

GA-2010 Policy Governance for Congregations

Friday, June 25, 2004 1:55 PM

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- Facilitated by Mary Higgins (District Executive of the Florida District) and Margaret Keip (Accredited Interim Minister, now semi-retired. Both are Unitarian Universalist ministers, and have trained at the Carver academy.
- The Florida District is the first district that has adopted Carver Policy Governance; a number of other districts are now doing so or have done so.

Mary's presentation

- This is a model with structural implications. If you violate the guidelines, you're not literally doing *Policy Governance*, but that doesn't mean you're doing something wrong.
- What is the model? Provides a structured and informed dialog between all parties. There are four policy areas that speak to the values of the organization. The Ends are the only "ends" [purpose] policies; all others are "means" policies.
 - Ends -- a result, change, or difference to be made for a certain group of people at some "cost"; cost can be in terms of priorities, doesn't have to be dollars; the Board needs to rationalize the priorities with the available resources (with the Executive playing a key role in feeding back what is doable)
 - Executive Limitations -- what must not be violated in pursuing the Ends; Executive Limitations are stated in the negative; they release the staff to pursue the Ends as long as they don't violate certain tenets. Examples include
 - Ethical treatment of staff and people served
 - Responding to grievances
 - Financial prudence, budgeting, planning
 - Board / Executive Linkage -- these policies define how the Board seeks to assure that the ends are being implemented and means limits honored; they include a monitoring schedule that helps the Board maintain Executive accountability.
 - Board Governance Process -- how the Board governs itself and how the Board links to the ownership, i.e., congregational members

- The Board speaks with a single voice or it doesn't speak at all. The President, Treasurer or single Board members don't instruct the staff.
 - The Board has a CGO -- Chief Governance Officer -- this is normally the President but it doesn't have to be so.
- Staff may be either paid or volunteer; they carry out the ends.
 - The Board works with three types of information: 1) information the Board needs to make a good decision; 2) monitoring information to ensure the ends are being met or the limitations are not being violated; and 3) incidental information to inform. With incidental information, approval/disapproval is not required.
 - In formulating policy, the Board starts with the broadest statement or description (i.e., "global"); more detailed statements are added as the Board feels the need to be more specific and provide more definition. The staff is then free to make any reasonable interpretation of the policy statements; refer to Carver for examples of sub policies in a given area
 - In the ends area, before any implementation occurs, Mary suggests that the Executive should write his or her interpretation of the ends statements and replay this back to the Board; the Board can then respond with any clarification that may be required. This occurs before implementation begins (and possibly wasted effort and energy). Once agreement is in place, the Executive should then develop the implementation plan for achieving the ends (not for approval) and tell the Board the timing of the results (for Board monitoring). This is also applied to the Executive Limitations policies.
 - The CEO can be a person or a team, and the latter may be comprised of paid and volunteer staff.
 - The Board manages the CEO or Executive Team
 - Some Board members adopt the model, some resist it. Therefore, board members are wisely selected based upon their ability to play a constructive role in Policy Governance.
 - The Board *governs* (through policy), it does not *manage* the affairs of the church

Margaret Keip's presentation

- Unique aspects in applying Policy Governance to churches:
 - A difficulty in a church setting is that the roles in a church are all intertwined: Board and staff (paid or volunteer) are also likely to be owners. Keeping these roles separate is a continuing challenge. The implication of this is that there should be role separation -- as much as possible-- which implies that Policy Governance may not be appropriate to small churches.
 - The Board "Liaison" model violates the "one voice" principle.
 - Ends in a church are larger than providing specific beneficial services to a certain community; there are also personal and social transformation ends within a church. In a church situation, the congregation determines the ends, not the Board; the Board's role is to articulate the congregation's view, so it needs to stay in touch with the congregation. Holding forums with the various constituencies within the church (e.g., parents, seniors, singles, etc.) is one way to do this.
 - The role of the clergy is complicated by congregational polity, since the congregation calls the minister, not the board; yet the Board is responsible/accountable to ensure the church is "healthy."
- The CGO is the only one with the right of "reasonable interpretation" of the Board means policies (like the role the Executive plays with the Ends and Executive Limitations policies)
- Question -- how do you get a "CEO" with only part-time resources? Because of this issue, the CEO is almost always a team in a mid-size church. Such executive teams are likely to meet as a group every week or every two weeks.
- Carver now says that when working with an Executive Team, in addition to the Board/CEO linkage policies addressing the entire team, there may be policies that address the accountability and monitoring of individual team members, based upon their specific roles. In this way the individuals can be held accountable, as well as the team being accountable.
- The Executive team should choose whether to have a Program Council -- not the Board. Such a council is a tool of the Executive Team, since its role is to help fulfill Ends. The only committees the Board appoints are those that help the Board do its own job of governance.

- Question -- how does the Committee on Ministry (COM) relate to Policy Governance? The minister has a larger responsibility than what is covered by the linkage with the Board, particularly in the spiritual area. The COM may be the vehicle to address this. The COM might be a committee of the Board. (Personally, I think not.)
- Once the ends and means policies are in place, the Board spends its primary time talking about the Ends and fulfillment of the church's purpose (Mary Higgins quoted a board member who said that meetings are like "going to church.")
- Some examples of the makeup of the Executive Team:
 - Minister, Administrator (part time), Finance person (Treasurer if the treasurer leaves the Board), possibly a general representative from the church
 - Two lay leaders + co-ministers, supported by advisory councils
 - Minister and administrator
- What is the role of the Treasurer in Policy Governance? If the Treasurer is to be "hands on" and involved in the operations of the church, he or she should be on the administrative team and not on the Board. If the Treasurer is a resource to assist the Board with its governance process -- and is not involved in the day-to-day operation -- then the Treasurer should be on the Board.