

Models of Board Governance

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The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Models of Board Governance



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Purpose of This Guide

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4–7

Every congregation needs structures and practices that enable it to pursue its mission to the fullest. To do this, we want buildings and property to be well maintained. We want clear, accountable decision-making processes that are appropriate to the size and context of our congregation. We want to ensure the safety and security of vulnerable people. In short, we want to use the congregation's resources thoughtfully to enable ministry to flourish.

This congregational resource outlines several models of board governance for use by United Church congregations. Key leadership roles related to the regular life and work of your congregation are also described.

Whether you are ministry personnel, a volunteer or paid staff, a newly elected member of a board, a committee, a group in your local church, or a seasoned veteran of church administration, we hope this guide helps you determine the style of governance that most suits your congregation's purpose.

If you have any feedback that would help us make this resource more useful, please contact us:

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Throughout this guide, references are to *The Manual, 2010*. In your work, always refer to the most current edition. You can download it from www.united-church.ca/manual or order a copy from United Church Resource Distribution (UCRD) or your presbytery resource centre.

Board Governance

The Manual, 2010, lists typical organizational models for United Church pastoral charges:

- Session/Stewards/Official Board
- unified board, called the Church Board
- council, called the Church Council

Different forms of organization may also be established, such as a

- Mission Team Model
- streamlined Church Board

The purpose of any model of board governance is to support the work of the congregation or pastoral charge and ensure the effective oversight of the congregation's spiritual and financial life. Clergy or other ministry personnel and staff also have particular roles in guiding and supporting the board's regular operations.

Since a congregation's circumstances change over time, models of board governance need to change across the life span of the congregation. For example, some boards are heavily involved in operations, while others have little or no involvement in daily operations.

In determining what model of governance to adopt, consider the size of the congregation, the number of programs or activities, and expectations around reporting relationships and how priorities are set.

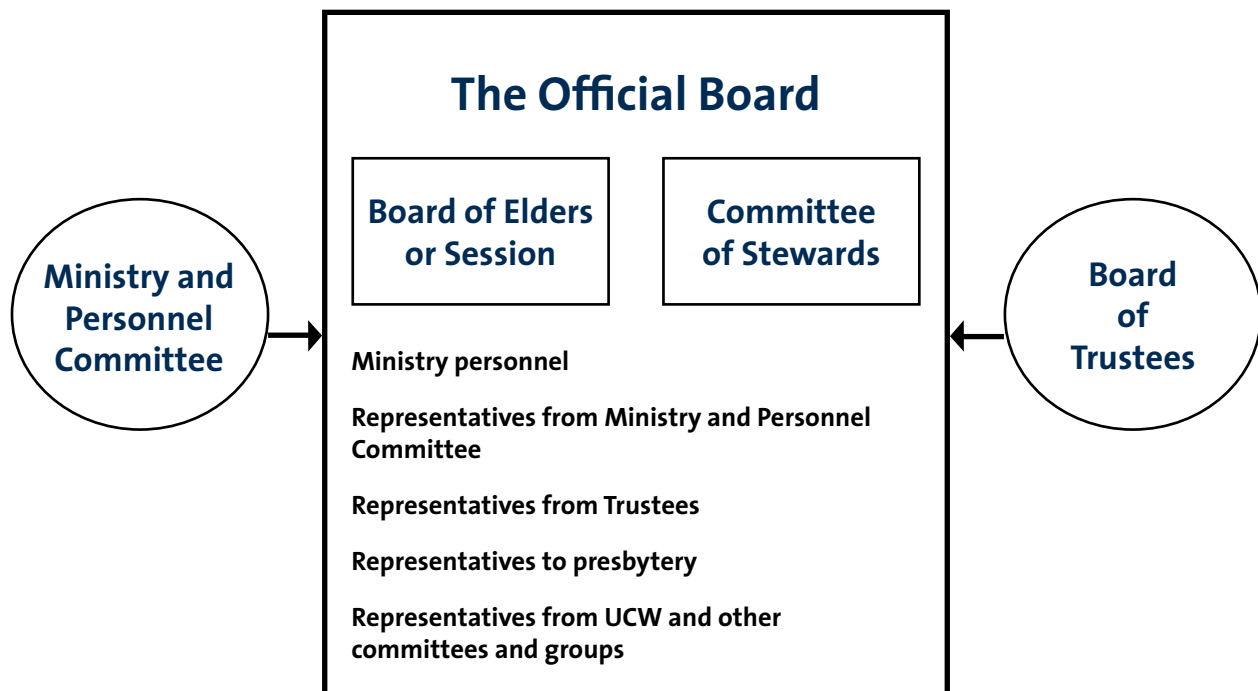
Regardless of the model you choose, regularly review it to ensure it is effective and able to engage, enliven, and support the ministry of your congregation.

