

## **Appendix: Background Information on Why the Proposed Change to Visions United's Governance Structure**

### **Introduction**

In his book on governance, Dan Hotchkiss reminds us to think about the opposing forces of Religion and Organizations. Religion at its best changes people, stirs the pot, and inspires people to take risks. On the other hand, a well-ordered congregation lays down schedules, puts policies on paper, places people in positions and generally brings order out of chaos.

As we look to new ways of organizing Visions United, the need to balance both sides of this paradox—the transforming power of religion and the stabilizing power of organization—is a unique challenge.

A Governance Review Team, consisting of Rev. Shawn Redden, Jill Baycroft, Joan Hawkes and Claudia Schaerer, met almost weekly from March to June 2022 to review various governance structures that would allow Visions United to spend less time and energy on governance and more on ministry – the congregation's daily, practical work, what we do to live out our mission and vision.

### **Volunteering**

As we explore new ways of organizing our work in the church, it is important to look at the past and present state of volunteering.

Congregations 50 years ago had the advantage of having an abundance of skilled labour done for free by women without jobs outside the home. Today, many fewer young women are willing to work for little or no pay.

Today, volunteers want “the nature and scope of the work to be defined honestly and clearly. They want the benefits to be significant and tangible, and they want the work itself to make good use of their talents.” Volunteers today have higher expectations, but they will respond enthusiastically when they believe their time will be used well.

### **What Do We Mean by Governance and Ministry?**

Governance and ministry are two types of power that a congregation can delegate in different ways.

Governance includes top-level tasks such as holding Visions United's vision, selecting strategies to attain the vision, and making sure that people and property are protected against harm.

Ministry is everything else! It is the congregation's daily, practical work, including all the rest of the decisions about what to do and how to do it. Ministry is what we do to live out our mission and vision.

What we would like to see is reduced governance – reduce the number of persons on the CLT, give clear direction on what our major goals are for the upcoming year, and get out of the way of our staff and volunteers. By delegating more responsibility and authority to our staff and volunteers, we free up time and energy to be more creative. We have happier and more energized staff – and volunteers!

## Why Implement a New Structure?

Visions United was created in May 2011. We have been using a governance structure that is based on a 50 year old model. Times have changed a wee bit since then! Today women are much more active in the work force and less willing or able to volunteer as in the past. Volunteers today are more discerning – they want to know exactly what is expected of them, and when the end date is, before they commit to volunteer. Presently we have a small group of over-committed volunteers who are getting burned out from being on several committees and attending so many meetings.

Currently VU is using the church council model (see Figure 1 below). Members of the church council, what we call the Congregational Leadership Team (CLT), include representatives of

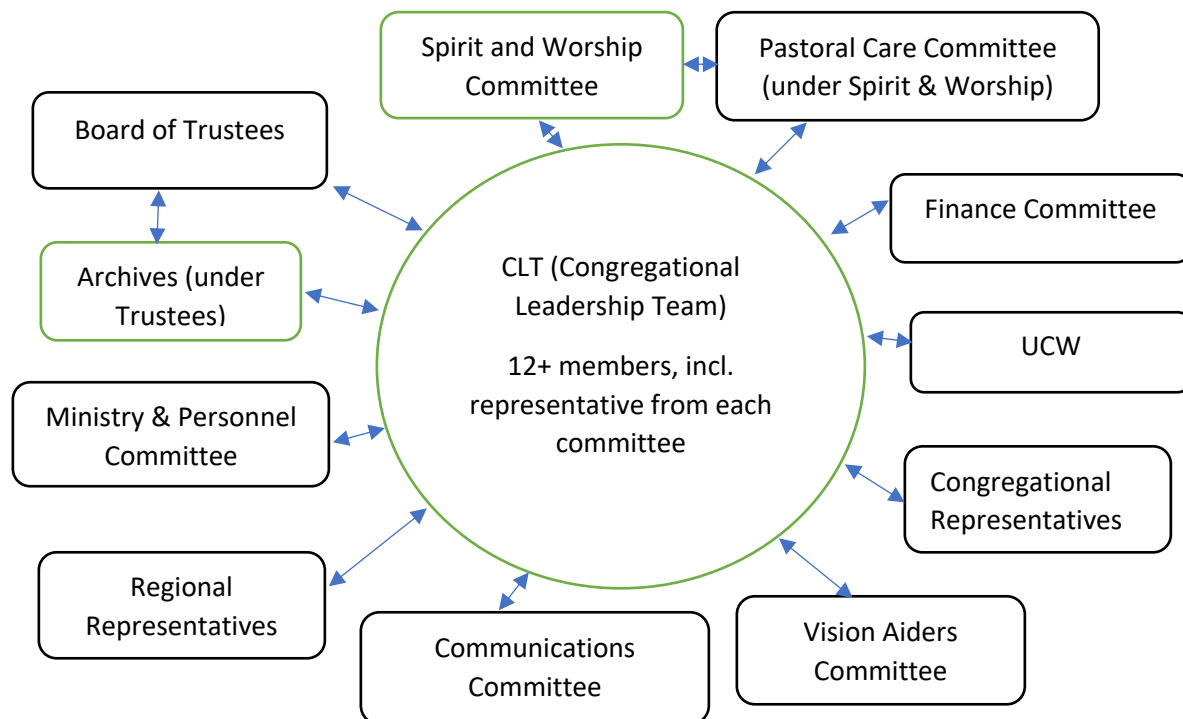


Figure 1: Vision United's Current Governance Structure – The Church Council Model

each of our committees, plus a Board of Trustee representative, plus a Ministry and Personnel Committee representative, plus a regional council representative, and our Minister. Our CLT has 12 members! Not only does a committee representative attend their committee meetings, but they also attend the monthly CLT meetings – time that keeps our volunteers away from ministry and being energized by that work. For example, our current chair of the Congregational Team, which is under the Spirit and Worship Team, gets to attend meetings for both of those teams, then also attend the CLT meeting – that's 3 meetings each month! Surely this dedicated person's skills and enthusiasm would be better utilized doing ministry rather than governance!

