management
committee

when committees are bad...

When church management committees are bad, they are *really* bad. Surprisingly though, "bad" can take many more forms than the most obvious and most feared. There are many ways for church management committees to be ineffective other than the stereotype of rampant hostility and all-night arguments. It's possible for there to be no blood on the floor but also no mission on the ground.

Of course, no-one wants conflict among us. The call to unity in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10) should even extend to committees! But while divided and hostile committees are commonplace enough, it's also possible to have a different sort of problematic committee. It's possible to have a very united 'feeling' Committee, having fun and fellowship deep into the night, that is equally ineffective. It may feel more pleasant than division, but what more is being achieved? What are we really here for? What is our role? Are we carrying it out?

It may be that a committee has some clear sense of their role, but hasn't got it right! The role is conceived too much as 'maintenance' rather than 'mission'. The money is collected. The money is banked. The bills are paid. The buildings are cared for. The grounds are kept. It's efficient, but is it effective? Things are maintained, but where's the mission?

On the other hand, it's possible for a Committee to have got the mission right, but lack the method to implement it. The intention is there. But it simply doesn't translate to action. Another meeting rolls around. The agenda is crammed with dozens of miscellaneous items to track through. People are busy. The excuses roll out why something hasn't been done yet. People are tired. The important policy discussion is deferred because "item (q): broken toilet" took longer than expected...

LEADERS:...before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' **and** 'meeting one to one'.

The goal of the MINISTRY PAPERS is to help churches become ministry training churches. Ministry training churches are churches where all God's people are equipped for works of service (see Ephesians 4:11-12). For that to happen, pastor-teachers need to concentrate on that teaching and equipping ministry. For *that* to happen, others are needed to serve alongside pastor-teachers, as fellow workers, freeing them up from all that might distract them from that teaching and equipping ministry...

investigate

read **Acts 6:1-7**

1. What was the presenting issue (verse 1)?

_____

_____

2. What potential threat came with this issue (verse 2)?

_____

_____

3. What was the solution (verses 3-6)?

_____

_____

4. What did this solution enable (verse 4)?

_____

_____

5. What was the result of approaching things this way (verse 7)?

_____

_____

think & apply

6. How might this episode in the life of the early church provide a useful framework for the role of our management committee?

_____

_____

7. What 'qualifications' might we need to value most when selecting a church management committee?

_____

_____

8. What is the overall goal of our committee?

_____

_____

the **principles**

Start with the principles. Start with the gospel which is "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Look at your church mission statement and think about what part your committee plays in carrying it out. Look at the table at the bottom of this page and then work through the principles outlined below. All the time keep wrestling with question 8 on page 1.

the mission continues

As you read on from Acts 6, you never get to see in detail *how* the 'waiting on tables' issue was dealt with. What matters is that it *was* dealt with. We can be *flexible* in how we organise ourselves. What remains fixed is the mission. In fact, as you read on following the likes of Stephen and Phillip, you find them not waiting on tables, but themselves active in the mission of word and prayer. Perhaps they also learnt the art of delegation and recruitment of all God's people for ministry.

plan for the future

It's not that the needs of the widows in Acts 6 weren't important. Their needs had to be met. But when that job was done, the main need still remained. This is the need for people to hear the gospel of Jesus. As a committee, we need to give maximum time and attention to discussing how to better attend to that need.

develop support roles

For mission and mission planning to take top priority, support roles must be developed. Just imagine if the routine maintenance needs of a particular property never hit the committee's agenda because someone is responsible for that 'portfolio' and deals with issues as they arise. Such people don't need to be on the Committee but simply have clear expectations set out by it. A large part of the Committee's role may be recruiting such personnel. Support roles: we'll always be in maintenance mode without them.

develop policies

For mission and mission planning to take top priority, policies must be developed. One clear policy discussion will save a hundred subsequent ones over identical issues. A clear policy will prevent lots of trivia clogging up the agenda. e.g. a policy directing how small purchases necessary for ongoing ministry can be made, will free up ministry personnel to get on with ministry, without having to wait for meetings to authorize purchases. It may be that working carefully to a meaningful budget provides the broad outline for all minor and recurrent ministry spending.

invest in ministry infrastructure

For mission and mission planning to take top priority, we need to discerningly invest in the right infrastructure. Effective gospel ministry needs an effective platform to operate upon. Computers, phones, photocopiers, support staff: ministry is all about communication. Having the right equipment is part of effective mission.

lamington drives and other distractions

We should pay our own bills, not ask the community to do so. In any case, one person giving $20 a week will beat the 'best' lamington drive every time. And the church can be busy telling people about Jesus rather than cake. The ultimate fundraising strategy is preaching God's generosity in the gospel (2 Cor 8:9). The main point here is, minor fundraising efforts will be an inevitable distraction for any Committee, from mission and mission planning taking top priority.

investing in people

Jesus said, "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2). The key to growing gospel mission is people: people serving in that mission.

Buildings can be useful servants of the gospel. Certain equipment and resources are often needed for effective ministry. There are also other nuisance but necessary expenses such as insurances and so on. It is people, however, that minister the gospel. It is people who grow our gospel mission. It is people, therefore, that we must work hardest to invest in.

