



## **Bylaws & The Relationship Model™**

The General Operating Bylaws has an accompanying governing document, *The Board Governance Manual*, which more fully describes the values, structure, processes, and relationships that form the basis of how governance, leadership, management and ministry delivery is lived out. In the Relationship Model™ (see Stahlke, *Governance Matters*, 2003; [www.governancematters.com](http://www.governancematters.com)) emphasis is placed on healthy relationships which are clarified through authorization, expectations, limitations, responsibilities and accountability.

The foundational values which make such relationships thrive are *affirmation* (encouragement, empowering), *involvement* (ownership, authority, responsibility), and *servant leadership* (care, concern, worth, service, support). The six core processes of governance are: communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, strategic planning, delegating authority and responsibility, monitoring and measuring.

ABMB governing documents are built upon concentric principles of authorization, limitations, responsibilities, expectations and accountabilities. This applies to convention, executive board, committees, staff, members, and even documents such as the Confession of Faith. It recognizes that decision-making proceeds from shared values, vision and mission, not unilaterally from the Board or the Executive Director. Decisions are made as close as possible to where they are implemented.

In the years leading up to 2010, ABMB decided to adopt the Relationship Model™ for their board governance and the basis for their bylaws, thereby aligning more fully with what had been decided nationally in 2004. In 2014 another decision was made by ABMB to fully integrate with the Canadian MB Conference (CCMBC) in its vision, mission, and values. This alignment means that ABMB can more easily access national resources to be delivered and implemented at the local level. ABMB has responsibility to deliver this unified vision, mission, and values in its own unique context, style, and methods.

### **Introduction to the Relationship Model™ For Churches**

In this introduction to the Relationship Model™ of governance, leadership and management of churches we introduce the definition of working relationship and demonstrate the importance of applying power in the most productive and fulfilling manner by using power collaboratively, that is with affirmation, involvement and servant leadership. Then we give definition to the structure and processes of governance. The entire Model is summarized in ten principles to conclude the article.

#### **RELATIONSHIPS – The Human Operating System**

People live and work within relationships. Relationships are the human operating system. In order to make our lives and our work successful and fulfilling, we need to apply the natural principles of relationships by establishing the values, structures and the processes of relationships throughout our Church.

In the Relationship Model™ values, structure and processes form the basis of governance, leadership, management and service delivery. The roles of governance, leadership and management differ, but the principles that underlie them are the same. There is a continuity of design from the Church Board to the point where members and others find their spiritual needs met.

A successful working environment is one in which there is a balance between the fulfillment of the

members in doing the work and the fulfillment of the same people and others for whom the work is done. The Church itself is like the fulcrum of a seesaw that supports the dynamics of the process of maintaining this delicate and dynamic balance of fulfillment benefiting both those who minister and those to whom they minister.

Putting emphasis on healthy relationships means investing a great deal of attention on the values, the structures and the processes that make up relationships. We have all observed that healthy and fulfilled men and women are more productive than unhealthy, dysfunctional people are.

Understanding how to build and maintain healthy working relationships is critical for successful management of human and financial resources. The basic design of relationships is disarmingly simple. Yet the application of these values, structures and processes is a lifelong experience, and a complex one at that. It is necessary to maintain a focus on the design of relationships in order to succeed at living out the Relationship Model™.

## **1. VALUES (The Way we Use Power)**

Our values determine our behavior. In order to have an effective Church, similar values must be shared. When values are shared there is a built-in tendency to be able to work with the same operating system—within the same structure and with the same processes. There are many categories of values and many values in each category. The list of our values is as long as we want it to be. In the Relationship Model™ we have identified three core relational values. Together they form the foundation of successful working relationships.

### **Affirmation**

Affirmation is fundamental to healthy and productive relationships. Affirmation is the most elemental of all values. It encourages, builds, enables, empowers and ensures the fulfillment of each individual in the Church. It encourages calculated risk. Affirmation enables mistakes to fuel a learning culture instead of a blame culture. This vital value characterizes the delegation of authority and responsibility and the entire process of accountability.

### **Involvement**

The concept of involving people in the matters that affect them is a principle introduced by God at the time of creation. God chose to involve the first couple in the work of caring for the world into which he placed them. He also involved them in creation itself by giving them the authority and the responsibility to reproduce themselves. In the New Testament the Lord involved his disciples and each of us in the challenge of the great commission. Involvement produces a strong sense of ownership for those who have responsibility related to what they helped to shape and plan. This value sets the “hireling” apart from the real shepherd. The Good Shepherd believes in collaboration – and demonstrates it personally!

