the growth of the congregation.

KEY WORDS:

Church organization, Elder, Shepherd, DelCon

GLOSSARY:

Elder: A scriptural name for a congregational leader with the general connotation today of being a ruler.

Shepherd: A scriptural name for a congregational leader with the general connotation today of leading and protecting the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

DelCon: A church operational software package specifically designed for Churches of Christ.

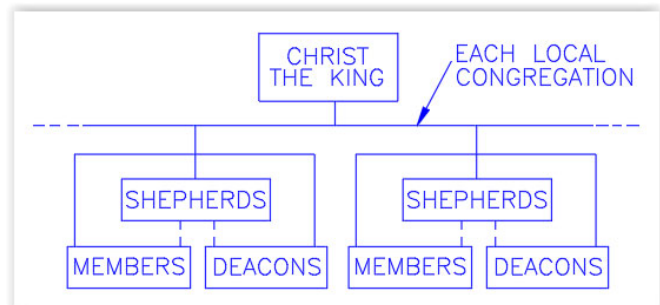
Ministry Active: A member who spends at least 30 minutes per month in a church role, committee, or ministry.

Thumb Printing: Making small unnecessary changes to a proposal.

REPORT:

According to the scriptures, Elders or Shepherds are in charge of the congregations and Deacons are assigned to do tasks. Review the lesson CHURCH

ORGANIZATION¹ for information regarding this. There is sparse information given on this in the New Testament, as one might expect when the organization is expected to last for thousands of years. The scriptures remain the same, but the physical implementation of the scriptures



will change from time to time. After a while, the organizational traditions we are accustomed to take on the air of being scriptural. However, sometimes scripturally acceptable traditions can interfere with actually doing what is scriptural.

What we are going to investigate at this time is our traditional implementation of the scriptural instructions which characteristically leads Churches of Christ to functional as board of directors operation. Is a board of directors style mandated, or is it simply an optional implementation?

We are going to suggest here that a “board of directors” implementation is when the physical decisions of the congregation are characteristically made behind closed doors by Elders, and members are informed of the decision. We are not suggesting that this is unscriptural, we are

suggesting that when it gets to this point the congregation is in the process of dying.

Additionally, we are going to distinguish the use of the word Shepherds from Elders, as shepherding characteristically has a different connotation than eldering. The words mean the same in the Bible. In usage today they give a different impression. The typical connotation of Shepherding today is to spiritually guide, whereas to Elder is to rule.

Take two decisions as discussion examples: (1) Bob is being taken in a sin and (2) we need to re-carpet the auditorium. Bob's sinning is a shepherding problem, and the carpet implementation is a task. It is not hard to imagine that Bob's sinning should be within the domain of the Shepherds to address so that is not a problem in this context.

Re-carpeting is more complex in this context. Characteristically the Elders approve considering new carpet, approve the budgeting, and approve the color. The task may be "delegated" to a committee, but the Elders have veto power at every step, and are usually inclined to thumb-print the decisions to get their "2 cents" worth into the process.

The net result of the typical process (even though a completely scriptural implementation) is that the Deacons and other members become discouraged and tend towards doing nothing. The Elders grow tired of the "lazy Deacons" and have to do most of the work themselves, or hire paid staff to do it. A good paid staff member can do the work of 20 volunteer members or said in the opposite, a "good" paid staff member puts 20 members out of an involvement role. (The role of staff should be to involve members, not to replace them.) Hopefully that is a fair and

reasonably unbiased appraisal of the situation the church today, and it results in dying congregations that disappear within 50-100 years.

A benefit to the present system is that once implemented it is very stable and will serve the congregation until it dies. Would it be unreasonable to say it serves the congregation until it kills it?

WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS ARE ACTUALLY GIVEN:

Beyond the qualifications of Shepherds and Deacons, what does the New Testament say about how to organize a congregation:

1. The Shepherds are in charge of everything. (I Tim. 3:4-5) This would be when a multiplicity of qualified Shepherds exist. Some kind of scriptural organization would also need to exist when no qualified Shepherds are available.
2. Deacons (and others) would be in charge of doing tasks. (Acts 6:2-3)

As you can note in the lesson titled CHURCH ORGANIZATION there are more details to this, but this generally summarizes it.

It is probably reasonable to say that any organization you have beyond this is your implementation or tradition. Implementations / traditions are important, but they are not scriptural requirements.

IS THERE AN ALTERNATE SCRIPTURAL IMPLEMENTATION OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION?

Again, for purpose of discussion we are going to say that the perfect implementation of what the scripture says is Organizational Plan A, which would of course be scriptural. We are going to refer

to the contemporary implementation of organization to be **Organizational Plan B**, which again is completely scriptural.

Whatever organizational implementations you may consider, the Shepherds cannot shirk from the fact that they are to manage or be in charge of and responsible for everything. On the other hand, if they control so tightly that they impede the motivation of other congregational members to do anything, it is not good.

Consider that the day before Shepherds were selected a congregation operated and grew well enough to get to the point of needing and having qualified Shepherds. In conventional wisdom the next day (or after a brief time) the congregation is no longer allowed to make business decisions without the approval of the Shepherds. Did those remaining suddenly become incapable of making a decision or at least a competent decision?

