American Baptist Churches USA

Church Renewal & Organizational Development

The Role of a Nonprofit Board of Directors
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Discussion Starters

1. Who owns the resources of the organization?

2. Some have suggested that the board should act as a steward for those resources. What does it mean to be a good steward? (Genesis 41:38-44)

The Board is responsible for

1. Setting vision and direction for the region
   a. Do you have a mission statement?
   b. Do you have a vision statement?
   c. Are policy and personnel decisions made with those statements in mind? Do they truly influence decision making?
   d. What are the short and long term priorities for the region?

2. Calling the executive

3. Policy decisions
   a. What policies exist now?
   b. Where are the gaps?
   c. Most policies relate to people and money
   d. Most people policies relate to hiring and firing, outlining unacceptable staff behavior, and designing a procedure for grievance
   e. Most money policies relate to budgeting, reporting, and accounting of funds

4. Core values
   a. What are the values that consistently and prominently surface?
   b. How can these "core" values be highlighted? (Covenant, statement, etc.)

5. Setting the agendas for meetings

6. Monitoring the membership of the board, including boards and committees

The Executive is responsible for

1. Carrying out policies
2. Overseeing the implementation of the vision with the help of staff and working teams
3. Maintaining the culture of the organization
4. Directing and evaluating executive staff
5. Hiring and firing support staff
6. Hiring and firing executive staff in consultation with the board

Working Boards and Teams
1. Concept: Because most regions have small staffs, the concept of "working boards" must also be addressed. When the membership of the board is divided into "teams" or ministry groups, the lines of staff and board members become blurred during these times, which is OK, as long as board members realize that they have removed their "policy making" hat in order to roll up their sleeves and work alongside staff to implement the ministries of the region.

2. Policy making at the team level: It is normally best to allow the working teams to set policies to guide their own ministries and simply report such policies to the board for information rather than action. If the board feels that any team policies violate the established direction, policies, or values of the region, they may "challenge" team policies through conversation and dialogue. Ultimately, the board may override team policies.