



R-17: Simplified, Accountable Structure (SAS)

Frequently Asked Questions for the District Superintendent

1. Where can I find information on simplified structure in the Book of Discipline?

¶ 247.2 in the 2016 edition

2. Which positions can be combined for one person on the Board to hold?

Most all positions can be combined as long as the minimum number is elected. The Lay Leader, Lay Member to Annual Conference, S/PPR Chair and Trustee Chair must be designated, but could all be the same person.

3. Is there an absolute minimum number for the Board?

Nine is the standard and recommended minimum. Very small congregations may be able to have a Board of six, composed of two individuals in each three-year class.

4. Does the pastor have a vote?

No. Because the Leadership Board's work switches roles quickly from Disciplinary committee to committee, we recommend that the pastor not vote, in order to preserve clarity and unity in the Board. If a matter comes up that depends on one vote of the pastor, that is probably a sign that more conversation and discernment is needed.

5. Can family members serve together on the Board?

Per the Book of Discipline, family members cannot serve on the Board together. If it cannot be avoided, the family members may need to excuse themselves from the room or not vote on issues with potential conflict of interest. Staff and family of staff cannot serve on the Board.

6. Should staff (paid and unpaid) serve on the Board?

No

7. Are the Financial Secretary and Treasurer required to be on the Board?

No, but they can be. The recommendation and best practice is for them not to be on the Board and instead to be thought of as more of a staff position.

8. Which position on the Board serves as the liaison to the district superintendent for Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee purposes?

It is recommended that the Board Chair serves as the S/PPRC liaison to the DS.

9. Are there still three-year terms and classes?

Yes. One third of the Board will roll off each year.



10. Is the Board self-nominating?

No. There is still a requirement that there be a separate Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development to nominate the Board Members to the Charge Conference each year.

11. How long can a person serve on the Board? Board members serve a three-year term.

Since all members are serving as S/PPR, Trustees and Finance, it is recommended they roll off after each three-year term. After being off the Board for a year, the person can roll back onto the Board if elected.

12. Are UMM, UMW, and UMYF representatives required to be on the Board?

If the church has these chartered groups, a member of that group may serve if requested on the Board as a leader of the local congregation (not to report about their group).

13. How many must be present to take an official vote? What requires an official vote?

A quorum is described as whoever is present. (Note of exception: in rare matters that require the Trustees to function as a legal body, a majority of Board members who are Trustees must be present.) Simple majority of Board members attending approves a motion.

14. How is the Trustee Chair elected or appointed as required by the corporate resolution?

At the first meeting at the beginning of each new year, the Board will elect a "trustee chair" to satisfy the corporate resolution requirement. It is recommended the Board Chair serve as the trustee chair. Please note that all members of the Board who will serve in the role as a trustee must be of legal age (18+ in most states).

15. If a church moves to the simplified, accountable structure, how does ministry happen?

Even though the restructuring occurs, ministry teams are still needed and in place. Fewer people on the Board means more people are available to do ministry. Simplifying structure is the combining of the four administrative teams of the Council, Trustees, Finance and S/PPR Committees. The only change for ministry teams is that the Nominations Committee is no longer responsible for identifying and nominating leaders and members for ministry teams.

16. What kind of approval is needed from the DS to move to the simplified structure?

The DS must approve a modified organizational structure. We highly recommend two points of DS contact before moving forward: First, the Pastor and Church Council Chair (and perhaps also the Lay Leader) request permission to begin discernment and study. We also highly recommend a SAS Coach be deployed to help the church in this Discernment Phase. After the congregation discerns and discusses the matter, then the Church Council votes on whether or not to make a formal request to move to SAS. Upon a favorable vote, the pastor, church council chair, and lay leader write a letter to the DS seeking formal approval permission to move to the SAS structure along with a Church Conference to consider moving to the modified organizational structure.



17. What kind of approval is needed from the congregation to move to the simplified structure?

We highly recommend a two-step approval process: First, the Church Council requests formal DS permission and a Church Conference, with every professing member able to vote, to consider moving to the modified organizational structure. A Resolution will need to place all committee authority into the new Leadership Board and call on Nominations to recommend potential board members. Then, a called or annual Charge Conference in which the Nominations Committee offers up an initial slate of nine board members, divided into three classes.

