

Sierra Leadership Network Curriculum: Month 8, Year 2

Participation in the Sierra Leadership Network (SLN) is a process of adult learning. It is the responsibility of the participant to do their assignments and seek out the necessary accountability. It is the responsibility of the participant to schedule time with their mentor, not the other way around. Here is a checklist of this month's exercises and space for comments. All useful generated materials should be placed in your Sierra Leadership Network binder. The mentor will look over the exercises and be given opportunity to add their own comments. Be sure you take your binder to the quarterly meetings at Granite Springs Church to also be available to the SLN directors.

Month 8, Year 2

Date Completed

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Church Administration [Estimated time: \_\_\_\_\_]

Mentor Comments:

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Establish and Intercessory Prayer Team: [Estimated time: \_\_\_\_\_]  
Mentor Comments

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Peer Relationships: [Estimated time: \_\_\_\_\_]

Mentor Comments

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor Signature

## Church Administration

Most churches are amphibians. They are at the same time organic living communities as well as organized formal institutions. These two sides of a church's existence hopefully support each other in a healthy, symbiotic relationship. The church's life comes from the organism aspect. Churches are living communities made up of followers of Jesus Christ. The "living" side of church gives it life, vitality, and at times chaos. People are notoriously unpredictable and groups of people can at times do things that no single individual intends. For this reason the church throughout its history has developed its institutional side. Ideally the institutional side supports the organic side. Institutions bring order to the messier areas of life. Institutions establish rules, procedures, traditions and expectations. There are times that these things feel like they impede the growth and development of the organism, and sometimes they genuinely do. However, without the institutional aspect churches, and the church universal would be weaker, more frail, and more chaotic. Every wise leader needs to understand the dual nature of the church in order to lead the church responsibly and effectively.

In order to get a better handle on we are going to approach church administration from three aspects: Biblical values, church traditions and cultural wisdom. Every church leader needs to understand these three things in order to lead their church well.

1. **Biblical Values in church administration:** I don't believe the Bible establishes one specific and detailed structure for the institutional church. The church has over its history worked in very different ways in very different times and contexts. To say that the Bible doesn't impose an administrative template on every church is not to say that the Bible doesn't teach us values that faithful administration of God's church require.
  - a. Jesus: We see in Jesus' ministry a "proto-church" (in many ways the church herself began at Pentecost) that is very nearly pure organism and very little institution. Part of that I believe was simply because Jesus as Lord simply ruled his people directly. An administration is often a mediating structure that establishes and maintains an authoritative structure. In that way the church today "rules" in Jesus' name, or in other words in Jesus' stead. Having said this, however, it is also clear that Jesus gave his disciples some very specific and clear instructions on how the church should be. Scan the gospels, list and describe 3 or more values that Jesus commanded the church to embody.
  - b. The book of Acts records the birth of the church and some of its early days. What are some values you find in the book of Acts that should be expressed in the church today.
  - c. The Epistles are for the most part letters to churches. They are often one sided conversations but we can learn a fair amount from them regarding the apostle's intentions for the church in their day. Glean from the Epistles 3 or more values that the church should continue to embody in its institution today.
2. **Tradition in Church Administration:** Churches are often tremendously traditional institutions. So much of how we do things is simply the way things were done in the past that has been carried forward. There is clearly good and bad in this. Some practices should be

retired, others preserved. Often formerly retired practices are resurrected because there is a contemporary need. List 3 or 4 healthy traditional church practices that you are aware of and explain why they are needed today.

3. **Practical Wisdom in Church Administration:** Talk with your mentor, your senior pastor, or another senior pastor and pick their brains on church administration. What have they learned in their experience to be institutionally crucial for good church health. Take some notes and write down some of the points that most impressed you.

### **Establishing an Intercessory Prayer Team**

Prayer is a funny thing, or perhaps how we think about and practice prayer is a funny thing. Almost everyone will salute the flag when it comes to prayer. “Prayer is central, prayer is vital, prayer is essential, prayer is important to me, I pray...” At the same time we need to continually be saying such things because there is often a subtext of doubt that passes through whispers. “Prayer doesn’t really make a difference. I prayed for X, Y and Z and God never did a thing!” Prayer is often approached in a perfunctory way. It is decorum to pray but “we all know” that the real work happens after the prayer. This tension is constant and what fuels it is doubt. The chief religious competitor we face is not Islam or Buddhism or New Age spirituality, it is secularism and every day in a thousand subtle ways secularism whispers in our ears that the firmest level of reality is the physical, psychological and social and that essentially it is our own efforts that will carry the day.

A Biblical worldview instructs us that God is the primary mover, we are secondary and for this reason prayer is essential. Jesus needed to pray! The Bible in many places admonishes us to pray. Our three great enemies, the flesh, the world and the devil will not yield ground without prayer. Our own discipline of prayer is for another lesson, today we should focus on intercessory prayer. Prayer is hard work and is necessary if your ministry will advance God’s kingdom. Each church should have a group dedicated to intercessory prayer for the ministry of your church. They may meet formally. They may pray in their homes. They may have large public events or they may fly below the radar but your church should have a group committed to praying for your church. They should pray for the church’s leadership. They should pray for evangelism in the church. They should pray for vital ministries of the church.

The assignment for this “competence” segment of this lesson is simply. Make sure your church has an intercessory prayer effort. If they don’t have one, get one started. If they do have one, touch base with them and find out what they do, how they do it, and how they encourage each other to keep doing it.

## Peer Relationships

We all depend upon a network of relationships. We have familial relationships: spouses, children, parents, relatives, etc. We have our relationships in our local church. We often have some intentionally spiritual relationships like accountability relationships. One vital area of relating are our peer relationships. In many work places peer relationships are some of the most important. In church leadership often these relationships are sometimes more difficult to define. In many ways the function needed for a healthy “peer” relationship isn’t necessarily found by virtue of position. For church leaders relationships of various kinds may be exceedingly complex and enmeshed. A Senior Pastor may have no “peers” at their local church. Elders may be functioning as “disciples” or “supervisors” depending on the situation. Staffers may be “employees” and “reporters”, not “peers”. The same may be true for those working on a church staff. The Senior Pastor may be their supervisor more than their peer. The peer relationship is often more determined by function rather than organizational status. Many church pastors and staffers find their most fruitful peer relationships in leaders of other churches where they can have a more open relationship and deal more honestly and safely with the issues they are wrestling with at work. I believe all church leaders should have at least one healthy peer relationship to maintain ongoing spiritual health and professional excellence.

What do we gain from peer relationships?

1. Encouragement: The people struggling with the same things you are are often the most able to identify with your struggles and sympathize with your dilemmas.
2. Professional development: Peer relationships are often the best means of continued education because all are highly motivated to learn what you need to learn at the same time. Peer relationships can be an important sounding board to try out new ideas and hear what is working and what isn’t in other situations similar to your own.
3. Accountability: Peers are often the safest people to share doubts and struggles with. They know your struggles and can ask insightful and probing questions to help keep you honest.
4. Comradery: Life is just better when it is shared. Often those living similar lives can better celebrate accomplishments.

Questions for you to talk with your mentor about:

1. Where are your peer relationships? Who is in the group that you categorize in this way?
2. How often do you see them or talk with them over the phone? How is the relationship going?
3. Do you need to establish a more disciplined approach to your peer relationships? Do you need to suggest monthly meetings or some other forum to keep this aspect of your life healthy?
4. If you don’t have at least one healthy peer relationship going, what do you need to do to start?