

**August 31, 2015**

### **Boards, Ministries and Committees Recommendations, Toolkits and Scenarios**

The following series of recommendations is the second step in an assignment focused on developing a Boards, Committees and Ministry structure at University Congregational Church United Church of Christ (UCUCC) that supports the congregation in living into the church for the next generation, and creating an anchoring structure for the passion and energy of its members. The church seeks to:

- Encourage enthusiastic participation in church ministries by updating the structure to better align with how God is at work in the lives of church members and friends
- Create a mechanism to assist people in identifying their calling(s) and how they might live out that calling both inside and outside the church

In the following, I will:

- summarize findings from the congregational interviews
- provide a series of observations and recommendations
- offer a series of scenarios as a starting point for conversation/decision-making about how to address the two objectives identified above.
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### **Summary of Findings/Observations**

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A variety of issues emerged from the interviews which can be recognized as opportunities for technical change or adaptive change.

#### **Technical Change**

Opportunities for technical change are summarized below, categorized by type, stated in the form of an action.

#### Decision-Making

- Increasing communication and transparency of congregational decision-making processes to address the question “Who’s really in charge?”

#### Group Effectiveness

- Fostering understanding of the connection between the direction/priorities of the church with each group and its work
- Clarifying the purpose, goals and work plan of each group

- Facilitating cross-communication/information sharing between groups
- Improving group leaders' abilities to plan and run effective, brief meetings
- Equipping group leaders with the orientation and training to work effectively with staff
- Creating processes of discernment for ending a group
- Clarifying when professional (staff/clergy) expertise is needed versus volunteer

#### Enhancing Community and Spiritual Experience

- Bringing spirituality and a spiritual focus to all meetings and all gatherings
- Creating processes that allow new groups to form and find their place in the system

Following are some of my observations related to issues of technical change:

Connecting Board, Ministry and Committee Actions to Vision and Direction – Many of those interviewed lifted up the need to better connect the work of committees and task forces to the vision and direction of the church overall. Those expressing the most satisfaction with their engagement express the sense of connection to larger purpose and a feeling of making a clear difference toward a desired outcome. It is an important function of leadership to clearly frame the direction and goals of the congregation and to help people see the connections of what they are doing with the larger direction. These connections are not self-evident to many people for whom they need to be stated explicitly. Interviews indicate that some clergy provide this guidance to the groups they participate in. Clergy often provide the frame and context that gives meaning to the work of each group and its relevance to living out the Gospel or aligning with the calling of the congregation. There is an important aspect of servant leadership in doing this mapping. Servant leaders are attentive to the consensus of the congregation and are interpreters of it. They recognize and name areas that lack of clarity and support dialogue to achieve clarity.

What is also essential is that combined clergy and lay leadership (Council, Executive Committee) provide clear direction based on ongoing dialogue and discernment with the congregation. My interviews for the Communications Assessment revealed a lack of clarity about direction. At present, the church's vision statement, open and affirming commitment, covenant, themes from listening processes and other statements are guideposts for action, but are not integrated. Many do not suggest measurable outcomes or desired implementation. Being vague avoids naming tensions between competing goals and minimizes conflict. Providing guidance that is specific enough for implementation while at the same time including all the passions and interests of the congregation is a balancing act.

Professionals Vs. Volunteers – I am on record in the Communications Assessment with the opinion that some aspects of congregational life are best served by the leadership of those with training/experience versus those without. In the case of communications, the time commitment and breadth of skill sets required to manage ongoing internal and external communications programs – in today's media world -- is not sustainable over the long term. In the instance of communication, I have recommended that the committee play an oversight role, setting goals and expectations and monitoring results. The committee may also be a support to staff in the completion of short-term projects, such as redevelopment of the website. This is not inconsistent with the current bylaws.