The Session/Stewards Model (*The Manual 140–190*)

The two primary decision-making groups in this model are

- the **Board of Elders** (also called the **Session**)
- the **Committee of Stewards**

Each of these groups meets separately and has distinct areas of responsibility. In this model, the Session and the Stewards are mandated to meet together on at least a quarterly basis. When they meet, they are called the **Official Board**.



Session

The Board of Elders, or Session, is responsible for the spiritual leadership of the congregation, including worship, education, pastoral care, and outreach. The ministry personnel settled in or appointed to a pastoral charge or a congregation are members of the Session. A **quorum** for Session requires the attendance of the ministry personnel or, where no minister is settled or appointed, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor.

Stewards

The Committee of Stewards is responsible for the temporal matters of the congregation, including stewardship development, remuneration of personnel, capital expenditures, property maintenance, and day-to-day administration of finances. The Committee of Stewards elects from its members a **treasurer**.

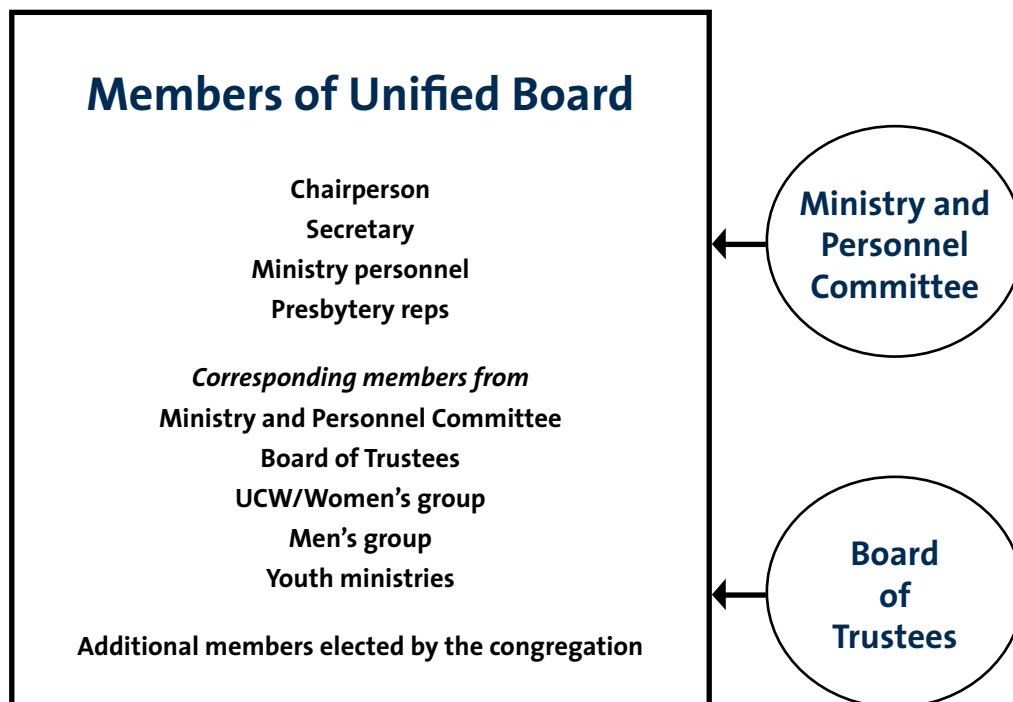
Elders

Elders are elected by the pastoral charge or congregation for their wisdom, caring, spiritual discernment, and other gifts of the Spirit. They are entrusted with leadership among the whole congregation. Elders of an Official Board must be members of The United Church of Canada.

The Unified Board or Church Board Model

(The Manual 200–213)

The Unified Board model unifies the traditional functions of spiritual leadership and financial management in one Board that also coordinates the work of various task groups or committees.



All members of the Church Board are **elders** and may be assigned a number of families to visit regularly. Required committees include the Ministry and Personnel Committee and the Board of Trustees. Other committees are up to the congregation or pastoral charge.

