



Leading the 21st Century Disciple: A Simplified Structure for Missional Effectiveness*

In the United Methodist Church (UMC), we historically have four administrative committees that care for the "business" of the church. Those four committees are the Trustees Committee, Finance Committee, Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (known as SPR), and the Administrative Council (Admin Council). If you didn't know, HMUMC typically has approximately 50 volunteers serving across these four committees and involves many hours of meetings throughout the year.

But we asked ourselves, "What if there is a better way to make disciples of Jesus and engage our amazing volunteers to do more mission work?"

The latest book of UMC Discipline allows churches the opportunity to restructure to be more missionally focused (see Paragraph 247.2). Hundreds of churches have now moved to a more simplified, accountable structure model where the shift is focused on serving in mission and ministry rather than serving in hours of meetings.

Over the past year, HMUMC and the North Georgia UMC Conference have been partnering with author and consultant, Kay Kotan who has developed and implemented the Simplified, Accountable Structure model in hundreds of churches for more than a decade.

Throughout the summer of 2022, we were in the discerning phase to determine if Simplified Accountability Structure is right for Hamilton Mill UMC. This phase was designed to explore if this is a good fit and have conversations with church members. We had two in person meetings and one additional Zoom meeting.

On July 12, 2022, the Discerning Team took all the feedback received from these meetings to the Administrative Council. The Admin Council voted positively to move forward so on Sunday, September 18th around 12:00 pm we will vote as a church to move forward. The Church Conference meeting is open for ALL MEMBERS. The District Superintendent will then preside over the Church Conference in which everyone present will vote. If the church votes positively, we will move into the Equipping phase. In the Equipping phase we will nominate and train our board and then finally we will move to an implementation phase which hope will happen in January 2023 – this is not a short process as we are taking our time to pray, learn, and make sure this is a good fit for our church.

A Brief Overview of the SAS Leadership Model:

To simplify church structure, the four administrative committees (trustees, finance, staff-parish relations, and council) cease to exist as we know them, and they are replaced by **one new Leadership Board of nine people with three-year terms**. This new board is nominated by the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development and voted on by either the church or

charge conference. **Rather than holding four separate meetings, there is now one board meeting where the leaders can practice a healthier and more holistic approach with missional focus and direction.** Technically, and in fulfillment with the requirements of the Discipline, all four committees still exist, but they exist as a single unified Leadership Board, with all responsibilities, qualifications, and authority of each administrative committee located in the simplified board.

When simplifying the structure, accountability must be a deeply integrated and highly accepted component of simplification. Without accountability, simplification is NOT recommended. When transitioning to accountable leadership, the new Leadership Board shifts from managing the church to governing the church. This is a significant shift that should NOT be minimized or glossed over. Accountable leadership changes not only the agenda, but also the conversations, focus, and priorities at the table. The nominations process is adapted too. While the new Leadership Board governs in the model of accountable leadership, the pastor leads, the staff (paid and unpaid ministry leaders) equips and coordinates ministry, and the congregation is released to be in ministry.

The primary purposes and benefits of simplified, accountable leadership are:

- Removes bottlenecks in the decision-making process (time, resources, multiple committees, disjointed focus, and priorities, etc.)
- More people released and available in ministry
- Leadership Board aligns church resources to the mission and vision of HMUMC
- Leaders are held accountable at all levels
- Leadership Board is responsible for focusing on the areas of stewardship, strategic alignment, generative future-focus, and accountable leadership
- Missional focus, priority, and alignment are non-negotiables

By moving to a simplified accountable structure, the leadership board has a covenant and guiding principles to follow. Strategic planning is done annually so we can live into the mission of HMUMC.

SAS Leadership Model Frequently Asked Questions

We've heard many of the same questions throughout this discerning phase and have answered them below. We hope these answers below help clear up any questions you might have.

1. Which positions can be combined for one person on the Board to hold?

Most all positions can be combined if the minimum number is elected. The Lay Leader, Lay Member to Annual Conference, S/PPR Chair and Trustee Chair must be designated but could all be the same person.

2. Is there an absolute minimum number for the Board?

Nine is the standard and recommended minimum. Very small congregations may be able to have a Leadership Board of six, composed of two individuals in each three-year class at the discretion of their district superintendent.