The other instance where the professional vs. volunteer choice is apparent is in the area of Christian Education. The place where Christian Ed is thriving is in youth programs that have staff leadership. The

dedication of time and the professional qualifications brought to these programs make not only for successful programs but also for a very positive committee experience according to interviews. It can be argued that adult programs would be best served by a parallel staff leadership structure, although the programs for adults would not necessarily be of a Sunday School variety (I will provide additional comments on the idea of the idea of “education” versus “spiritual growth” later in this analysis.) While lay persons may be able to lead book groups or facilitate Bible studies or deliver a class based on an established curriculum, few lay leaders have training/experience in how adults learn or develop spiritually. Those who by profession or avocation do can play a key role in planning adult programs and guiding the efforts of those who do not. UCC culture strongly supports the role of lay leadership in all aspects of the church. This is not so much a critique of that culture as it is noticing what is working well at UCUC and suggesting it be replicated elsewhere.

### **Adaptive Change**

Some of the issues that emerged from the interviews are more adaptive in nature and focus on our evolving understanding of what it means to be a Christian faith community in this time. These I will frame as adaptive questions:

- What elements of a revised Boards, Ministries, and Committees system will facilitate individuals’ discovery and ability to live out an authentic sense of call?
- What are the spiritual needs of those contributing significant volunteer time to ministry and “administry” (love this term from Mike Denton) and how are those needs to be met? How have those needs been met in the past? How have the needs changed?
- How can the spiritual experience of engagement with ministry and administry – experiences of relationship, connection, mutual care and community (with each other and with God) -- be enhanced? How can we account for the diversity of spiritual experiences people bring to an inclusive church?
- How can we create more short-term engagement opportunities for people with limited time or those who want to volunteer but not lead?
- How can we identify and cultivate new leaders?

Following are observations about one of the adaptive challenges we face in this time of cultural change.

Spiritual Formation and Community – As all of you well know from the work of Diana Butler Bass, whose work you have championed in the Lecture Series, the evolving culture of the Christian community has undergone a significant shift as it relates to structures of belief. Whereas previously churches taught people what to believe based on their denominational theology, today’s church embraces the importance of people finding their own answers. It is assumed that people already have a relationship with God and the church’s role is to help them explore their own “God stories.” The interviews for this study make it clear that many experience spiritual growth through relationship and community, thus the *experience of community* is one of the most important sources of spiritual growth and formation that the church offers. Bible studies, book clubs, lecture series and other so-called adult education programs become *more spiritual* when they involve experiences of connection, mutual care and relationship. So too do experiences on Council, Boards, Ministries and action groups become sources of spiritual nurture when they emphasize connection, mutual care and relationship. “Fellowship” should not be a separate

siloes activity – rather it should be “baked in” to every gathering— social, ministry, administry – in the form of emphasis on relationship and mutual care. Likewise should opportunities for spiritual reflection be “baked in” in order to foster the understanding that all “work” is sacred work/ministry.

Many leaders at UCUC are already bringing a spiritual approach to what might be considered “business” meetings, where the emphasis is on doing. These leaders bring a spiritual aspect of gatherings that emphasizes being – being the church, being relationship oriented, taking time to focus on the people in the room first before focusing on the task that needs to be accomplished. Some will know how to do this intuitively. Some will need help in the forms of mentoring, trainings, written prayers or spiritual practices for groups, ways to manage conflict or to practice gratitude. Additional suggestions are reflected below.

## **Recommendations**

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The findings and observations previously stated support the following series of recommendations. These recommendations are described briefly and are followed by the names of what I call “Toolkit” items. The Toolkit terms are short-hand for whole recommendations or components of the recommendations and show up in the scenarios for discussion provided at the end.

### Structural Change

The following structural change recommendations suggest the need for bylaws revisions.