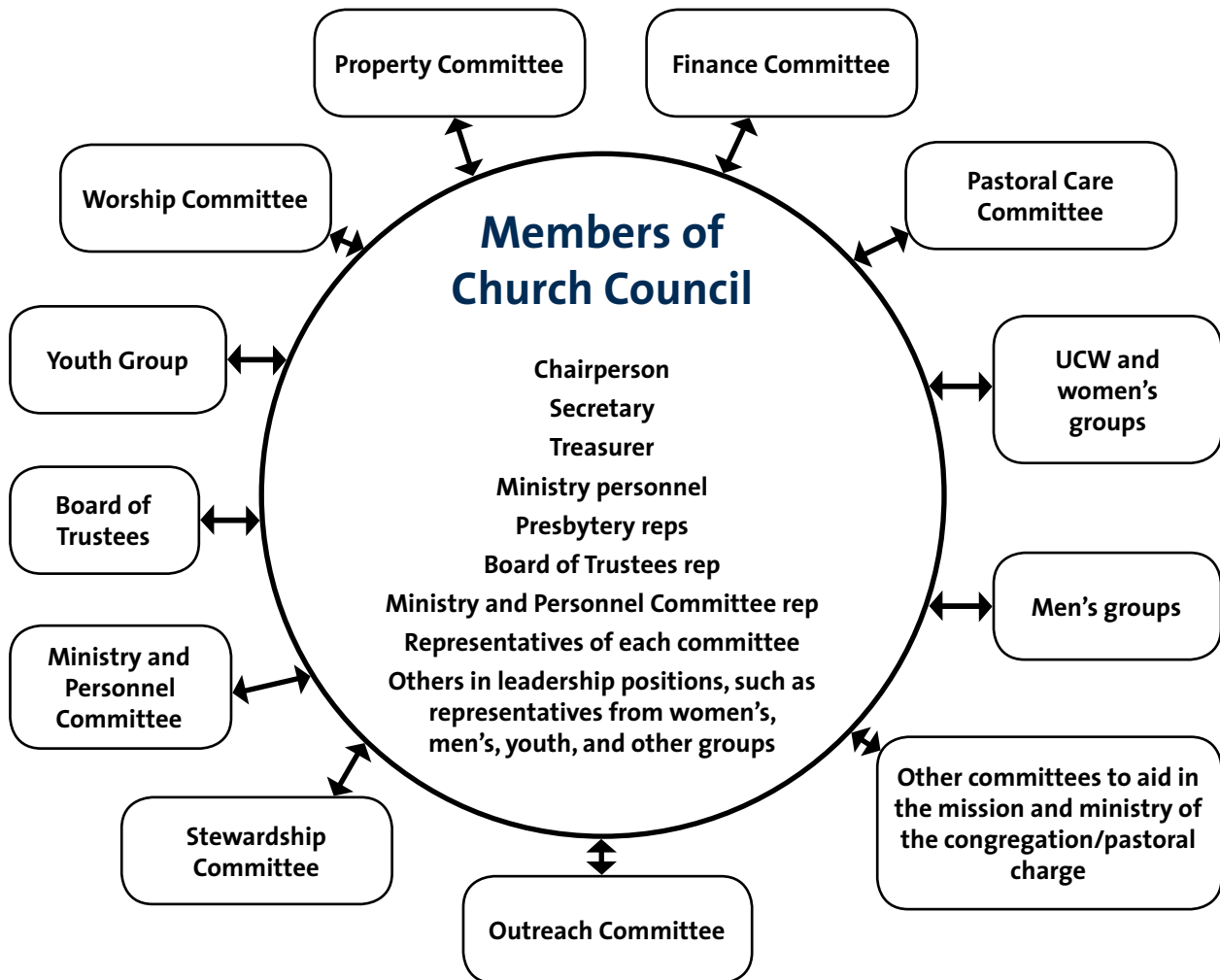
A **quorum** for the Board requires the attendance of the ministry personnel or, where no minister is settled or appointed, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor.

A **treasurer** is elected from among the members of the Church Board.

The Church Council Model (*The Manual* 215–228)

The Church Council develops policy and plans that are implemented by various committees and groups of the congregation. The pastoral charge determines the organization and duties of Council committees and elects from among the members and adherents of the pastoral charge people to serve on the committees.

Typical Church Council Model



Council committees elect from their members individuals to represent them on Council. The members of Council are called **elders**.

A **quorum** for the Council requires the attendance of the ministry personnel or, where no minister is settled or appointed, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor.

An **adherent** is a person who is attached to a congregation and contributes regularly to its life and work but is not formally a member of the United Church.