3. Does the pastor have a vote?

No. Because the Leadership Board's work switches roles quickly from Disciplinary committee to committee, we recommend that the pastor not vote, in order to preserve clarity and unity in the Board. If a matter comes up that depends on one vote of the pastor, that is probably a sign that more conversation and discernment is needed.

4. Can family members serve together on the Board?

Per the Book of Discipline, family members cannot serve on the Board together. If it cannot be avoided, the family members may need to excuse themselves from the room or not vote on issues with potential conflict of interest. Staff and family of staff cannot serve on the Board.

5. Should staff (paid and unpaid) serve on the Board?

No

6. Who should take notes at the meeting?

Someone can be assigned or elected to take notes who is not on the Board. That person could also be selected from the existing members of the Board, a person recruited outside the Board to take notes (needs to be excluded from S/PPR conversations) or a person who is an addition to the Board with the sole responsibility of taking notes.

7. Are the Financial Secretary and Treasurer required to be on the Board?

No, but they can be. The recommendation and best practice is for them not to be on the Board.

8. Which position on the Board serves as the liaison to the District Superintendent for Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee purposes?

It is recommended that the Board Chair serves as the S/PPRC liaison to the DS.

9. Are there still three-year terms and classes?



Yes. One third of the Board will roll off each year.

10. Is the Board self-nominating?

No. There is still a requirement that there be a separate Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development to nominate the Board Members to the Charge Conference each year. The nomination process for this board is critical – the nomination committee must identify spiritually mature individuals that are right for this important team within the church.

11. How long can a person serve on the Board?

Board members serve a three-year term. Since all members are serving as S/PPR, Trustees and Finance, it is recommended they roll off after each three-year term. After being off the Board for a year, the person can roll back onto the Board if elected.

12. Are UMM, UMW, and UMYF representatives required to be on the Board?

If the church has these chartered groups, a member of that group may serve if requested on the Board as a leader of the local congregation (not to report about their group).

13. How many must be present to take an official vote? What requires an official vote?

A quorum is described as whoever is present (Note of exception: In rare matters that require the Trustees to function as a legal body, a majority of Leadership Board members who are Trustees must be present). Simple majority of Leadership Board members attending approves a motion.

14. How is the Trustee Chair elected or appointed as required by the corporate resolution?

At the first meeting at the beginning of each new year, the Board will elect a Trustee Chair to satisfy the corporate resolution requirement. It is recommended the Board Chair serve as the Trustee Chair. This person would have legal responsibility for all documents that fall under the Trustees. Please note that all members of the board who will serve in the role as a trustee must be of legal age (18+ in most states).

15. If a church moves to the simplified accountable structure, how does ministry happen?

Even though the restructuring occurs, ministry teams are still needed and in place. Fewer people on the Board means more people are available to do ministry. Simplifying structure is the combining of the four administrative teams of the Council, Trustees, Finance and S/PPR

Committees. The only change for ministry teams is that the Nominations Committee is no longer responsible for identifying and nominating leaders and members for ministry teams.

16. Where can I find information on simplified structure in the Book of Discipline?

Paragraph 247.2 in the 2016 edition

17. How should we pick Leadership Board members? Do we need to seek out people with different skills, such as financial, human resources, legal, and marketing? Should we try to create a team composed of people with personality test results?

By Discipline, all Leadership Board Members will need to be professing members of the church because some of the constituent committees require professing membership. The right team is composed of devoted disciples of Jesus who can think strategically about the church's mission, hold clergy, staff, and fellow members accountable to the mission, and partner with other Leadership Board members to guide the congregation into making a God-sized impact. The Leadership Board should be as diverse as possible so that the leadership table will have the different voices that God needs for the congregation to discern its future direction. Other skills can be added through work groups. While teams can be designed using a variety of tools, don't let these tools get in the way of the fact that Jesus' mission needs Jesus' disciples and that accountability must come before any other considerations.

18. What size church is too small or too large for SAS?

While 247.2 was written for small churches who had difficulty finding enough people to fill all the "slots" in a committee structure, it was some of our largest churches that first discovered the power of SAS. Churches with an average worship attendance under 50 may already be doing a de facto simplified structure, and it may or may not be using accountability. Large Churches that worship in the thousands have discovered the need for SAS as they seek to counteract ministry silos and mission drift. Mid-size congregations from 50-500 in worship will quickly discover the power of SAS in unleashing more laity for ministry and focusing the church on Christ's mission.

