

Simplified Leadership Structure

Question and Answer Guide

Following are questions asked during the Town Hall meeting about the Simplified Leadership Structure.

For the purpose of this Q/A, the proposed simplified leadership structure's governing body is referred to as the leadership team. The actual name for Vista Ridge UMC will be proposed by the Design Team.

Why is this new structure being proposed?

There are several reasons that Core Leadership is proposing the change. The top reasons include:

- The current system stifles creative, new ideas.
- The current system is extremely inefficient. It takes too many steps to get a good idea approved and implemented.
- The current system requires an inordinate amount of resources (people, time, etc.) skewed toward administrative functions.
- The size of the bureaucracy affects the focus of the church—more on structure than our mission.

How effective are our current teams?

Our current teams do a phenomenal job of taking care of the usual business. Where we see weakness is in the development of new areas of ministry. Too much time and manpower are necessary to run the bureaucratic structure of the church, as opposed to strategic opportunities to live out our mission.

Couldn't we just reduce the number of people on our current teams instead of adopting a new structure?

During the past two years, the Leadership Development Team has done all it can to minimize the number of people serving on the administrative teams.

How many people would serve on the leadership team if the simplified model was approved?

We would still operate under the auspices of the UMC Book of Discipline. To fulfill that requirement, our parameters would be a minimum of nine people with a maximum of 15. The Design Team appointed to develop the guidelines and structure of the new leadership model will propose an optimum number for Vista Ridge.

Will we put a structure in place that encourages a diverse group of voices and backgrounds?

Although the goal of the Leadership Development Team has always been to ensure that diversity in all forms is a linchpin of our structure, the Design Team may choose to add language to our guiding principles that emphasize this tenet.

How will we ensure that we have a broad selection of people on the leadership team, especially when it comes to the area of staff-parish relations?

This falls under the purview of the Leadership Development Team, chaired by the Senior Pastor, whose primary function is to ensure that a cross-section of spiritual gifts and experience are matched with specific ministry areas. The new simplified model would not change this as the Leadership Development Team would remain autonomous from the new leadership team.

How would the leadership team be chosen?

The Leadership Development Team would continue to fulfill this function. They would receive training from the North Texas Conference to educate about needs for the new leadership team, as opposed to the current structure where specific skillsets are important.

Will there be term limits for the people serving on the leadership team?

In some form or another, the new model will use a "class system" to manage leadership turnover and prevent any one person from serving for an inordinate amount of time. It has yet to be determined the specifics of this model.

Would the one person on the team representing a specific area be responsible for the work of the committee that currently consists of nine people?

The work of the three administrative teams (Finance, Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Trustees) would be shared by all of the members of the new leadership team. The agenda and other information to be presented at each leadership team meeting would be sent to all members for study in advance of their meeting. This should lead to more efficient use of time for the new leadership team.

Would the leadership team meetings be open for anyone to attend?

With the rare exception of confidential matters concerning staff, all meetings would be open to the congregation. Transparency and communication are important principles of the Simplified Leadership Structure.

How would the leadership team communicate with the congregation to ensure transparency?

This topic would be a major agenda item for every meeting of the leadership team. In addition, new forms of communication would be explored to reach the congregation.

Would the congregation still be able to vote on church matters or would that authority be given to the leadership team?

This new structure would not change the items that need churchwide approval, including the adoption of the annual budget, the leadership roster, and selling or acquiring property.

Would staff members serve on this leadership team and be able to vote on items?

The Senior Pastor, as always, would be part of this leadership team. A guiding principle of the new structure would be to gain input from other staff members, but they would not have a voting seat.

Would there be subcommittees under the leadership team?

The new leadership team could choose to form small specialty groups for specific purposes. Some of these could include ongoing areas such as building maintenance, while others could be short-term ad hoc teams for a specific one-time purpose such as new staff hires.

What is the ideal timeline for this process?

Our usual church Charge Conference takes place in late November to early December. Our goal is to be ready to make the changeover then, but nothing prevents us from taking more time and moving the implementation past these dates. We would simply need to ask our District Superintendent for a special Charge Conference.

How would this new structure be implemented?

The last phase, if approved by the church membership, is implementation. It would be a diligent and methodical process and would take several months to accomplish. Leadership Development would need to complete training as to how their task is changed in filling this new leadership team. Then, Leadership Development would begin the process of finding the right people to fill the positions, taking into account how best to use the class structure for future years. When the new team has been filled, they would be trained to serve in the new role. The church membership also would need to vote to dissolve the old system and implement the new structure at a Charge Conference

If implemented, how would we know if this new model is working for us and if we are successful with the change?

The Design Team will examine several metrics that can be put in place to determine success. However, given what we do as a church, not everything can be measured in tangible terms. There would need to be an ongoing discussion within the church to determine whether this system is working or needs alteration.

When the church membership votes on the simplified leadership structure this fall, will we know who has been identified to serve on the leadership team?

There are two answers to this question:

1. The first vote from the congregation will be to approve, or disapprove, the specifics of the model as presented by the Design Team. There will be no leadership team member names attached at this time.
2. If the first vote is approved, the Leadership Development Team would put together a roster for the new board. This slate will be voted on, as it is now, at our Charge Conference.

Will this change affect our church worship services?

The Relationship with God Ministry Team, in cooperation with the staff, would continue the purview of worship activities. All of the Relationship Teams are expected to have a representative on the proposed leadership team.

How would members of the church get involved if we reduce the number of teams for them to serve?

The Simplified Leadership Structure would only reduce the number of opportunities that would be available on the administrative teams. It would provide more opportunities for the membership to get involved in missional activities in lieu of attending meetings.

What if we implement this new structure and find out that it doesn't work for our church?

Changing to a new system is not irreversible. However, it should be noted that simply reverting to the system we have now would not solve any inherent problems. We would need to come up with a different model.

Are there other churches that have made this leadership change that we can learn from?

Although this a relatively new concept, there are other churches that have either made the switch or are in the process. We are in ongoing dialogue with some of these churches for recommendations, suggestions, and lessons learned.

Who will be serving on the Design Team to develop the recommendations for the new structure?

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