1. Simplify the structure of Council, Boards, Committees and Ministries
  - Boards are replaced by Ministry Councils that report to Council (reducing the number of groups directly reporting to Council from 21 to 12.
  - The Ministry Councils do not replace Boards as work-groups. They exist purely for shared planning, policy discussion, coordination and collaboration of committee work.
  - Ministry Councils are comprised of representatives from each of the subgroups within them, up to a maximum of 12 people (in the case of Love and Justice), but as little as 3 (Worship and Music).
  - Committees/Subgroups are renamed to focus on their role: policy and advisory, task-oriented, etc, ongoing programs. Example:
    - (Topic) Council = Policy, coordination, collaboration, information sharing, interface with Church Council
    - Ministry/Administry = Task-focused, action – Can be Ministry /Administry Committee (ongoing) or Ministry/Administry Task Force, Discernment Group, or Action Team
  - Clergy attend Ministry Council meetings; not assigned to all committees
  - Frequency of Ministry Council meetings dependent on need for policy, shared planning, coordination, collaboration and bringing things to Council
  - Ministry Council setting as a place of spiritual nurture of leaders

(Toolkit Name: Simplify)

2. Create a new Ministry Council on Calling and Engagement comprised of groups whose purpose is to help people find their vocation and opportunity for ministries (both small short-term callings and big life-time vocational discernment). Ministry or Administry groups within this council include:
- **Nominating Committee** – Feeds the annual nominating process for Council officers and at Large Members, but also functions year-round to support groups in their “calling” (direct personal asks) of individuals to participate in church activities -- a match-making service to help people find opportunities to engage. The committee will work closely with the New Members Committee to help new members get connected to activities they desire. It might also conduct an engagement survey of all church members that could feed results into the church database regarding interests, time availability and skills.
  - **New Members** --- Will continue to offer new member classes but would coordinate with both the Nominating committee and the Vocational Discernment Programs to help people find the activities that speak to them and fit their lifestyle.
  - **Vocational Discernment Programs** – Offering programs to help people find their vocation in work and volunteer work. These programs might include co-hort based Life Discernment Groups (especially relevant for young adults, people at mid-life and people at retirement looking for their “encore” career); as well as Leadership Development programs focused on cultivating emotional and spiritual intelligence, self-awareness of gifts, strengths and weaknesses, etc.

This Council also might be a home for a committee or subgroup that provides technical assistance to those learning how to start a new ministry or project at the church, and to support those in leadership positions how to plan for their succession out.

(Toolkit Names: Ministry Council on Calling and Engagement; Vocational and Discernment Programs; Year-Round Nominating/Calling Process)

## Processes

These recommendations focus on doing new things or doing existing things differently.

3. In addition to Annual Meeting, convene all groups annually for an event that “sends” people out for ministry within the church structure. This meeting will communicate church priorities/goals and will give each group a chance to develop and share their group’s purpose and goals, and clarify the relationship of those goals to the church’s overall priorities and goals. In addition to planning for the year, utilize this gathering to provide training and orientation:
  - How to conduct an effective meeting
  - How to communicate with the church and work with the staff to get things done
  - How to foster relationship and connection as groups work together

This meeting might also be an entry point for people who have an idea for a new ministry or program to help them understand how it fits with church priorities.

(Toolkit Name: [Sending](#))

4. Utilize Love and Justice model for convening new ministry groups. The methodology now used in the Love and Justice ministry area is working well and is coordinating significant activity efficiently. I recommend it be considered and adapted for use within all Ministry groups to create opportunities for new initiatives to emerge. (Toolkit Name: [Project Onramp](#))
5. Annual Self-Assessment. Each task-oriented team should conduct an annual self-assessment using an online survey instrument like Survey Monkey to assess the need for ending a group or intervening to address dysfunction that is affecting group morale. Executive Committee would review the results of these surveys and identify action steps in response to findings. (Toolkit Name: [Project Offramp](#))