18. Must the SAS Board members be professing members of the church?

Yes. By Discipline, all Board Members will need to be professing members of the church because some of the constituent committees require professing membership, with a Discipline-recommended minimum of 1/3 being laywomen and 1/3 being lay men.

19. What size church is too small or too large for SAS?

While 247.2 was written primarily for small churches who had difficulty finding enough people to fill all the “slots” in a committee structure, it was some of our largest churches that first discovered the power and efficiency of SAS. Churches with an average worship attendance under 50 may already be doing a de facto simplified structure which may or may not include accountability. Large Churches that worship in the thousands have discovered the need for SAS as they seek to counteract ministry silos and mission drift. Congregations from 50-500 in worship will quickly discover the power of SAS in unleashing more laity for ministry and focusing the church on Christ’s mission.

20. Who can attend the meetings?

Congregation members are always invited to attend the meetings, but do not have voice or vote. When the Board needs to move to executive session to address S/PPRC matters or to consider legal negotiations (such as buying or selling property), these church members will need to be excused.



R-26 Brief Overview of Simplified, Accountable Structure

In the United Methodist Church (UMC), our polity has historically called for four administrative committees to care for the “business” of the church. Those four committees are the Trustees Committee, Finance Committee, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and the Church Council. These committees usually consist of 6-12 people serving three-year rotating terms. In addition to these generalities, each committee has its particular nuances and requirements as outlined in our *UMC Book of Discipline* (book that constitutes the law, polity, and doctrine of the United Methodist Church). While the structure and numbers vary from church to church, the average congregation has somewhere between 25 to 75 members tied up in serving on these four administrative committees.

While the predecessor bodies that constitute our denomination have approved a *Book of Discipline* for 200 years, the first edition of the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* originated in 1968 when the UMC was formed through the union of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church. In 1968 the church’s primary responsibility was to receive the continuous flow of people coming in the door from a church-centric culture and make them official members. Designed for continuity and stability, the legacy committee structures we inherited were simply not designed for the complexity and rapid changes of our modern era. In the 21st Century, simply adding names to the membership roll is not the primary responsibility of the administrative committees since culture is no longer church-centric (in fact the church is counter cultural) thus resulting in the church needing to structure differently for a shifting time and focus.

In the latest edition (2016) of the *Book of Discipline* ¶247.2, the church, with approval of the district superintendent, is provided the opportunity to restructure in order to be more missionally focused. While the *Book of Discipline* describes in great detail how the four administrative committees are formed, this latest paragraph is quite general and flexible in nature. In working with hundreds of churches and thousands of leaders over the past decade (plus), we (Kay and Blake) have continuously massaged, tweaked, and improved a Simplified, accountable structure model for local congregations to adopt. This model has now found its way into churches across the country in multiple conferences. It is now referred to the simplified structure model generally accepted by district superintendents, cabinets, and bishops (with some districts and conferences requiring their own particular nuances).



This paragraph in the Discipline was introduced for the primary benefit of small churches who were struggling to have enough people to fill the four administrative committees as required by the traditional structure. However interestingly enough, it was the larger churches who were some of the early adopters. They quickly identified the efficiency and effectiveness in the model.

We are often asked about the effectiveness of simplified, accountable structure for the various size churches in the various church settings (rural, suburban, urban). In our experience, this model can (and does) work in any size church. Of course, there are nuances in the various settings, but the overall number of board leaders and accountability are static. The nuances occur in such things as the structure of staff and ministry teams according to church size, whether the church has a daycare or preschool, and how to operate in a multi-point charge. Further nuances occur in the guiding principles, leadership covenants, and the nominations process. The bottom line is that a simplified, accountable structure can work for any size church in any setting.

To simplify church structure, the four administrative committees (trustees, finance, staff-parish relations, and council) cease to exist as we know them, and they are replaced by one new Leadership Board of nine people with three year terms. This new board is nominated by the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development and voted on by either the church or charge conference. Rather than holding four separate meetings of the four previous administrative committees, there is now one board meeting where the leaders are able to practice a healthier and more holistic approach with missional focus and direction. Technically, and in fulfillment with the requirements of the Discipline, all four committees still exist, but they exist as a single unified Leadership Board, with all of their responsibilities, qualifications, and authority of each administrative committee located in the simplified board. The new Leadership Board is the Church Council, and it is also the Trustees, which is the Finance Committee, and is the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

When simplifying the structure, accountability must be a deeply integrated and highly accepted component of simplification. Without accountability, simplification is not recommended! When transitioning to accountable leadership, the new Leadership Board shifts from managing the church to governing the church. This is a significant shift that should not be minimized or glossed over. While simplifying is a technical shift, accountability is an adaptive shift which takes longer and is a harder turn to make for most churches. Thus, this is not the “easy fix” some churches might think or even desire.



