



## Leadership Teams in Church Planting

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### New Beginnings

For many, a perplexing question in the beginning of a new church plant is, “*Where do I begin?*” While the establishing of a new ministry can be exciting and stimulating, it brings with it some prayerful consideration over exactly where one starts. Some will begin by seeking a building; others will do demographics. Eventually there may be a door-to-door campaign in the area of the plant, and perhaps some outreach activities. Along with these factors, the answer to the above question will inevitably involve the deliberation of leadership development. A host of important issues will guide the church planter as he begins seeking counsel and direction in choosing faithful servants for church leadership.

### Development of a Leadership Team

While some church planters start out “*cold turkey*”, not having the aid of another church or group of people, some have the added blessing of a “*bigger*” joint effort, a mother or sister church. This latter group may even have their leadership already on board before the first service begins. For the former group this may only be a vision packaged in the reality of future days.

**The wise church planter will recognize his need and help of Godly men as he endeavors to carry out the work of seeing souls saved, and the edifying of the Body of Christ.** Yet, where do you get such men when first starting out? What does a pastor do while waiting for qualified spiritual men that will guide the church in the days and years ahead? How can ministries actually be accomplished without such leaders as elders and deacons? These are important questions deserving adequate answers. In the interim of waiting for qualified leadership, the acquisition of an outside group of Godly men is of supreme value. Various titles identified with this group are Leadership Teams, Leadership Committee, Steering Committee, Temporary Board, etc. For this particular article, I will address this group as the Leadership Team.

I find myself sitting on three such groups even as I write this article. All three are basically new church plants, although the ministry on Unalaska/Dutch Harbor is a church with a name, building, two core families, Doctrinal Statement and Constitution, BUT no pastor/church planter. In one of the other church plants, I function as a temporary board member. It takes a person a great deal of time, energy, wisdom and

investment in this position. Wright Van Plew has stated, *“To those who serve in local church leadership, on Steering Committees, Boards, or in any other capacity, such activity requires hard work, many sacrifices of time, leisure, and material things.”*

So, how do you go about developing a leadership team? This is certainly one of the many questions to bear in mind when taking the necessary steps forward in securing such individuals. In addition, other questions needing consideration in the development process are:

- *Who chooses these individuals, and how many should serve in this capacity?*
- *Is there a time element or term for completion?*
- *Should their qualifications be the same as that of elders and deacons?*
- *How much authority for decisions should this group have in the life of the church?*
- *What will be the purpose of the leadership team?”*

A missionary pastor, church extension director, field director or even the congregation can appoint a Leadership Team. They may be chosen from a host of arenas such as a pastor, Christian leader, and even a Godly individual from within the congregation. They do not necessarily have to live within the same area geographically, but it does provide more challenges in the communication process if not. The temporary nature of a Leadership Team allows a freedom from a hurried period, to bring on mature, qualified men either who are trained or who come to the church ready to serve as leaders. Some church plants establish a six-month, or set period of service for the Leadership Team and then reevaluate over time, while others allow for an indefinite period for service.

### **Purpose of the Leadership Team**

There are many practical advantages to a Leadership Team. For a ministry as Aleutian Bible Church, which has no pastor, these men provide an additional benefit. The overall result of a Leadership Team gives a church a feeling of security in maintaining vision, direction, and doctrinal standards; freedom from the urgency to secure a pastor quickly just to have the pulpit filled; and encouragement in knowing Godly men are giving counsel and oversight to the flock. When pulling together a Leadership Team it is good to have their purpose firmly established. This will include serving as the administrative element for the conduct of the local church, temporary substitute for a church board, to train others for future leadership when the time is ready for official organization. They also help in providing a cooperative working relationship between the congregation, the pastor and church extension mission if one is in operation. A further advantage of a Leadership Team is the encouragement given to the pastor and his wife.

**We have found that wives of the men in this leadership capacity often bring an element of counsel and help to the wife of the church planter.**

### **Qualifications of the Leadership Team**

Men appointed to this unique group of leaders should fall in line with the scriptural qualifications addressed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. It is good to select at least three members, plus the pastor, but probably no more than five members. This corresponds with the corporate legal status of many churches. Along with this, the pastor of the church plant should serve as the chairman. In the case where there is no pastor, an outside authority such as a church extension director or field director can appoint the chairman.

### **Primary Duties of the Leadership Team**

Some churches establish in their Constitution, especially in a new church plant, the nature and responsibilities of the Leadership Team. Specifically their duties entail that which is held by various boards in a church. Many of these will include, but are not limited to the following:

- Sensitivity to the desires and needs of the people who make up the congregation.
- Help with the regular services such as song leading, pianist, pulpit supply if needed, announcements, visitation, etc.
- Designate congregational meetings as necessary.
- Act as a temporary board in making decisions; financial, counsel, membership, direction & vision.
- Lead the group in steps toward incorporation under state laws, and drafting a Doctrinal Statement and Constitution if not created yet.
- Seek possibilities for the purchasing of land, and/or building if needed. Along with this there may be the need for securing a place to worship in the meantime.
- Arrange for maintenance of church building, grounds, and equipment where needed.
- Give training for future leaders such as elders, deacons, etc. along with the pastor.
- Keep the church focused on the essentials and main purpose of the church.
- Guide the congregation in best choice of a servant to shepherd the church if one is needed.

For those who serve in the capacity of temporary church leadership, on a Leadership Team, Steering Committee, Boards, etc., **such endeavor requires patience, hard work, time, sacrifices and perhaps even personal resources.** However, there are wonderful blessings and rewards for a group of committed leaders used in this transitory position in helping a new church plant get started. The ultimate objective of the Leadership Team is to bring the church into a stable, Scriptural organization as an independent church that reaches the community in which they are planted.

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