## Enhanced Spiritual Nurture for Leaders

6. Develop Pastoral Presence program to provide support and community with those who contribute significant time to church engagement. (Note: This suggestion is not to say that clergy do not currently provide spiritual nurture for leaders – this suggests doing things differently and equipping leaders in specific ways). A simplified boards/committees structure should minimize clergy time spent in meetings, allowing more time for spiritual nurture of leaders and the spirituality of the engagement experience. This might include providing resources for bringing prayer and spiritual reflection to meetings or gatherings, facilitating conversations to deepen relationships, providing personal support/pastoral counseling to leaders in crisis, etc. (Toolkit Name: [Pastoral Presence](#))
7. Spirituality of Leadership Mentoring – With #6 focused on personal spiritual support of leaders, clergy might also have a role in mentoring leaders on how to bring spiritual presence to their leadership of committees and groups. These resources might include:
  - Written prayers or reflections to read to start or end meetings.
  - Relational practices – check-ins, icebreakers, dialogue skills such as “[Mutual Invitation](#)”

- The use of silence and gratitude practices, or the use of [Appreciative Inquiry](#)

(Toolkit Name: Spirituality of Leadership)

### Decision-Making Clarity

8. Clarify clergy, staff and congregational roles in decision-making, and create educational materials for the congregation to make decision-making processes transparent. Materials should identify the different methods of contributing one's voice to decision-making. What are the opportunities for the congregation to express its will as a whole? How do individuals express themselves on particular issues? Consider the need for education to be ongoing, not a one-time campaign. (Toolkit Name: Hearing/Being Heard)

### **Connecting Back to Scrum and Networks**

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As I've completed this analysis, I have been keeping in mind our initial review of networks and scrum as technologies for organizing engagement. The technologies themselves are both useful and they represent two different ways of organizing. The commonalities I'd like to lift up here that apply to this analysis are:

- Both provide a structure for accomplishing work. The intent is getting things done. The intent is not deliberation for its own sake, or for representative decision-making.
- Both require clear purpose and direction – in scrum this is provided by the Project Owner, it may be collectively defined.
- Both allow self-organization of those doing the work.

The networks technology is very similar to what is working within the Love and Justice ministries. Scrum technology may be useful to consider in planning the Sending gathering and times when the Council commissions new action groups.

You've said that prescription of one or the other would involve training the congregation, which is not considered a strength. Instead, use them as templates and compare those templates to what you see happening that is working well – notice what elements make a contribution, and notice what is missing that might also be helpful.