Let's presume for the sake of discussion there are 70 members and 2 become Shepherds, leaving 68 non-Shepherd members. The day before the leaders of the 70 members including new Shepherds ran the organizational business of the congregation in a business meeting in a completely scriptural way. Why couldn't that same organizational business be run in the same way after the change, with the Shepherds voting exactly as they did before? Would doing the exact same thing suddenly become unscriptural upon having Shepherds? It would not be a scriptural problem, it would just be a plan which conflicts with our customs.

Acts 6:4-6 says regarding the physical situation of the Grecian widows "So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve

tables. "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

This is our classic scripture on the role of Deacons with these men as prototype deacons, which seems to be a reasonable understanding. The roles of Shepherds and Deacons was not defined at this time. Is it not also a description of the role of Shepherds with the Apostles as prototype Shepherds? Does this not mean that while Shepherds have oversight, that their primary role is shepherding and not being the head Deacons.

The following is a plan which is in summary that the Shepherds are in charge of everything, delegate authority by means of written regularly reviewed job descriptions, and then have a veto power anything unscriptural, not in accordance with the written job descriptions, or is out of the budget which they have approved. It is called Organizational Plan S as any plan will become unique to the situation of a congregation. There could be some parts of the following plan which you would want to adjust to fit your situation.

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN S:

AUTHORITY

1. Make a new operating statement identifying the Shepherds primary role as shepherding, but with veto power over anything unscriptural, not according to approved job descriptions, or exceeding the approved budget (unless funded by the participants).

OPERATING SYSTEM

1. Congregation operates on Delcon² software which functionally operates like the CEO of the congregation. (Shepherd's authority is put into job descriptions within Delcon and fans out to committees and members.) DelCon will be operated by a Facilitator.
2. Operations are done according to Delcon job descriptions, which are approved by the Shepherds, and updated annually.
3. The congregation will operate on a Committee/Ministry system such that Shepherd's authority is delegated to Committees and then subdivided to Ministries as appropriate.
4. The Chair of each Committee will operate primarily as a manager and send short monthly reports including 5 agreed upon reporting points to a Facilitator.
5. The role of Committee Chair will be for a term of one or two years only and the Chair must rotate out of the position for at least a year.
6. The Facilitator will post the information to DelCon and send a monthly summary report on Committee activities to the leadership.
7. Jobs descriptions will be suggested by the Committees according to how they can best achieve their part of the Shepherd approved congregational goals. Shepherds will approve all job descriptions and to the greatest extent practical will refrain from "thumb printing" them. Committee Chairs and liaison Shepherds will review and update all job descriptions annually.

CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS:

1. Business meetings will be held quarterly and at other times when required.
2. Business decisions to be made by majority rule in open business meetings run by Robert's rules of order. All ministry active³ members, Deacons and Shepherds to have an equal vote (see item #1 under AUTHORITY).
3. The Chair for the will be alternately a Shepherd and a Deacon Committee Chair who is current on this monthly reporting.
4. The current summary report from Committee Chairs will be provided so all will be aware of the committee status on the 5 key reporting points. Verbal committee reporting will be beyond those 5 points.
5. Budgets will be done for and approved by the Shepherds by the guaranteed subscription method.⁴
6. The Shepherds cannot veto any activity which is scriptural and is in the current budget but can veto any item which is either unscriptural or not in the current budget.
7. The Shepherds have veto power on incurring any debt.

ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS:

1. There will be an annual business meeting of all adults in the congregation in which all ministry active³ member's point of view will be given 3 minutes to speak on any topic.
2. Someone who can run a meeting like this should run it. It is a talent which everyone does not have.

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. The Shepherds will receive the Delcon Visitor Summary Report monthly along with a graph of the congregational attendance and visitor traffic since the DelCon program was started.
2. All congregationally sponsored activities will be evaluated at least annually on their potential to attract prospects.
Available resources (time and money) will be focused on attracting and engaging prospects. Shepherds will be kept aware of prospect status.
3. All members will view the 3 – 20 Wings of Eagles⁵ videos or something equivalent.

THE LEADERSHIP WANTED TO DO EVERYTHING THE SAME AS BEFORE, BUT GET A DIFFERENT RESULT

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN Y:

As commented before, no plan is going to be good for all congregations. If we continue with business as usual with our current implementation of the scriptural plan B, the Churches of Christ as we know them are likely to disappear in 50-70 years.

We simply cannot let this happen. You need to make a plan for your congregation which will get members effectively engaged in the Great Commission again; and will keep them engaged for the long haul.

Hopefully, this paper will give you some ideas as to what you might do.

References:

1. <https://occg.institute/christian-array-topical-lessons/4-church-of-christ/>
2. <https://occg.institute/delcon/>
3. Ministry active is defined here as spending 30 minutes per month on any role, committee, or ministry of the congregation, a term used to promote the congregational goal of member involvement.
4. <https://occg.institute/papers/organization/guaranteed-budget-subscription>
5. <https://occg.institute/2-wings-of-eagles/>

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