

DECIDING ON YOUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Who has the responsibility to do what regarding leadership decisions?

There are 3 primary functions of leaders in the church:

- 1) ruling
- 2) leading
- 3) executing

There are 2 primary leadership positions within the church:

- 1) elders
- 2) staff

Most all would agree that elders rule and that staff executes (programs of the church).

There are 2 primary options for a church's leadership structure:

- 1) elders rule and lead – staff executes
- 2) elders rule – staff leads and executes

An abbreviated summary of ruling responsibilities:

Approving and overseeing the church's ministry plan, pastoring, policies, budget and health, while guarding the church's theological purity and gospel centrality.

An abbreviated summary of executing responsibilities:

Directing the ministries, programs and procedures which have been chosen to fulfill the church's ministry plan.

An abbreviated summary of leading responsibilities:

Deciding on the personnel, ministries, programs and procedures the church will use to fulfill the church's ministry plan.

I suggest the best option for a church's leadership structure is:

Elders rule – Staff leads and executes

Examples of responsibilities when staff are responsible for both leading and executing:

- assisting the elder leadership in equipping of the saints and the shepherding of the flock
- deciding how to successfully fulfill the church's ministry plan (purpose, vision, mission and values & goals) in a timely manner
- hiring and supervising the staff allotted in the budget
- presenting a ministry plan (new or updated) for approval by the elders
- creating and maintaining a healthy morale and culture among the staff, officers and members of the church (the responsibility of the senior pastor)
- etc...(see job descriptions, staff orientation, & elder orientation)

Many, if not most, PCA churches use a hybrid of these two structures (which in my opinion is very unwise).

- They do so by having a committee run church, putting staff, elders and laity on the committees of the major ministries of the church (i.e., missions, youth, worship, etc.)

It is important that no committee or ministry team have an elder placed on the leadership team as a representative of the session. It is fine for an elder to join a ministry team as merely a church member.

For any leadership structure to work, 2 things are critical:

- 1) The pastor must be a man who both desires and invites his ideas and advice be challenged before a final controversial decision is made.
- 2) During and after every decision is made among both staff and elders, each person must embrace the values of honesty and loyalty.