

The Pastors Connection

April 2012

Confirmed Call

"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way, in all your speaking and in all your knowledge, because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you." I Cor. 1:4-6

Cindy and I praise God for the joy of receiving your confirmation of God's call upon my life to continue leading this body into our future together. We look forward to witnessing what God accomplishes through our gospel partnership the five years before our next end of term review.

I want to publically thank our Oversight Team James and Faith Wenger, and Nelson Yoder who joined in this review; for their generous investment of time and energy. It would be appropriate for each of us to pray God's blessing on them for their service!!

Our church structure is modeled upon what we see in scripture. NT Apostles functioned in teams. Similarly we benefit from the wisdom of oversight from a Team.

In the NT church the Apostles led the believers in calling leaders from within the body to govern their life together. Similarly we empower out Pastoral Team into that governing role of providing direction, correction and protection of our life together.

After confirming elders the NT Apostles no longer retained governmental authority in the local body but rather spoke life upon a foundation of relational authority. Our Oversight Team also has no governing authority to override the decisions of the congregation or Pastoral Team. They function as "invited in" authority whose word carries weight simply because God leads us to select persons into oversight whom we love, trust and respect.

Our Constitution also seeks to fully honor biblical principles of leaders being both authorized to lead, and accountable for that leadership. Every ministry in the church has clarity regarding who on Ministry Council empowers, oversees, and releases Gods mission through their work. Similarly "authorization" empowers our Pastor to lead Pastoral Team and Ministry Council while "accountability" empowers the outside Oversight Team to lead annual reviews and bring a report to the congregation without any member of the Pastoral Team having veto power over the content of that report.

In last weeks' review Pastoral Team and Oversight Team briefly evaluated this model. Obviously it works well when relationships are healthy and leaders have integrity. But what about a setting where the Pastor would lack integrity, or have mediocre leadership skills? In such a setting would an outside Pope or Bishop model; or a single Overseer or Conference Minister model; or a less authorized Pastor sharing leadership power with a congregational chair model; or an independent church model work better?

I came away from that discussion more deeply grateful for the privilege of serving in a setting where we aim to honor accountability and authority of all leaders.

In my May of 2010 Connection I summarized the work of our Constitution Team by writing “We believe church organization should reflect the skeleton of our bodies, providing structure and flexibility. When the skeleton is broken, the body can come apart; when inflexible, it can grind to a painful halt. We pray the changes approved will provide adequate structure to help us stand together; and adequate flexibility to run with the wind of God’s Spirit stirring new dreams in our midst.”

I believe the abundant fruit we witnessed in our 2012 review is direct outgrowth of those strong governance roots.

Joyfully living Christ’s story with you, Pastor Bob