The Mission Team Model (*The Manual 279*)

The Mission Team structure consists of three teams that reflect the three areas of responsibility essential to congregational life and work:

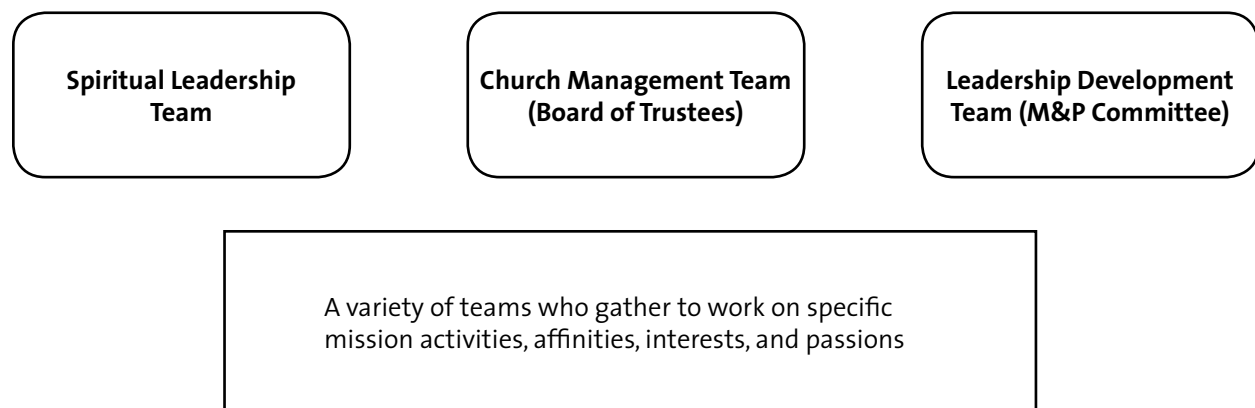
- Spiritual leadership team: Motivates, equips, and trains leaders for effective ministries in and beyond the church. The work of visitation and pastoral care is assigned to this team.
- Church management team: Deploys the resources of the congregation to facilitate the ministries of the congregation. The work of the Trustees is assigned to this team.
- Leadership development team: Nurtures volunteer and salaried participants to discern gifts and callings and to work together responsibly in healthy relationships. The work of the Ministry and Personnel Committee is assigned to this team.

Ministry personnel serve as a resource to all three areas of the Mission Team model.

Together, the members of the three teams, the ministry personnel, and presbytery representatives make up the Church Board. This model of board governance is oriented toward policy development and long-term planning. Mission discernment, design, and implementation are delegated to the various ministries.

The Board consists of a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. For a quorum, the Board requires the attendance of the ministry personnel or, where no minister is settled or appointed, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor.

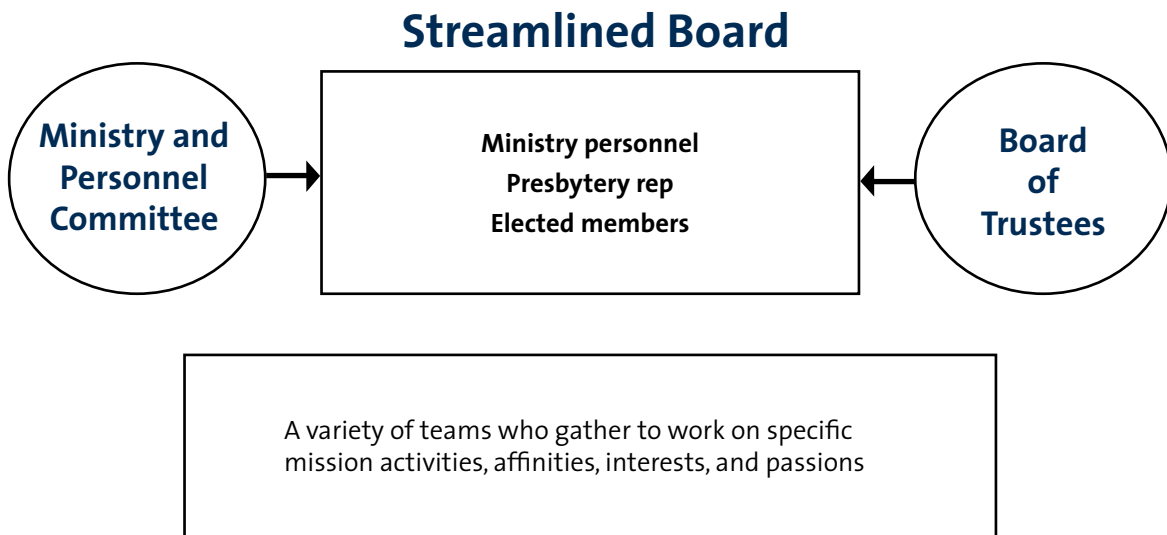
Typical Mission Team Model



The Streamlined Board Model (*The Manual 279*)

This model is usually much smaller than the Unified Board or Church Council. Those who serve on the Board do not have to serve on any particular group, and those who serve with a group or team do not have to attend Board meetings.