Accountable leadership changes not only the agenda, but also the conversations, focus, and priorities at the table. The nominations process is adapted, too, in this model. The role of the pastor will likely need to shift and sometimes staff roles, too. While the new Leadership Board governs in the model of accountable leadership, the pastor leads, the staff (paid and unpaid ministry leaders) equips and coordinates ministry, and the congregation is released to be in ministry.

The primary purposes and benefits of simplified, accountable leadership are ...

- Removes bottlenecks in the decision-making process (i.e. time, energy, resources, multiple committees/layers, silos, disjointed focus and priorities, etc.)
- Systems, procedures, and policies in place that are flexible and adaptable
- More people released and available for ministry
- Leadership Board responsible for church's faithfulness to The Great Commission (making disciples)
- Leadership Board aligns church resources to the mission and vision
- Guiding Principles in place for efficiency and permission-giving within healthy boundaries
- Leaders are held accountable at all levels
- Leadership Board is responsible for focusing on the areas of stewardship, strategic alignment, generative future-focus, and accountable leadership
- Missional focus, priority, and alignment are non-negotiables

Mission Possible by Kay Kotan and Blake Bradford lays out the three phases of leading with the simplified, accountable structure (discerning, equipping, implementing) in detail, along with tools and samples to ease the transition and encourage clarity as your congregation begins operating with this powerful and effective model of leadership.



[†]¶247.2 *The Charge Conference, the district superintendent, and the pastor, when a pastor has been appointed (see ¶205.4), shall organize and administer the pastoral charge and churches according to the policies and plans herein set forth. When the membership size, program scope, mission resources, or other circumstances so require, the charge conference may, in consultation with and upon the approval of the district superintendent, modify the organizational plans, provided that the provisions of ¶243 are observed. Such other circumstances may include, but not be limited to, alternative models for the conception of a local church, such as coffee house ministries, mall ministries, outdoor ministries, retirement home ministries, restaurant ministries, and other emergent ways in which people can gather in God's name to be the church.*

^{††}¶243. *Primary Tasks – The local church shall be organized so that it can pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community – reaching out and receiving with joy all who will respond; encouraging people in their relationship with God and inviting them to commitment to God's love in Jesus Christ; providing opportunities for them to seek strengthening and growth in spiritual formation; and supporting them to live lovingly and justly in the power of the Holy Spirit as faithful disciples.*