### **Scenarios**

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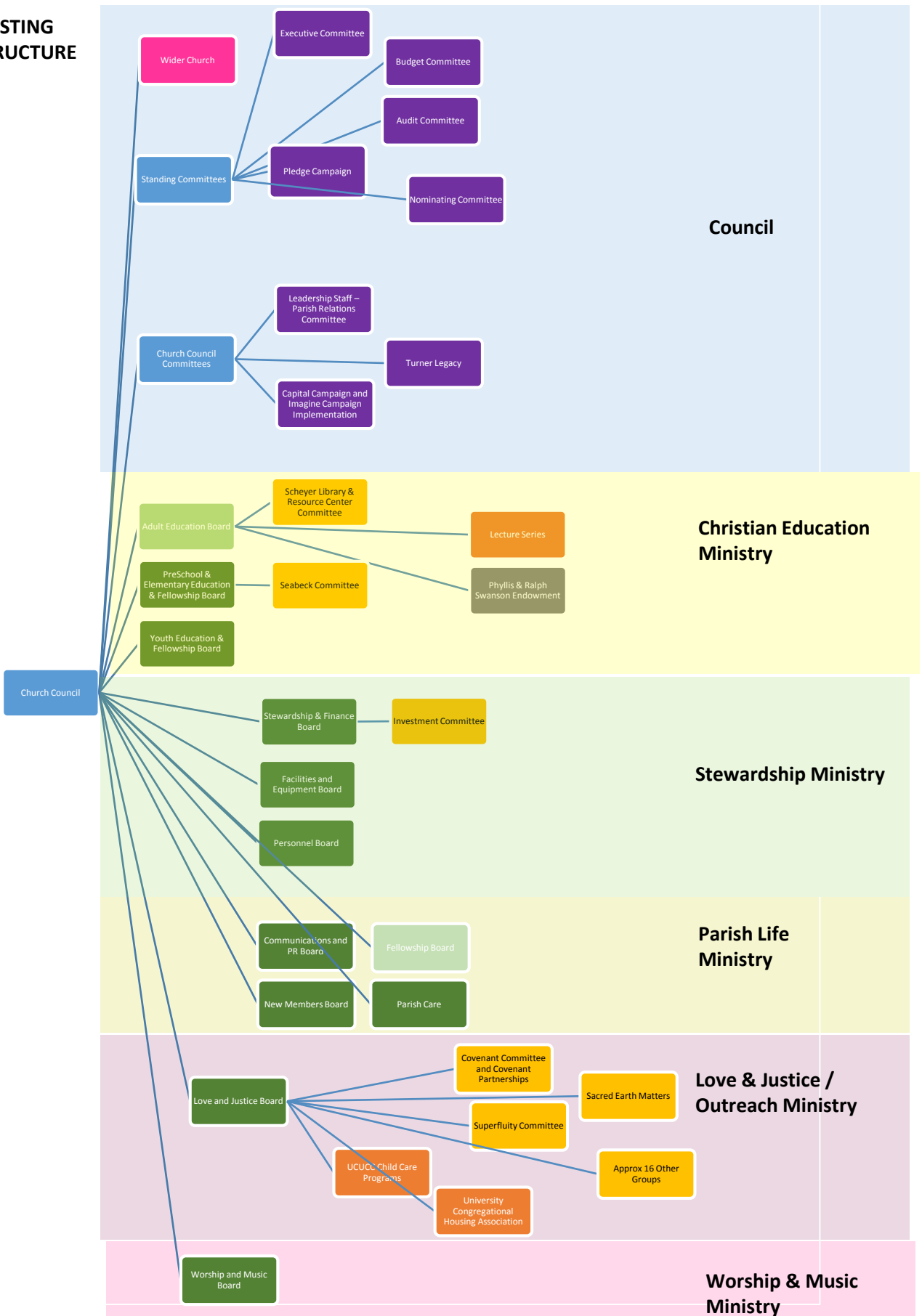
Following are a series of scenarios that select from these component recommendations, offering degrees of change toward the two goals at the beginning of this report. These are intended to start conversation. The first step in dialogue on these scenarios will be the Boards and Ministries committee meeting on Sept. 3. The next step will be dialogue at the Executive Committee meeting. The Executive Committee conversation will inform how we design the conversation for the October retreat.

