

Guiding Principles at Glen Lake Church: How Decisions Are Made

Since Christ's church began, decisions have had to be made, so the people had to find ways to make these decisions. By looking closely at Scripture, we see that the early church often made decisions in a way that worked for them in their culture and context. Over two thousand years later, the church still needs to make decisions on all sorts of items. In the following paragraphs, we will use an analogy to show an overview as to how we make decisions at Glen Lake Church in light of Scripture and our denomination.

Imagine with us the game of baseball. Every professional baseball organization has a variety of roles. There is the front office whose responsibility is primarily to keep the baseball organization operating in a healthy manner. They create policies for how tickets will be dealt with and how the grounds team will maintain the park. They also create budgets for how much money can be spent on player salaries and other staff members. Next, you have your coaching staff. This is led by the head coach who is given the responsibility lead the team in such a way that the team wins as many baseball games as possible. The coach casts vision for the season and develop training and drills to help the team get a win. The head coach is also responsible for putting the best group of players in the best positions in order to get the victory. The head coach is supported by a number of assistant coaches who tend to specialize in one particular area of the game such as hitting or pitching. The assistant coaches do everything they can to help the head coach make the best decisions to win the game. If you made a list of all the decisions that have to be made, most of them would be made by the head coach and his/her assistants. And finally, there is the team itself. The individual players have a wide array of gifts and are expected, along with the other players, to continue to become a better baseball team. The team's primary job is executing, to the best of their ability, the game plan that the coaches developed for that game.

In many ways, this is similar to how decisions are made at Glen Lake Community Reformed Church. We stand on a tradition that empowers leaders to make decisions for the whole of the body. The majority of the decisions that need to be made in the church are made by the Lead Pastor and his/her staff. The Lead Pastor is required to make decisions that move the church toward its mission and vision, and are in line with the policies set by the Consistory. The Pastor and the church's staff function much like the coaches, called to empower the congregation's teams to carry out the ministry of the church.

The Consistory, which functions much like the front office of a baseball organization, is where the next largest amount of decisions will be made. The Consistory creates the boundaries of the "field" within which the "game" of ministry is played. Comprised of elected Elders and Deacons, who consult with the church's Pastors, the Consistory is not tasked to manage ministry, nor is it to be a glorified party planning committee. Instead, the Consistory is called to create goals and policies to govern the church and

ensure they are being followed. They also work to ensure that the church follows the policies established by our denomination. The Consistory does not micromanage the ministry, but rather establishes healthy boundaries for carrying out the church's mission and vision. For example, a policy could be created that when lights and furnaces fail, they are to be replaced with energy efficient units. Then the staff or their teams can feel free to replace a light bulb, knowing the boundaries within which they are to work.

In the front office of a baseball team, there are various departments that help the whole of the front office to function at its best. Likewise, in our Consistory, we have two different "departments" that pay attention to specific aspects of the church's mission. Our Elders are tasked with overseeing the spiritual growth of our pastors, congregation, and membership. Our Deacons are tasked with overseeing the physical needs of our pastors, congregation, membership and community.

From time to time, emergencies or crisis situations arise when decisions need to be made quickly and with no policies to guide those decisions. When these types of decisions must be made, the Lead Pastor will work with the Elders to make the best decision possible in the moment. Hopefully these decisions will be few, but it is important to know who will make these decisions.

Finally, there are times when decisions need to be made by everybody. Just as the players' primary task is to execute the game plan, so too is the congregation tasked with carrying out the ministry of the church. There are few decisions that the full body will be asked to make. These congregation-wide decisions are found in our church's by-laws and our denominational policies. The most common congregational decisions include the nomination to Consistory of potential Elders and Deacons, the approval of a new budget each year, and the extension of a call to an ordained minister.