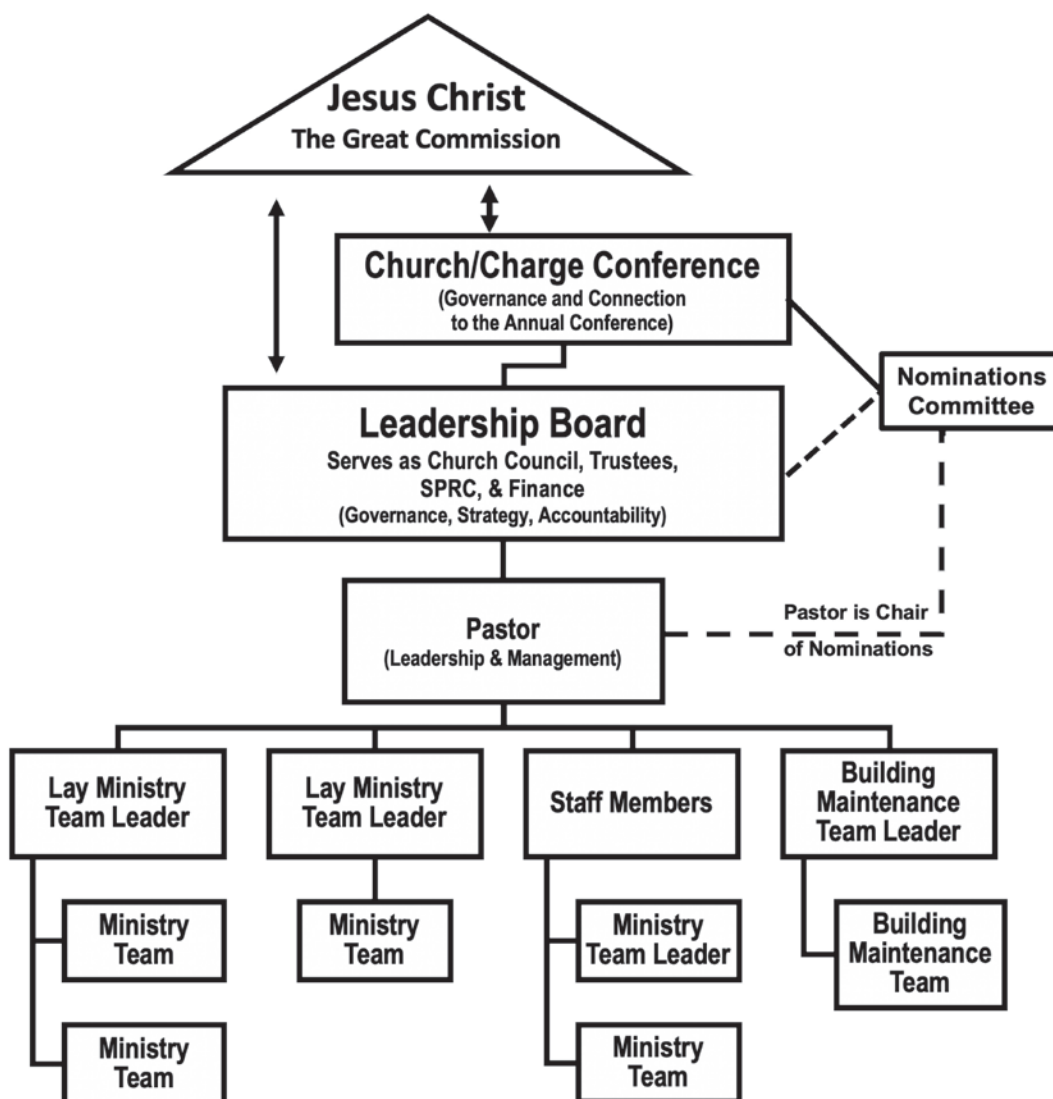
In carrying out its primary task, it shall be organized so that adequate provision is made for these basic responsibilities: (1) planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness for persons and families within and without the congregation; (2) providing for effective pastoral and lay leadership; (3) providing for financial support, physical facilities, and the legal obligations of the church; (4) utilizing the appropriate relationships and resources of the district and annual conference; (5) providing for the proper creation, maintenance, and disposition of documentary record material of the local church; and (6) seeking inclusiveness in all aspects of its life.



R-4: Samples of Organizational Charts

EXAMPLE 1:

Organizational Chart of the RECOMMENDED simplified, accountable structure





EXAMPLE 3:

Dual Election Model with a separate SPRC (Not Recommended)

- In this modification of the recommended model, the Leadership Board contains 3-4 members of SPRC, including Chair and Lay Leader who serve both on the SPRC and on the Leadership Board as Personnel Specialists. SPRC continues to report to the Leadership Board.
- This is an alternate modification of the “pure” simplified, accountable structure.
- While we do not recommend this model, we provide it in case your district superintendent or annual conference requires an independent SPRC.
- There are challenges to having a separate SPRC:
- The shared Board members/SPRC can create authority issues and operational vagueness
- Separate SPRC dilutes the efficiency and accountability of the Leadership Board
- Pastor can receive mixed messages about priorities
- So, instead of having a fully separate SPRC, having half of the separate SPRC’s membership be “dually elected” to both the Leadership Board and the SPRC can attempt to protect alignment to the congregation’s goals and mission.
- While we encouraged district superintendents and congregations to engage fully in the standard and recommended single SAS board, if the annual conference or district superintendent requires a SPRC to be elected, this model might provide a compromise that retains as much accountability as possible.