## Boards, Ministries and Committees

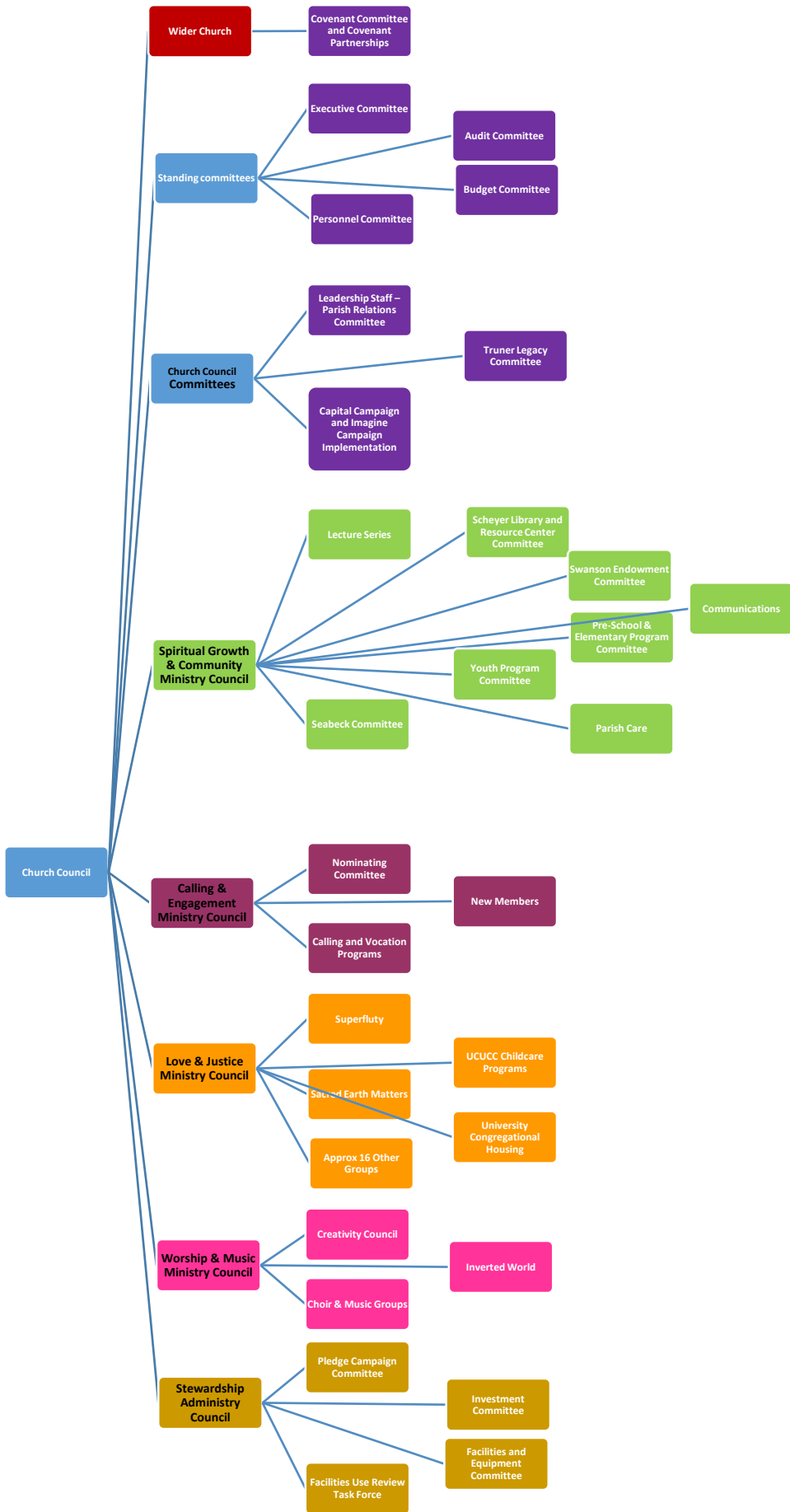
	Scenario One	Scenario Two	Scenario Three	Scenario Four	Scenario Five
<b>Structural Change</b>	Eliminate Fellowship Board & Adult Ed Board Move Covenant Committee to Wider Church	Eliminate Fellowship Board & Adult Ed Board Move Covenant Committee to Wider Church	Simplify Structure	Simplify Structure Calling & Engagement Year-Round Nominating	Simplify Structure Call & Engagement Year-Round Nominating Vocational and Discernment Programs
<b>Processes</b>	Sending	Sending Project OnRamp	Sending Project OnRamp Project Offramp	Sending Project OnRamp Project Offramp	Sending Project OnRamp Project Offramp
<b>Spiritual Nurture for Leaders</b>			Pastoral Presence	Pastoral Presence Spirituality of Leadership	Pastoral Presence Spirituality of Leadership
<b>Decision-Making Clarity</b>	Hearing/Being Heard	Hearing/Being Heard	Hearing/Being Heard	Hearing/Being Heard	Hearing/Being Heard
<b>Address both objectives?</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Impact on Bylaws?</b>	Minimal	Minimal	Significant	Significant	Significant
<b>Degree of Change?</b>	Limited	Limited	Moderate	Significant	Significant



