

# PASTORPEDIA™

*Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders*

[cenational.org/pastorpedia](http://cenational.org/pastorpedia)

Vol. 7, Issue 3

March 2020

Produced by [CE National](#)

## ***The Church Board***

### **If we could leave our egos outside the meeting!**

It is most certainly not so easy, this goal of being Christ-like in our leadership. It is hard enough to live unselfishly when we are all alone, or at home in marriage, let alone when we are with other sinners on a church board.

How then shall we unite? What principles apply thousands of years after the Bible was written and more than thousands of miles away?

We have all the answers! 😊 No, but we do have some lessons learned and principles embraced after over 120 years (combined) of pastoring.

And a lot of them were learned in tough times where we stuttered, prayed, and searched for the best way to come closer to Christ in the way we lead and do board meetings.

See what you think. Check what you do. Fix what you can. Let us know if we can help.

*Learning,*

*Knute Larson, with Jeff Bogue and Jim Brown*

## ***Are there any directions in the Bible? Principles? Is the board the same as the staff?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- There *are* directions in the Bible. It's the idea of eldership, and these men should be qualified biblically.
- Elders are servant leaders who oversee the work of the church. They should function as a band of brothers, not as a board, and lead in partnership, as coworkers, with the pastor.
- The pastor needs to lead the elders, so the pastor should not walk into an elders' meeting and say, "Hey men, what's your vision for the church?" The pastor should set the tone and then allow those men to speak into it.
- The board is not the same as the staff. If there are staff on the board, there should always be more lay elders than staff elders.
- There certainly should be an independent board that has legal authority and relational authority that can oversee the staff if necessary.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Yes, the Bible has clear qualifications on eldership and spells it out very distinctly in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- Elders oversee the spiritual issues of the church.
- We do have our pastors on our elder board, but we make sure there is one more working elder than pastoral elder on the board.
- The lead/senior pastor casts the vision and leads the church with it and the elders come alongside to support and keep it on track.
- We also have a built-in structure of our staff with a pastor leading with oversight of each staff category. In our case, creative/worship/vision, family/discipleship, and financial/outreach/maintenance.
- Ultimately everyone works together to execute the vision of the church.
- The board is not the same as the staff in our case.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Some, but not many, in this sense: The paragraphs about pastors or elders were written to people who worshipped in what we would call "house churches" and witnessed as a group in their cities and towns. Their spiritual leaders, their "olders" (don't forget what the elders were), were probably directors of ministry, shepherds for care, and teachers of the Word of our Lord. We assume most of them kept their day jobs and that the ones nearby banded together to pray and figure evangelism strategy for the town or area.

Now how do we define what we call a church board in this nation, when the sizes of churches are so very different and we often have buildings and staff who can give full working time to the church? We can apply principles carefully while never being able to find a "church board" as such in the Bible.

In my mind, the summary of church government in the New Testament was something like, “What part of obeying Paul do you not understand?” 😊

- There certainly is the principle that older, or at least more mature, men should give spiritual oversight to the church. But how that relates to a pastor in his late 20’s is not clear. Clearly, He must do the work of an elder but also have a good way for oversight that works.
- There certainly was a “deacon” position of ministry—a servant or minister, with the original ones (Acts 6, I believe) officially caring for widows and ministries of need, causing many of us to wish we could just generally refer to all who serve in some official capacity (teach junior high, usher, take care of the building, etc.) as deacons (men and women).

We can’t find “trustees” anywhere, but that does not mean there is anything wrong with choosing a team to take care of the finances or the building and calling them trustees!

- Surely common sense and the need for authority and accountability call for some official way to protect and provide advice and accountability for the pastor/elder who gives much of his time and energy to the ministries of the church. So here we will call that the board! And it would seem silly to argue about its name. There is plenty of room for kind arguments about its function or job description.

Many take all of the duties assigned to the elders in the early house churches and assign them to a whole team or board of elders, without making a difference between what a full-time pastor can do and what someone who can give a much smaller dose of time each month can do. Surely we must make a difference.

Surely we must say the board or oversight team is not the same as the pastors or the staff.

Surely there can be a good way, with biblical principles in mind, to make a difference between the role of the 50-60 hour people who can major on teaching and pastoral strategy and care from the dedicated 3-10 hour overseers who are responsible for direction and boundaries for the church. I advocate the “soccer field” model where the selected overseers take care of the “boundaries” for the church and its ministries and the senior or lead pastor and staff lead the ministries on the “infield,” with many volunteers involved. All of the responsibilities listed in the Bible paragraphs about leaders or elders can be covered this way, in a manner appropriate to the differences in size, time, and culture.

To read more than you might ever want to read on how this can work well, please see the papers on my [knutelarson.com/](http://knutelarson.com/) website under “Major Concerns” and then under “board.” I have seen these principles work well in churches of 50 and 500 and 1,500 and 8,000.