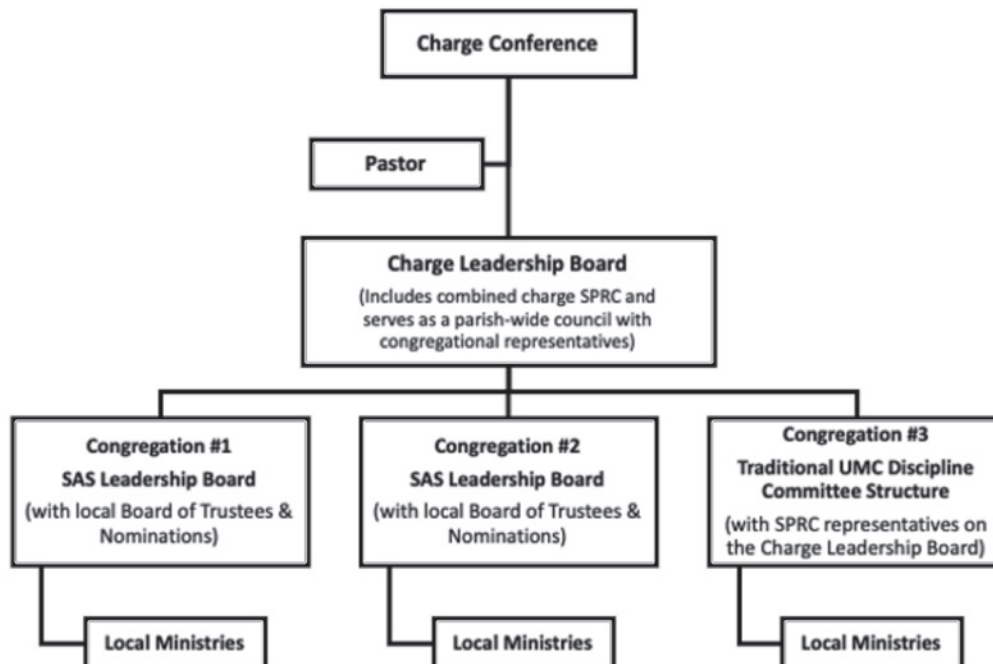
Resource from *Mission Possible 3+*, by Kay Kotan and Blake Bradford. Market Square Publishing, 2021. Permission to copy for use with *Mission Possible 3+*.



EXAMPLE 4:

A Two-Point Charge or Cooperative Parish utilizing the SAS Model

- Local Church simplified, accountable structure Leadership Boards select representatives to a Charge Leadership Board that also serves as a Parish-wide SPRC and Parish Council
- The Charge Leadership Board coordinates with the congregations to rotate Charge Conference election of Lay Members of Annual Conference
- Local Churches retains the responsibility and authority of the Boards of Trustees (as part of the SAS Leadership Board) because of legal responsibilities
- Local Churches continue to have independent Nominations Committees that select the congregation’s Leadership Board and appoints representatives to the Charge Board
- Staff, supervised by the Pastor, may be amenable to the local church SAS or to the Charge Board, depending on the nature of the staff position. For instance, some churches, as part of a charge, support a single charge administrative assistant. Job descriptions will need to be clear which governing body staff are amenable.
- If one of the local churches on the charge is not ready to transition to the SAS model, the congregation can keep its legacy committee structure and appoint representatives.





R-5: Rules to Remember for Structuring and Nominations

All the Disciplinary requirements and limitations of each of the new Leadership Board's constituent committees remains in effect. Rules to remember:

1. A separate **Nominations Committee**, chaired by the Pastor, is required because the Board cannot self-nominate.
2. You will need **nine** members. Board members serve a **three-year term**. The Lay Leader and Lay Delegate are exempt from the three-year term. After being off the Board for a year, the person can roll back onto the Board if elected. SPRC and Trustees have minimum and maximum limits on the number of members, so (depending on your Leadership Team's size and composition), a few members of the Leadership Team may be barred as voting members of some of the constituent committees. For instance, there is a limit of 9 on Trustees; there is also a limit of 11 on SPRC, counting Lay Leader and a Lay Member of Annual Conference.
3. Pay attention to Disciplinary **conflicts of interest**. Household members cannot serve on the Board together. If it cannot be avoided, the family members may need to excuse themselves from the room or not vote on issues with potential conflict of interest. Staff and family of staff cannot serve on the Board because of SPRC membership restrictions (plus it is simply good ethics!).
4. **Trustee Requirements:** At the first meeting at the beginning of each new year, the Board will elect a Trustee Chair to satisfy the corporate resolution requirement. It is recommended the Board Chair serve as the Trustee Chair, if the Board members is one of the Trustees. The Leadership Board, serving as the Trustees, is also the legal Board of Directors. All Board members who serve as Trustees must be over 18. The Trustee membership rule of minimum 1/3 laymen and 1/3 lay women remains in effect. The Pastor cannot be a Trustee.
5. Even though the restructuring occurs, **ministry teams** are still needed and in place. Fewer people on the Board means more people are available to do ministry. Simplifying structure is the combining of the four administrative teams of the Council, Trustees, Finance and SPR Committees. The nurture, outreach, and witnessing ministries continue their disciple-making work.



