**The Roles of Second Chair Leaders**

**Who are 2nd Chair Leaders?**

The authors of the book *Leading from the Second Chair* (Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson) define 2nd Chair leaders as, *“A person in a subordinate role who has opportunity to influence others and has opportunity to add value throughout the organization.”* Their 2009 book was one in a series of the Leadership Network which served primarily very large congregations and megachurches.

Typically, a 2nd Chair leader is a staff member (paid or volunteer) who reports directly to the Senior/Lead Pastor/Minister. This construct applies most to congregations with multiple (five or more) full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members. It is especially important for the leaders of large churches. However, much of this discussion is also valuable for leaders in smaller churches when adapted to the congregational size, pastoral leadership styles, or other cultural features.

The roles of staff in churches of less than 200 (average attendance) tend to be defined informally. If there is a written job description it may be very broad or general. Specific functions are mostly tacitly understood. But in larger churches there are usually written job descriptions for staff members. As churches grow beyond 400 staff roles become more specialized. A key consideration as staff is added to a growing congregation is whether the primary role of a new staff member is to do ministry (division of labor) or equipping and empowering volunteers to do ministry (leadership development).

**Foundational to the work of 2nd Chair leaders are four key roles.**

1. Shaping the Culture of the Congregation
2. Crafting a Vision of the Congregation’s Future
3. Leading Change to Achieve the Vision
4. Implementing the Congregation’s Mission/Purpose

The first two of these roles are the primary focus of the 1st Chair leader and realized in close collaboration with the 2nd Chair leader(s). The second two are the primary focus of the 2nd Chair leader in collaboration with the 1st Chair leader, and if applicable, an executive team.

**Shaping the Culture of the Congregation**

Leaders are social architects who shape the culture of an organization. 1st and 2nd Chair church leaders intentionally do this by building and communicating a clear, concise view of their congregation’s identity, including its basic purpose/mission, key beliefs/ideals, and core values/guiding principles. This may include its founding narrative and affiliation with a larger community of faith, if applicable. (Note that most features of a congregation’s culture are often tacitly understood rather than clearly defined.)

**Crafting a Vision of the Congregation’s Future**

1st and 2nd Chair church leaders build a shared vision of who their congregation intends to reach and serve, what kind of impact it will make in their lives and the larger community; they produce a picture of how this congregation will look in the future as it lives out its purpose and vision.

**Leading Change to Achieve the Vision**

The 2nd Chair leader designs and implements an eight-step process for major change; establishes a sense of urgency, creates a guiding coalition; develops a vision and strategy; communicates the change vision; empowers broad-based action; generates short-term wins; consolidates gains to produce more change; anchors the new approaches in the culture. The 1st Chair leader is the champion and leading voice in communicating the vision.

**Implementing the Congregation’s Mission/Purpose**

The 2nd Chair leader is responsible for the management of implementing the congregation’s ministries, programs/projects, and business operations. This includes periodic strategic planning and evaluation to assure alignment with the congregation’s culture/identity, vision, and mission/purpose. A plan of ministry or program of work as well as ministry action plans for specific program/ministry structures within the congregation is developed each year. This is achieved consistent with the policies established by the congregation’s governing board as well as approval of the 1st Chair Leader.

**Essential Functions of a 2nd Chair Leader**

The there are various titles and duties of 2nd Chair leader depending on the congregation in which one is employed and the specific position. Typical position titles may be Executive Pastor or Minister, Executive Director, or Director (or Pastor/Minister) of (specialized area). Some of these positions may be held by either clergy of laity.

In larger churches with multiple staff members it is best to write job descriptions that include the essential functions for each position and core competencies which describe the knowledge, skills, and behaviors expected in general of all staff members plus those specific to each position. For helpful information on this subject see the book, *When Moses Meets Aaron,* by Gil Rendle and Susan Beaumont (chapter 4).

The following categories of essential functions are present in all churches. The responsibilities within each of these categories become more complex as churches increase in size. In large churches with multiple staff members the responsibility for the implementation of these functions is usually delegated to one or more 2nd Chair leaders.

1. Program/Ministries Management
   1. Setting strategic direction for ministries/programs
   2. Annual ministry plan: planning, implementing, evaluating
   3. Management of ministry/program structures and systems
2. Volunteer Management
   1. Job descriptions/position statements/team purpose statements
   2. Training of volunteers for all positions
   3. Risk prevention/management policies
   4. Volunteer recognition and feedback
3. Financial Management
   1. Financial accounting policies and implementation
   2. Fundraising and stewardship plans and processes
   3. Financial audits/reporting/transparency
4. Risk Prevention/Management
   1. Establish risk prevention/management policies and protocols
   2. Conduct an annual risk prevention/management review
   3. Provide risk prevention/management training to staff/volunteers
   4. Insurance protection
5. Governance Support
   1. Board of Directors (working board or policy board)
   2. Church bylaws/incorporation management
   3. Congregational meetings
6. Personnel Management
   1. Personnel policies/manual
   2. Job descriptions/position statements
   3. Performance planning/feedback/review/evaluation
   4. Compliance with applicable employment laws
7. Property Management
   1. Acquisition or rental of property and/or facilities for church use
   2. Property/facilities usage policies/procedures/processes
   3. Property/facilities maintenance/cleaning/landscape
   4. Accessibility/ADA compliance