## ***What are the important guidelines for us no matter what system?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- There should be accountability.
- The men should have a kingdom mindset.
- They should be there to advance the vision, not hold onto the past.
- They should listen to each other. They should have a humility and grace when interacting with each other.

- Our big statement is: If servanthood is beneath you then leadership is above you. So, they are definitely servant leaders.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Always remember that this is not your church but it is God's church.
- God is ultimately in control.
- Work as a team, not as a dictatorship.
- Accountability is necessary for everyone.
- The senior pastor should lead the way with his life, but not micromanage.
- The fruits of the spirit should be evident when meeting and making decisions.
- We moved our meetings from the evening to the early morning because men were too grumpy in evening meetings. Plus, there is an end time noted before the meetings starts. Way too many decisions are made at late night meetings when men are tired and just want to go home.
- Inform as best as you can before you meet so that the entire meeting isn't spent catching up.
- We also have created a closed Facebook page for the daily communication to take place, and where documents can be stored.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Love, unity, and all the fruits of the Spirit. Somehow, selfishly, these can get overlooked in some church oversight boards or staffs.
- Obedience and honor to Jesus Christ, the Lord and Head of the church. People who serve as pastor, overseer, teacher, or minister in any other way should repent, and quickly.
- Accountability. Just because we are all very human, there must be a way of oversight that is not stifling or impractical.
- Clear guidelines for what the congregational membership decides, what the oversight board or team is responsible for, and what the pastor (and staff) does. While many of us have served, or do serve, in a church that emphasized "congregational government" as if that term or concept was taught in a chapter of the Bible!

Many churches and groups of churches list these responsibilities for membership as a congregation: **constitution, including statement of faith; call of the pastor; call of the oversight board members or elders; budget approval; and property (buy, sell, build).**

- Communication, communication, communication.
- Having a very clear job description for the board as an unit, clear guidelines for what a member of the board can and should do as one person, and what decisions are to be made only as a board. I like the guideline that a member does not walk around "overseeing" individually, but serves in that role when the board is in session.
- Reporting on a board decision as one decision, not giving "sides" or positive and negative. We speak as one mind.

## ***What did an elder in the Bible do?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- They prayed, they taught, they oversaw, they served, they labored, and they helped to carry the spiritual burden.

### ***Jim Brown***

- They were teachers, they supported, they prayed, they guarded against evil, they protected against false teachers, they visited the sick, and did what Paul and Peter listed in the elder verses!

### ***Knute Larson***

- See my first answer for some of this. In summary, these older men, with spiritual maturity and wisdom, gave teaching and guidance, shepherding, care, and discipline, management and leading, and were examples to the others. At least all these, with love.

## ***Some say, "Any system can work if..." What do you think? If what?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- I do not think every system can work but the systems that do, work because of servanthood, humility, a love of the mission and vision of the church, and a desire to achieve biblical goals.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Some systems are flawed and need updated and as your church grows there must be new structure implemented.
- There always must be humble, godly leading and the development of future leaders.
- I also believe that there should be term limits for the elder board so that new leaders can emerge and the old way doesn't become the only way.
- Communication, godliness, humility, vision, giftedness, talent, and prayer must characterize these boards.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Within the limits or obeying the teachings of Scripture that are clear, I would say yes. If there is commitment to all the character directives and mission mandates of the Bible, and if people work together in unity and honor each other, they can surrender egos at the door of the church and work with most any flowchart.

My first lead pastoring was with a church council of 28 people, including people elected to be flower chairman, head usher, Sunday school superintendent, and a lot more, and we all worked together with love. Granted you may not have been alive then, in 1968, but it worked well because there was love, communication, careful prayers, hard work, and mutual commitment to our Lord's Great Command to love each other and for the Great Commission to reach the unbelieving.

And we did change to an oversight board of 6-8, something close to the soccer field model, after four years of careful leading, teaching, and honoring the people for their hearts. And majoring on personal and spiritual as well as numerical growth, all of which are hard to argue with.

Crucial: we always make changes slowly after loving people quickly and sincerely.

*Pastorpedia is a resource provided to you by CE National, a church effectiveness ministry. Please contact us at [cenational@cenational.org](mailto:cenational@cenational.org) or 574.267.6622 if we may be of any help to you or your ministry!*

*Jeff Bogue, of [Grace Church](#), in several locations in the Bath-Norton-Medina areas of Ohio; Jim Brown, of [Grace Community Church](#) in Goshen, Indiana, a church known for its strong growth, family and men's ministries, and community response teams; and [Knute Larson](#), a coach of pastors, who previously led The Chapel in Akron for 26 years. Pastorpedia is brought to you by [CE National](#). Visit [cenational.org/pastorpedia](http://cenational.org/pastorpedia) for more issues and to read the bios of our contributors.*