6. The concept of a Leadership Board is **designed to increase accountability and alignment** for the whole church towards its holistic mission, not be a place for ministry representatives to negotiate “turf.” Members of the Board only represent and lead the whole church, not a particular interest group or ministry.
7. While the Leadership Board **may designate specialists** (such as finance specialists) from the membership of their Board, the whole Board, in toto, serves as the finance committee, Trustees, etc., not just the designated specialists.
8. The small number of governance officers on the Leadership Team **requires huge trust and congregation-wide accountability**. It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you describe your future Charge Conference as being “The Leadership Board, Nominations Committee, and all clergy who hold their charge conference in the congregation.” And it would also greatly help build trust, accountability, and transparency if your governing documents adopt a requirement that asks the district superintendent to convene all Charge Conferences as Church Conferences to allow all professing members to vote on matters. This allows the larger congregation to have a say in nominations and hold the Leadership Board accountable in the Board’s role as the Charge Conference’s executive committee.
9. Churches on **multi-point charges** will particularly need to take care to support and respect the organizational structure and ministry of one another’s churches.



R-8: Sample Nominations Report

2022 Anytown First UMC Leadership

- Anytown United Methodist Church is governed according to the denomination’s prescribed structure as found in the United Methodist Book of Discipline. All Book of Discipline and congregational policy references to the Church Council, Board of Trustees, Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, Endowment Committee, and Finance Committee shall be understood to refer to the Leadership Board. Where years are listed, they represent the final year of an individual’s term.
- The Nominations Committee has undertaken a careful and discerning process of preparing the slate below for approval by Church Conference. The committee’s aim is to match persons with open positions according to the following considerations:
 - Maturity as a Disciple of Jesus Christ
 - Alignment with the church’s mission: “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the world”
 - Length of membership tenure at Anytown UMC, with a balancing of experience in leadership with welcoming and engaging new leaders
 - Actively fulfilling member expectations (UM Discipline ¶217): prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness
 - Past history of leadership in small groups, classes, ministry teams, and committees
 - Balance and diversity of the committee, particularly with age, gender, and areas of involvement
 - Ability to fulfill board requirements, the Board Covenant, and attend meetings
- As part of our Intentional Leadership Pathway, In YEAR, a class of “Preparatory Members” was created who will serve one year with voice, but without vote in order to prepare those who may subsequently be elected to serve a three-year voting term. In the event of a vacancy, the preparatory may be asked to complete a term.



Anytown First UMC Charge Conference

- The Charge Conference includes the members of the Leadership Board, the Nominations Committee, pastors appointed to the congregation, and all active and retired clergy who have designated our congregation as their home Charge Conference.
- In order to “encourage broader participation by members of the church, the Nominations Committee recommends that Anytown FUMC request that any annual or called Charge Conference be convened as a Church Conference to extend the vote to all professing members of the congregation (2016 BOD ¶248).
- The Leadership Board serves as the incorporated institution’s board of directors and serves as the executive committee of the Charge Conference.



Leadership Board

RECOMMENDED Version with NINE on the Board:

Class of 2022

John Jones, T/F/SPR
 Carol Clark, T/F/SPR/LM
 Yolanda Youngperson, F/SPR/Y

Class of 2023

Jennifer Jackson, T/F/SPR/C
 Ben Black, T/F/SPR/LL
 Larry Lewis, T/F/SPR

Class of 2024

Sue Smith, T/F/SPR/UMW
 David Dent, T/F/SPR/UMM
 Debbie Duncan, T/F/SPR

Version with ELEVEN voting on the Board

(Includes separate Lay Leader and Lay Member of AC who are not disciplinary term-limited)

Class of 2022

John Jones, T/F/SPR
 Yolanda Youngperson, F/SPR/Y
 Mary Miller, T/F/SPR

Class of 2023

Jennifer Jackson, T/F/SPR/C
 Larry Lewis, T/F/SPR
 Reggie Roberts, T/F/SPR/Treasurer