Increasingly churches are realising the advantages of team ministry. A glance at the end of Paul's letters reveals a diverse team of 'fellow workers'. Churches often hit a static point in their mission because they're unwilling to take the next step in growing a team. Not all team members have to be paid. Nor do all have to be employed full-time. But in order to equip all God's people, it is worth aiming to release more and more people for full-time devotion to ministry of the word and prayer.

There's a vital principle when it comes to growing a team: money follows workers, not the other way around. Committees can be nervous about taking such steps toward growth, but the right person doing the right ministry will promote growth and so pay for themselves.

ideas for discussion

which model of church?

which of the following models of church is most biblical? which should we follow?

model	mindset	role of minister(s)	role of congregation	impact
MAINTENANCE	"keep things going"	change nothing	receive ministry	things do change! (they decline)
MINISTRY	"we need to grow"	ministers to everyone they can	passive – watching ministry	sometimes some growth
MULTIPLICATION/ TRAINING	"we have a mission together"	teaching, training, equipping, modelling	all involved in ministry	true growth (Eph 4:16)
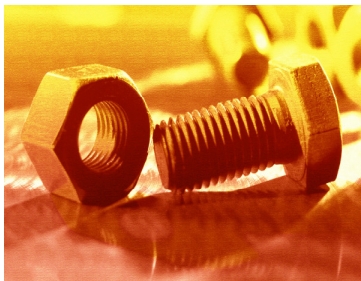
the nuts and bolts

It's time to move from the principles to a few specifics. As we saw in the introduction, it is possible to have a mission intention but somehow lose that in the translation of what actually happens in the Committee meetings. It's possible to have a mission heart but not a mission brain, so to speak. The ideas below are a starting point for thinking through how the nuts and bolts of the committee work can be more conducive to a mission rather than a maintenance function. The questions on the next page will also help translate that to action for your Committee.

the hub

There are many issues to think through in freeing up pastor-teachers for their core ministry. A very real concern in the mix is the rapidly growing administrative load bearing down on churches: government and denominational requirements; internal functions such as rosters & account-keeping; routine enquiries; important newer demands such as child protection policies; time-consuming and complex administrative functions such as copyright compliance. It's all necessary. But none of it is the ministry of word and prayer.

There is a definite need for a church office where all such administrative functions can be centralised and co-ordinated. There is a further need to consider employing a 'ministry co-ordinator' to oversee all such functions. Apart from the time and expertise required, it is another case of investment that will eventually pay for itself. Just as an effective manager in a mechanic workshop will make each mechanic twice as effective, a ministry co-ordinator will make all staff and leaders more effective, and expand opportunities for congregation members to help out. i.e. their role is to co-ordinate the involvement of many, rather than simply doing it all themselves.

While we are rightly eager to prioritise the growing of pastoral staff, there is a problem if such staff are spending over half their time on admin. Not to mention the vast array of ministry leaders etc who also benefit from admin support: e.g. a scripture teacher who finds they can take on an extra class if photocopying is done for them.

It's all part of the vision for a mission mode committee. That will be difficult without these measures. The growing demands upon the treasurer, for example, ordinarily requires the expertise of a professional accountant. But a person with such expertise should not be spending time putting cheques in envelopes. Administrative support is vital across the board.

the agenda

the usual approach to drafting the agenda can unwittingly sidetrack even the most mission-minded church committee into a maintenance mode of operation. Compare the following:

MAINTENANCE agenda	MISSION agenda
1. open in prayer	1. open in Word & prayer
2. apologies	2. apologies
3. confirmation of minutes	3. confirmation of minutes
4. finance report	4. update from leadership team (vision)
5. business arising	5. specific ministry report (e.g. yth group)
6. all the miscellaneous things that have come up since last meeting	6. policy discussion (issue papers)
7. midnight draws near	7. finance report
	8. decisions arising out of 4-6

- the maintenance agenda on the left is inherently backward looking and has no sense of priority within the items discussed.
- the mission agenda on the right prioritises future planning and pro-active discussion of ministry. Ministry reports and issue papers should be circulated ahead of the meeting so members can come prepared and ready for discussion.
- the finance report is important but if discussed too early in the meeting can unhelpfully become the sole basis for every decision, and lead to a focus on detail before bigger picture concerns are considered. Starting with overall vision and strategy, and then ministry and policy discussion is a more helpful context to then discuss finances, rather than the other way around.
- time spent well on policy discussion can reduce the number of items coming to the Committee (see attachment for a standard format for such issue papers).

the minutes
- the minute-taker should come prepared with a template so discussion can flow, and sit near the chairperson for clarification of wording of motions, etc
- minutes shouldn't carry too much detail but only the substance of the discussion, with motions clearly delineated.
- effective minutes will have a clear action column (what and who) so people can't miss what is required of them.
- minutes should be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting.

the budget
- a carefully prepared budget based on past year expenses and projected growth is an invaluable tool for the committee's work throughout the year. Schedule a 'devoted' budget meeting, with input from leadership and all ministries.
- such a budget may negate the need for committee approval for minor spending.

