

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) RHCC-UCC Governance Changes**

### **1. Why are we looking to change our governance?**

There are two main reasons why we are re-thinking our governance structure:

- a) Many have realized that a structure with many boards and committees is less “nimble” at providing the types of ministries that churches want to provide. In other words, sometimes the process of holding meetings seems to become an end in itself, rather than focusing on what it means to be a church. We want to create a structure that allows us to direct our energies toward doing what Christ calls us to do through a variety of ministries, both within and outside our church community.
- b) Also, much has changed in the world since our current structure was established. At that time almost everyone in a community attended church, so filling board and committee positions was not difficult. Today, we live in a different world. People have so many other commitments to their time. We want to be as efficient as possible and direct our energy toward providing the ministries that we want the church to provide, rather than directing too much of that energy into regularly-established meetings.

Many other churches are addressing their governance for the same basic reasons.

### **2. Can you describe the new system in a few simple sentences?**

Basically, we want to be driven more by what we are called to DO as a church than by how we are organized to do it.

### **3. What are some of the key differences between the proposed new governance system and what we do now?**

Key differences are as follows:

- a. We will no longer have Boards which are centered around specific types of duties. Instead, we will have **Core Ministries** which are focused on the things we believe we are called to do as a church, and **Support Ministries** which are focused on developing and managing the resources needed to support the church in carrying out its ministries.
- b. We want to enable ANY member or friend of the church to champion things they believe in (as long as they are consistent with our overall vision) through Ministry Teams with specific and well-defined purposes.
- c. One major change is the formation of a “Time Talents and Treasure” support ministry. This support ministry will encompass both nominating and stewardship functions (in two separate Committees), as well as fundraising functions and any other Time Talent and Treasure-related activities. Another way to think of this Support Ministry is that its mission is to harness our collective congregational resources to carry out the ministries we wish to perform as a church by providing the necessary personnel and monetary support.
- d. We will work harder to focus on our primary purpose and vision as a church. And we will continue to strive to communicate and be transparent about all that we are doing as a church.
- e. To that end, the Council will prepare an annual Strategic Plan for each year to help us focus our activities.

### **4. What do we mean by a “ministry”?**

In short, ministries are ways that we carry out the work that we feel God is calling us to do. This can take many forms (feeding the hungry, caring for the planet, encouraging faith formation in children, youth and adults, working for justice, helping our neighbor, etc., etc.)

**5. How will ministries report to the Council?**

The Council will be comprised of Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer and Pastor as well as representatives of all the Core and Support Ministries. That way, similar to today, Council will be a central body where our church activities are coordinated and shared. However, Council will have a stronger charge to help direct all groups to carry out a shared vision and mission and will develop an annual "strategic plan" to help ensure this happens.

**6. How do I start a Ministry Team that I am particularly interested in pursuing?**

Every **Ministry Team** will report to a "sanctioning body" (a Core Ministry, a Support Ministry, or the Council). To start a new Ministry Team, we envision that there will be a short (and simple) form to be filled out and submitted to the appropriate sanctioning body for approval. This form will summarize the purpose of the new ministry team and any anticipated budgetary needs. We hope to develop a large wall chart that shows the various ministry teams and who all is involved.

**7. What are examples of Ministry Teams that we expect to form?**

Examples of Ministry Teams reporting to the Worship Core Ministry might include: Ushers, Flowers, Sanctuary Decorations, Communion Preparation,....

Examples of Ministry Teams reporting to the Congregational Care Core Ministry might include: coffee hour hosting, specific fellowship events, Heavenly Hosts, Prayer Shawls, visitation support, ...

A revitalized "Pew Crew" could be a Ministry Team for the Facilities Support Ministry.

**8. How do we close out Ministry Teams that are no longer active?**

There will be periodic assessment of ministries that have “run their course” or which are no longer effective.

**9. How are Ministry Teams funded?**

The Core Ministries and Support Ministries will all receive funding from the church budget according to their needs, similar to how funding is allocated now to Boards and Committees. Those funds will also support whatever Ministry Teams function under them. Some Ministry Teams will need no budget, while others will have budgetary needs. In essence, similar to what we do now, if there are things that we support doing as a church, we will find the funding.