Class of 2024

Sue Smith, T/F/SPR/UMW
 David Dent, T/F/SPR/UMM
 Debbie Duncan, T/F/SPR

Preparatory Member

Andrea Anderson (non-voting)

Ex-Officio Members:

Lay Leader: Ben Black, F/SPR/LL
 Lay Member of AC: Carol Clark, F/SPR/LM

Key

- T - Trustee (a minimum of five and a maximum of nine, and includes at least 1/3 men and at least 1/3 women)
- SPRC - Staff Parish Relations Committee, (a minimum of three and a maximum of nine, not including the Lay Leader and Lay Member to Annual Conference who are members)
- F - Finance
- LM - Lay Member to Annual Conference (Ex Officio on SPRC)
- LL - Lay Leader (Ex Officio on SPRC)
- C-Chair
- UMM-United Methodist Men
- UMW-United Methodist Women
- Y-Youth (Note: members under 18 cannot be an elected Trustee)

Notes:

- At January meeting, Leadership Team will elect a Trustee Chairperson, which may be the Leadership Board Chairperson.
- Leadership Team may assign team members as Primary Contacts for matters pertaining to building maintenance, personnel, financial matters, or other areas of responsibility, but the Leadership Team operates as a single body encompassing the responsibilities of SPRC, Finance Committee, Endowment Committee, and Trustees.



Committee on Nominations and Leadership

Chairperson is the Appointed Senior Pastor (max 9 members, not including the pastor)

Class of 2022

Carl Clark
Belle Brady

Class of 2023

Rollie Rich
Gene Galloway

Class of 2024

Sally Smith
Rob Roberts



Child Enrichment Weekday Ministry Advisory Board

Anytown FUMC’s tuition-based ministries provide Christian care and education for children throughout the year. The team provides advisory support for our state-licensed ministries for children and relates as a ministry team with the Lead Pastor (or designee), and is subordinate the Leadership Board of the congregation, according to UMC Book of Discipline ¶256.2.c. Since Anytown FUMC’s weekday ministry shares the IRS employer ID number and nonprofit incorporation status with the church as a subordinate entity, the Anytown FUMC recommends all the Advisory Board members and chair for election by the Charge Conference. Non-members of FUMC, such as parents, may be elected to the Advisory Board, but the chair, selected by the Nominations Committee, must be a member. A majority of Advisory Board members must be professing members of Anytown FUMC.

¶256.2.c. Weekday Ministry Board – The term weekday ministry applies to any regularly planned ministry for children. When appropriate, one or more weekday ministry boards may be organized to oversee the weekday ministry programs of the congregation. The board’s membership should be mostly professing members of the congregation, with parent, church staff, and weekday ministry staff representatives. The board will set policies consistent with the congregation’s policies, state mandates, and sound business practices. The board will guide weekday ministries as appropriate opportunities for faith development, mission outreach, Christian education, evangelism, and safety. They will advocate for inclusion of children from various socioeconomic, cultural, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Weekday ministry board(s) accountability should be placed within the local church organizational structure with consideration to the group responsible for the congregation’s education ministry.

Chairperson: Mary McMillan

Treasurer: Chosen by Committee

Secretary: Chosen by Committee

Class of 2022

Roland Rogers
Suzy Simmons

Class of 2023

Angela Atkins
Regina Rogers

Class of 2024

Jeremy James
Frankie Fulbright

Ex-Officio Members (with vote):

- Director of Child Enrichment Ministries
- Director of Faith Development
- Senior Pastor
- Associate Pastor



NOTES for readers:

1. We have included a sample of a non-independent childcare ministry to the nominations report because these entities are often a source of questions. If your congregation's childcare ministry is a separately incorporated 501(c)3, then a different kind of governing relationship must be explicitly negotiated and outlined. Take care to update any existing policies and by-laws so that the Leadership Team is defined as the executive committee of the congregation's Charge Conference and the body with which the separately incorporated child care ministry relates on matters such as rent, use of shared space and staffing, ownership of furnishings and property, relationship with the pastor and church ministries, and expectations concerning church membership representation on their independent 501(c)3 board (including who gets to choose the representatives).
2. Similarly, some churches have independently incorporated Local Church Foundations (UM Discipline ¶2535) instead of endowment committees. Since this arrangement creates a separately incorporated body, care will need to be taken to relate the governing board of the foundation to the congregation's Leadership Board and charge conference. This may require approving amendments to the bylaws of the foundation.