executive roles
- the CHAIRPERSON: is responsible for chairing a discussion with maximum participation, while ensuring the discussion stays on focus.
- the SECRETARY: is responsible for agendas, minutes, correspondence and all records of the committee.
- the TREASURER: receives and accounts for all money, and prepares reports for the committee (who as a whole are responsible for the church's finances).
- note from the sidebar discussion that a Ministry Co-ordinator may assist with routine functions of the executive, and co-ordinate the setting of agendas and distribution of reports, issue papers, etc.
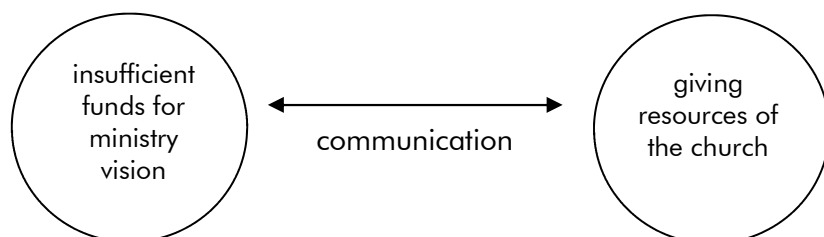
communication

Essential to an effective church management committee is effective communication. Think of yourselves as a committee for 'communication': communication in the broad sense of bringing everything together; in the Acts 6 sense of connecting the right resources to the needs of the mission.

Often we can assume that the failure for meeting ministry needs and filling ministry gaps in our church is a problem of commitment. And yes, that can sometimes be the case. But perhaps the bigger problem is *communication:* more effectively communicating about those gaps and needs, and more effectively matching the resources of the congregation to them. We might be surprised how willing people are to step forward when invited to a specific ministry opportunity, rather than just a general demand to "show some commitment!" or "serve more!"…

ministry gaps in church ←——— communication ———→ gifts and abilities in the church
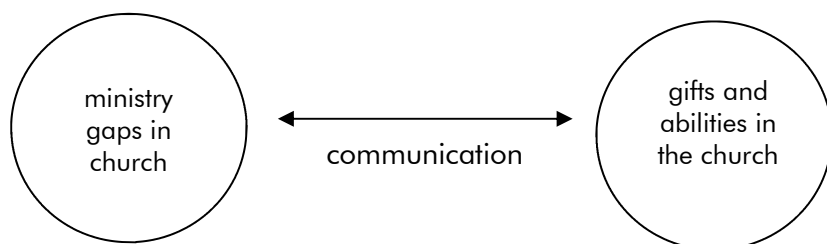
The same can be true with regard to a shortfall in giving or the desire to grow giving towards funding ministry vision. We can again assume the problem is one of commitment if an adequate response isn't forthcoming. But as above, communication can also be a significant factor. Of course, we don't want to be churches that are always talking about money. But we do want to be always talking about the gospel, about Jesus, about the lost, and about opportunities for reaching them. We need to work hard at communicating those things well.

insufficient funds for ministry vision ←——— communication ———→ giving resources of the church

There are often deeper spiritual reasons for these problems. Ministry of the Word and prayer is needed to address these. But an effective Committee will strive hard for effective communication as vital to their role. Ensure everyone in the congregation knows who's on the Committee and that they can be approached with questions. Committee members, however, should always be pro-active in this.

key questions for your committee

having worked through this ministry paper together, here are some questions to help your committee process its contents:

1. are our methods of selection to the committee adequate?
2. is leadership vision being clearly communicated to the committee?
3. how can communication to/from congregation be promoted?
4. what support roles are needed to free up ministry of the Word and prayer?
5. who can be recruited to these roles (& how will this be addressed in an ongoing way)?
6. is our ministry support infrastructure adequate (including office, equipment, staff)?
7. what will our standard meeting agenda be?
8. how will ministry reports and issue papers be co-ordinated?
9. is our budget adequate (and what are our protocols for minor spending)?
10. how can we be pro-active in supporting and promoting ministry?

a committee of character

It's important that the 'last word' in this paper not be one about techniques or systems or meetings. The most helpful last word is one that takes us back to where we started: God's Word.

Did you notice that 'the seven' in Acts 6 were chosen because they were "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (verse 3)? The key requirement for the task wasn't their business credentials or their standing in the community or their ability to represent a particular interest group. The key requirement was their godly character. You'll see the same emphasis upon character in the requirements for various leaders set out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Did you also notice that the seven were "*known* to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3 again). They weren't remote managers but people who set an example to others. Some of the most vital work we do as a committee is what we do outside of the actual meetings: that we are serious about living lives that honour Jesus, and are known for that passion.

Churches have often made the mistake of recruiting according to expertise alone, rather than assessing people spiritually. In worst case scenarios some committee members are more regular at attending committee meetings than they are at church, and seem more interested in reading reports than the Bible.

So consider broadening your 'brief' as a committee member. Remember that you should be modelling the basics of the Christian life: a daily time with God, being at church and growth group each week, etc. Be a listener, asking how people in various ministries are going and what their needs are. Be an encourager, always seeking to support and promote ministry. Be proactive in the task of growing the mission of the gospel across the ministries of the church.