# EXISTING STRUCTURE



**SIMPLIFY  
STARTING  
POINT**

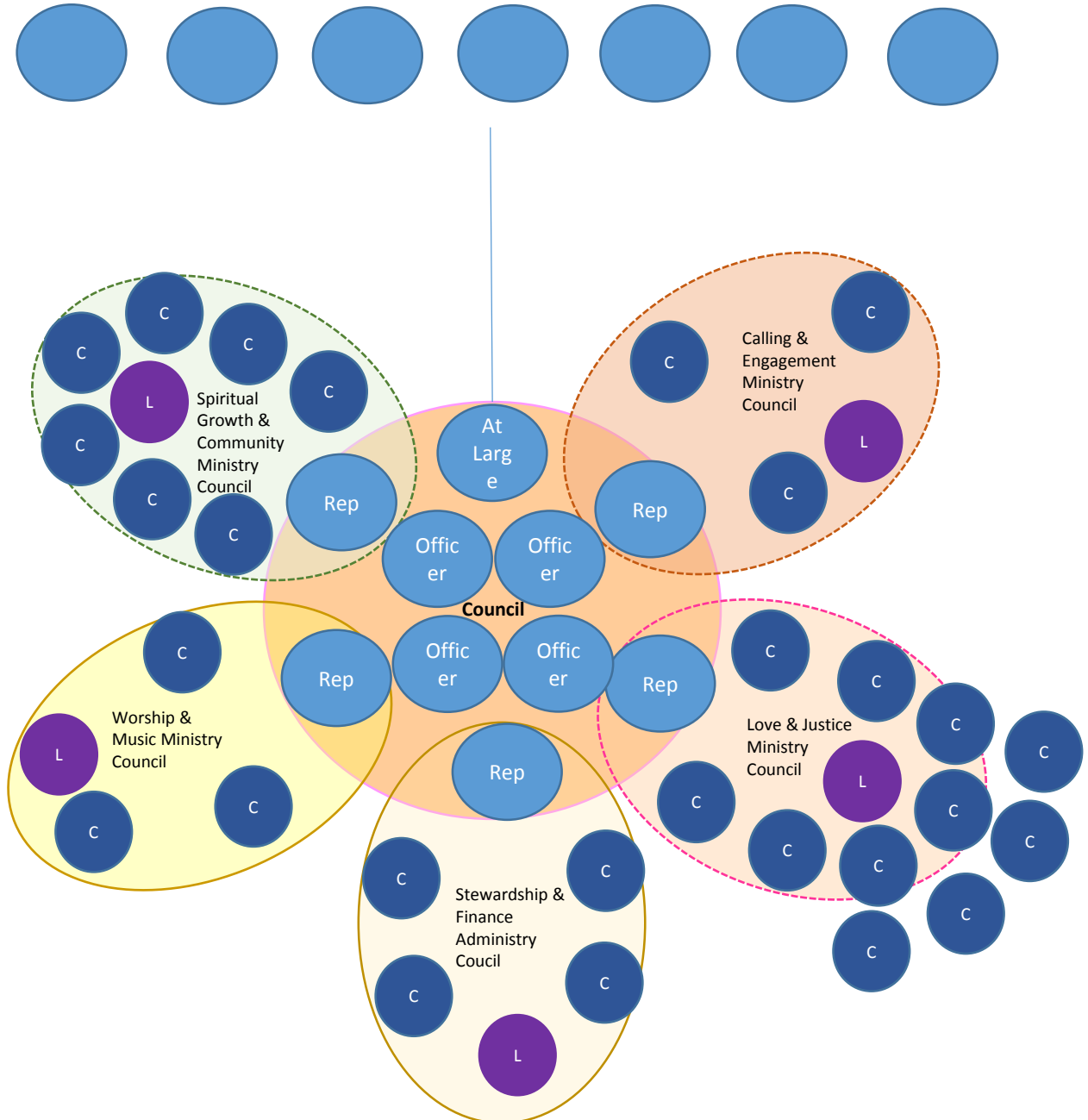


**SIMPLIFY  
STARTING POINT -  
Relationships**

**Council Committees**

Standing Committees

Ad Hoc Committees



Ministry/Administry Councils are not “work groups” but places for coordination, shared planning and leadership support

A member of the leadership team works with each Council to provide pastoral support and mentoring

Clergy/Leadership remain part of Executive Committee (not shown here)