### **Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership is a quality that characterizes those who are the source of authority to others in a relationship-oriented Church. Servant leadership includes such values as care concern, valuing the worth of others, service, help and the like. Servant leadership can be demonstrated by anyone who is in a position of authority in a Church. In congregations everyone has some authority. We often think of authority in a “top-down” manner. Our governing charts, which place the “highest” level of authority at the “top”, suggest the opposite of the kind of authority that supports those above. A better organizational “chart” is the image of the tree where those with the most authority support the weight of those above.

## **2. STRUCTURE**

### **Authority**

Authority, the first component of a relationship, includes authorization, money and people, information and time. Authority at any level in the Church is always limited by the person or group who is delegating authority to others. Power, when used in a positive sense, is synonymous with authority.

### **Limitations of Authority**

Limitations are the element of a relationship that defines the boundaries of authority and therefore the limits of our freedom in fulfilling our responsibility. Limitations are normally expressed in negative terms. A swimming pool may display a sign that says, "No diving. No running. No pushing." A sign in a restaurant may say, "No Smoking." In a Church defining limitations of authority eliminates the need for returning to the Church or the Church Board repeatedly for permission to act.

### **Responsibility**

Responsibility, the second primary component of a relationship, is the broad description of the purpose for a position within the Church. It is usually contained in the terms of reference of a group or the Relationship Description of an individual or group. Responsibility is further defined by the expectations of the responsibility.

### **Expectations of Responsibility**

Expectations are the adjusting components of responsibility. In a relationship-oriented Church expectations of all working relationships are negotiated, not imposed, in order to achieve a balance with the authorization and resources that are available. They are usually expressed in the form of strategic or tactical goals. The minimum quality we expect of one another and the quality to which we aspire may be expressed in standards.

### **Accountability**

Accountability, the third primary component, is the monitoring and measuring component of a relationship. The first role of accountability is to confirm that the authority and responsibility delegated to persons or groups are in balance with one another. The second role is to confirm that expectations of responsibility were achieved within the limitations of authority. The annual relationship review is the primary opportunity for accountability. Often given a negative connotation, accountability in The Relationship Model™ gives an opportunity for recognition and learning as well as correction. Accountability is a neutral process.

## **3. PROCESSES**

Process is particularly important, even critical to the success of any group decision-making process. In order to insure a high quality Church Board decision, for example, the Church Board does not allow any individual or small group to dominate the process. The Church Board takes care not to delegate its governance responsibility to individuals and small groups but rather uses individual research and ad-hoc committees to complete preparatory work that will enable the Church Board to make better decisions, not to make the decisions for the Church Board.

### **The six core processes of governance are:**

- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Decision-Making
- Strategic Planning
- Delegating Authority and Responsibility
- Monitoring and Measuring

### **SUMMARY**

The Relationship Model™ offers the most natural means of giving an effective design to our churches. No major paradigm shift is required. At the same time we will realize how important it is to use the conceptual framework that this model offers when we build a governance structure and when we process information.

Structure is the vehicle. Process is the journey. The way we use power reflects the quality of our driving. The combination of values, structure and process may be synthesized into ten basic principles that define

The Relationship Model™. Using these principles as a checklist can assist the Church Board to verify that the values, structures and processes used within your Church are consistent with the Relationship Model™. The checklist can also assist the Church Board to identify weaknesses and to give guidance toward making adjustments that will improve relationships and effectiveness in ministry.

#### **TEN PRINCIPLES OF THE RELATIONSHIP MODEL™**

1. A balance is maintained between the fulfillment of the spiritual needs of the members of the Church and the effectiveness of the ministry of the individuals in the Church.
2. The affirmation, involvement and servant leadership of every individual and group at every level in the Church are vital to the success of the Church.
3. Decision-making proceeds from shared values, vision and mission, not unilaterally from the Church Board or the Senior Pastor. Decisions are made as close as possible to where they are implemented.
4. Authority, responsibility and accountability are the primary components of all relationships. Limitations (of authority) and expectations (of responsibility) are the secondary components.
5. Circles of authority and responsibility are defined clearly and are maintained equal in size by placing limits on authority and/or by negotiating expectations of responsibility.
6. The Church Board, acting on information from all members, is responsible to the Church for governance including designing Church Board structure and process, strategic planning, delegating authority to the Senior Pastor and for measuring results.
7. The ministry staff and administrative staff are responsible for management, delivering services to the members in accord with stated priorities and for achieving the strategic goals within the limitations of the authorization and resources available.
8. Each individual member is responsible for creating, owning, understanding and implementing the mission of the Church.
9. The Church is results oriented. Indicators and measurements of strategic results are identified and applied. Monitoring progress towards results and monitoring compliance with limitations form an ongoing process involving the Church Board and the staff and volunteers.
10. Accountability is mutual. The Church Board is accountable to the Senior Pastor for providing adequate authority and resources. The Senior Pastor is accountable to the Church Board for achieving strategic results.

From: <http://relationshipmodel.com/the-relationship-model/churches/>