The streamlined Board empowers mission teams by providing overall directions and boundaries for action while freeing teams to manage their mission as they see fit. The Streamlined Board discerns mission, forms policy, develops strategies, deploys leaders, and monitors progress. Staff and participants have freedom and authority to act, guided by the congregation's purpose and core values and the parameters of each leader's role.



The Board consists of a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. For a quorum, the Board requires the attendance of the ministry personnel or, where no minister is settled or appointed, the Pastoral Charge Supervisor.

Governance of The United Church of Canada

The founders of The United Church of Canada provided for substantial local freedom for congregations. They also endeavoured, through the various courts of the church, to secure the benefits of a strong connexional tie and cooperative efficiency.

The Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregationalist churches formed The United Church of Canada on June 10, 1925. The basic law of the United Church agreed upon by the uniting denominations is contained in the Basis of Union, which came into force by virtue of *The United Church of Canada Act*. Both the Basis of Union and the United Church by-laws can be found in *The Manual*. Although the Basis of Union is the more authoritative document, the by-laws are more detailed and are referred to more frequently.

The Manual of The United Church of Canada is a living, working document that is regularly amended. Its purpose is to order procedures and to provide for the consistent resolution of differences to help achieve order and justice. *The Manual* is one of the means by which the United Church does its work and safeguards its members.

When determining what form of church government is best suited to their purpose, congregations are to refer to the options outlined in *The Manual* for guidance.

The glossary that follows contains basic definitions related to board governance in The United Church of Canada.

Glossary

adherent

A person who is attached to a congregation and contributes regularly to its life and work but is not formally a member of the United Church.

church court

One of the four organizational bodies in the United Church that have deliberative and decision-making powers. The four courts are the pastoral charge, presbytery or district, Conference, and General Council.

conciliar

Holding councils for the purpose of common agreement in faith and practice. This means that representatives from one body (e.g., the congregation) are members of the next body (e.g., the presbytery/district). Likewise, the Conferences consist of representatives from presbyteries/districts, and the General Council consists of representatives from the Conferences.

elder

A person elected by the pastoral charge who is entrusted with leadership among the whole congregation. Elders serving on a Church Session, Church Board, or Church Council must be members of the United Church.

governance

The structure of authority and processes of decision-making used by a congregation.

Ministry and Personnel Committee

The committee responsible for the oversight and support of salaried staff that is required in all models of board governance in the United Church.

Order of Ministry

The ordained or diaconal leadership of the congregation or pastoral charge. Diaconal and ordained ministers are accountable to the United Church through presbytery/district.

pastoral charge

The basic unit of organization in The United Church of Canada. A pastoral charge can consist of one or more congregations.

polity

How a body or denomination forms and uses its structures for mission. In the United Church our form of governance is conciliar.

presbytery representative

A church member elected by the congregation or pastoral charge to be a voting member at meetings of the presbytery/district.

quorum

The minimum number of members of a congregation's governing body required to transact official business.

Session

In the Official Board model of governance, the body whose duty is to oversee the spiritual interests of the pastoral charge or congregation.

settlement

The action required by the Conference Settlement Committee regarding calls or appointments to a presbytery accountable or presbytery recognized ministry.

spiritual leadership

The nurture and supervision of worship, spiritual growth, administration of the sacraments, conduct of members, pastoral care, and outreach.

stewardship

Responsibility for the time, talents, and money entrusted by God to the congregation or pastoral charge.

temporal matters

The day-to-day matters of the life, work, and finances of the congregation or pastoral charge.

treasurer

The person responsible for presenting a statement of accounts at the end of the financial year.

trustee

An individual who, along with the other members of the Board of Trustees, holds all of the property of the congregation for the use and benefit of the congregation and on behalf of The United Church of Canada.

Resources

For further information, see the following United Church of Canada publications:

Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook, 2004 (www.united-church.ca/handbooks#congregational)

Financial Handbook for Congregations, published every two years (www.united-church.ca/handbooks#finance)

The Manual, published every three years (www.united-church.ca/manual)

Ministry and Personnel Committee Guidelines, 2010 (www.united-church.ca/handbooks#pastoral)

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\$2.00 or download from www.united-church.ca/handbooks