19. What are the Discipline requirements for Leadership Board composition?

The Leadership Board should be made up of professing members, with a Discipline-recommended minimum of 1/3 being laywomen and 1/3 being lay men.

20. Who can attend the meetings?

Congregation members are always invited to attend the meetings, but do not have a



voice or vote. When the Board needs to move to executive session to address S/PPRC matters or to consider legal negotiations (such as buying or selling property), these church members will need to be excused.

21. Should we assign Board Members to specialist roles for finance or personnel?

No! This defeats the purpose of the simplified structure and interrupts Leadership Board accountability. While the Board may assign a work group to work on a special project and report back, only the entire Leadership Board can act and make decisions

Additional questions asked during our discerning phase – please see the answers below from Kay Kotan, creator of SAS:

22. In this new model, there is reference to a board retreat. Is this required for the initial board only or is this something that will be held annually?

There is a recommended annual fall Strategic Ministry Planning Retreat led by an outside facilitator. This will be for the new Leadership Board.

23. What is the continuing education plan for the board?

Each year the new Board Members should be provided a Mission Possible book and trained in the new model (through the district, conference, or online on demand training). In addition, each meeting has a spiritual and leadership development time as part of the agenda.

24. Who determines the nominations committee?

The Committee on Nominations places persons before the Charge Conference for consideration for Nominations just like the Leadership Board members.

25. What are the terms for the initial 9 members since they will be on a rotating schedule?

The first 9 people should be placed in classes: 3 people in the class of 2023, 3 people in the class of 2024, and 3 people in the class of 2025

26. Do we need to define or can we determine the ages of the 9 people on the board?



The Committee on Nominations is responsible for discerning new leaders to place before the charge conference for vote. Spiritual maturity will be the most important discerning factor followed by the skills needed for leadership. Per the UMC Book of Discipline, "In the identification process, care shall be given that the leadership of ministries reflects inclusivity and diversity." This includes not only the Leadership Board and Nominations, but also across ministry team leadership.

27. How does the 9 have good checks and balances and not burden the staff with too many items?

One of the first things the Leadership Board will do is develop a Leadership Covenant. They will also be trained in the model including accountability. This includes how the Leadership Board is accountable to Christ for leading the church in its mission of making disciples, the Leadership Board holding the Pastor accountable for the vision and goals, the Pastor holding the staff accountable for the objectives, and the Ministry Team leaders holding their team accountable for the ministry outcomes.

In this model, the Leadership Board rarely has much direct interaction with the staff. The Pastor leads the staff, so the Leadership Board over burdening the staff should not occur.

28. How do they stay in touch with what is going on in the church?

The Leadership Board will conduct quarterly Town Hall meetings to provide updates for the congregation and provide a time for feedback loops for the congregation.

29. How do we focus on the rest of the church and not just the 9 – showing the church that it's going to be easier to get involved?

Ministries should be celebrated. Highlight a ministry of the month. Have a servant Sunday where anyone who has/is serving is celebrated and recognized.

Remember, how we make decisions is part of the structure (structure = money, building & grounds, calendar, how decisions are made) of the church. Healthy structure plays a supporting role - not a driving role in a healthy, vital, and growing church. Vision needs to be a driving role as well as relationships (external relationships followed by internal relationships). Ministries are planned that support the vision (not because we've always done them or it's someone's pet ministry). One of the primary motivations in moving to SAS is to release people into ministry.



Disciples are not made in meetings! THE most important role in the life of the congregation is to be in ministry with people who do not yet know Jesus so that we might have the opportunity to tell a person why Jesus is an important part of our life. That opportunity will not occur in a Board Meeting!

Do you have more questions? Feel free to reach out to the Discerning Committee by emailing communications@hmumc.org

*Note most of this material comes from Kay Kotan & Blake Bradford's book "Mission Possible: A Simple Structure for Missional Effectiveness" 3rd Edition, Copyright 2021.

https://www.amazon.com/Mission-Possible-Structure-Missional-Effectiveness/dp/1950899284/ref=sr_1_1?crd=R8RS6Y7HB23Q&keywords=mission+possible+kay+katon&qid=1655388904&srefix=mission+possible+kay+katon%2Caps%2C182&sr=8-1