**10. Will the Nominating Committee have fewer slots to fill each year?**

Yes! Nominating’s charge will be substantially reduced. We want members and friends to “step up” into positions where they feel a calling. Prior to this governance change, Nominating was called upon to fill 129 slots annually! After this change, the Nominating Committee (now part of our Time Talents and Treasures Support Ministry) will only need to fill about 30 slots.

**11. There are only three elected representatives on each Core Ministry. Is that enough?**

It’s important to recognize that a Core Ministry is not like a Board. The way we have operated previously, the people on a Board actually DID most of what was needed for that Board. We are looking to Core Ministries to LEAD the ministry, not necessarily to do everything that needs to be done. By “lead”, we mean that the Core Ministry will set the goals for the ministry and will establish and oversee Ministry Teams to carry out much of the work.

**12. How do we have accountability in a revised and “looser” structure?**

There will still be a Church Council overseeing activities and providing longer term strategy and direction for our ministry energies. All Ministry Teams will report to one of the established Core Ministries or Support Ministries or the Council (which are referring to as “sanctioning bodies”).

**13. How do we make sure that everyone knows what’s going on in the church?**

We will have to continue to work hard, just as we do now, to ensure that church members know what all is going on and how they can be part of activities and ministries. The typical ways we currently get information will still be used (Churchmouse, Sunday bulletins, weekly email updates, church website, etc.)

**14. Will we still have “Deacons”?**

This is a great question and one which is up to us as a church to work out. While the role of “deacon” at our church has changed over the years, it is important to note that neither the current (or proposed) Constitution defines “deacon”. One dictionary definition of “deacon” is “one of the laymen elected by a church with congregational polity to serve in worship, in pastoral care, and on administrative committees”.

In any case this is not really a constitutional issue, but something to be worked out—most likely in the Council as we adjust to our new structure. Since the term “deacon” is one that is meaningful to us historically, we may decide to retain that title for some lay leaders. One possibility is that anyone nominated and subsequently elected to any of the Core or Support Ministries or to the Council could be considered to be Deacons of our church and may be referred to as such, since they are the lay leaders of the church. We look forward to having this conversation as we move forward into a new era. We

do anticipate that we will no longer have a position called a "Senior Deacon."

**15. Don't we need Deacons as liturgists and to serve communion?**

The Diaconate has already expanded liturgists to other members of the congregation. Similarly, one related change that might happen is that while only Diaconate members serve Communion currently, in the future, Communion servers could potentially be any church member or friend. This is also not a Constitutional issue.

**16. Will we still have Life Deacons?**

We greatly appreciate the dedication and service that our Life Deacons have contributed to the spiritual life of this church over the years. They will continue to be recognized for their service.

**17. Who controls our staffing decisions?**

Standards for hiring and terminating Pastors are set forth in the Constitution, and remain the direct responsibility of the entire congregation through actions taken at congregational meetings.

Aside from Pastors, the Council determines how we should be staffed, and how that staff should be managed. This will obviously be based on an assessment of work needs and financial constraints. A Personnel Committee will be appointed by the Council to oversee general personnel matters, and to ensure that personnel policies are properly administered.

**18. What happens to the Fair (Events) Committee?**

Since the Fair and related events are primarily fundraising activities, this Committee would become a Ministry Team under the Time, Talents, and Treasures Support Ministry. (It could also be subdivided into several Ministry Teams, each managing separate events.)

## **19. What happens to the Music Committee?**

The Music Committee is a somewhat unique situation as its activities fall within ALL of the Core Ministries. It is essentially up to the current Music Committee to determine how they plan to adapt to the new system. Options might include:

- Breaking into smaller Ministry Teams under the respective Core Ministries
- Staying as one Music Ministry Team, but liaise with all the Core Ministries (perhaps choosing one of them as a place to “sit” for organization chart purposes)
- Staying as one Ministry Team but request Ministry Team status under each Core Ministry

## **20. The Constitution requires each Ministry Team to submit a team plan with objectives, plans to achieve the objectives, and requested financial support. Will there be a form or template to facilitate the preparation of these team plans?**

Yes, we plan to develop a simple, one-page template for these plans, and will also develop a few sample plans to illustrate how these might “look”. We are not seeking complex information. We are only seeking clarity of purpose and expectations so that sanctioning bodies and all church members can understand the role of each Ministry Team, and church members can make informed decisions about their interest in joining any team(s).