## Proposed Structure for Visions United is the Streamlined Board Model

The model being proposed is more streamlined, with far fewer meetings. It separates governance from ministry. It uses a bottom-up approach, with the congregation taking the initiative on which

activities to be involved in. It allows our members to focus on what interests and energizes them the most – whether it’s developing strategies to achieve our vision and mission or being more hands-on by visiting shut-ins or helping in the community garden.

The streamlined board model will have a much smaller CLT (6 members plus the minister) (refer to Figure 2 below).

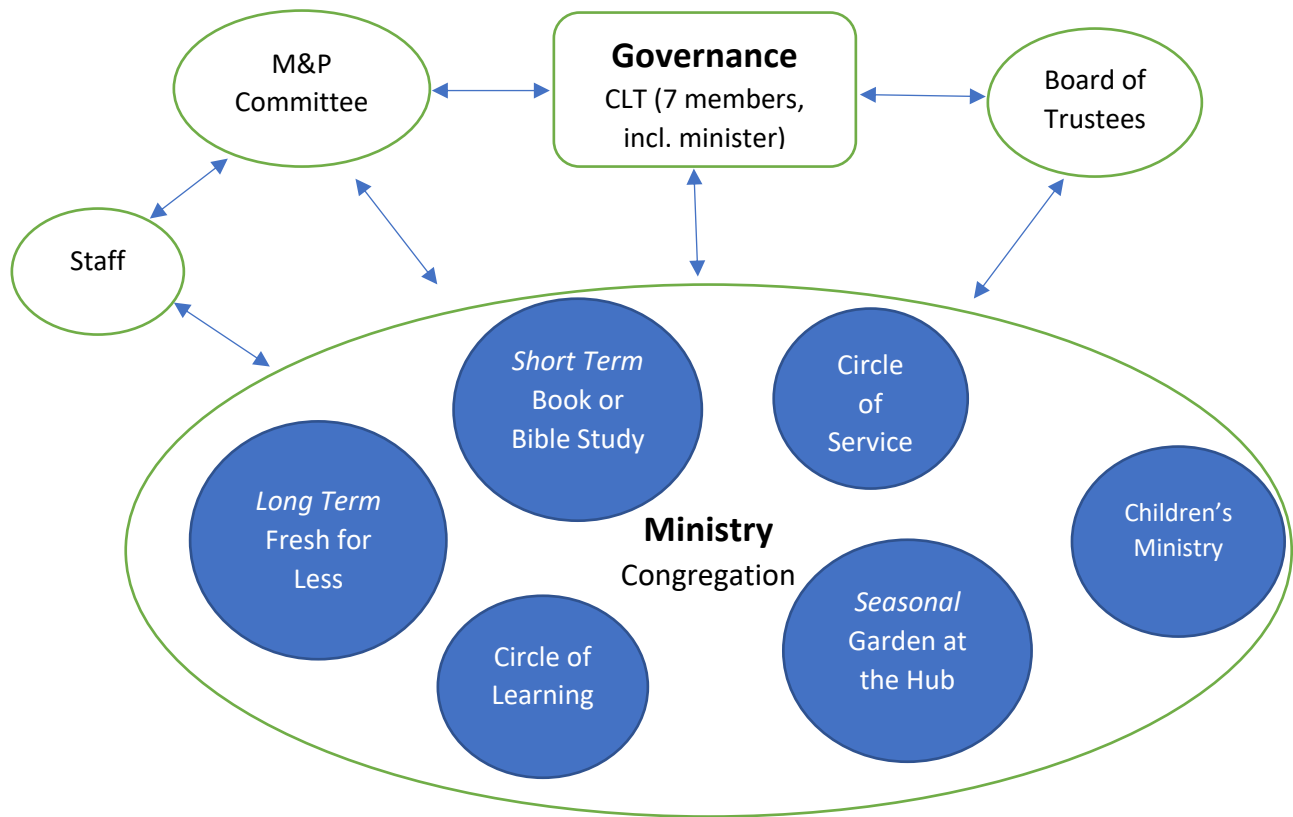


Figure 2: Proposed Governance Structure – the Streamlined Board Model

More responsibility and authority will be delegated to our staff and volunteers, freeing up their time and energy to be more creative and more energized.

Right now the CLT is trying to govern and do ministry. This new model will have the CLT focus on governance – focusing on our vision, developing policy, and developing strategies to attain our vision and mission. The congregation, via Circles of Service, will do ministry – the daily practical work we do to live out our vision and mission. Circles of Service can be long-term or semi-permanent, ex. Fresh for Less project, or short-term, ex. plant the community garden, or a book study. A member of Visions United can put an invitation on the Connection Board. The invitation asks other members to work with them on something that interests them. If no one responds to the invitation on the Connection Board, then it is an indication that there is no passion for that activity at that time, and no further action is taken, although that proposal could be revisited later.

We will still need to have business meetings with this new model, but we’ll have far fewer meetings than now, with far fewer persons. The CLT will meet twice per month – a business meeting that will

be a maximum of 2 hours long, and a spiritual grounding session that has a more spiritual, learning focus where no business is discussed, lasting 1 hour.

A presentation was made to the congregation on June 12th, 2022. During small table discussions, the question was asked, “what do you like about the proposed Circles of Learning and Service?”

Responses included: no long-term commitment; great way of inviting new ideas and testing to see if there is sufficient interest; more people having responsibilities; good idea to cut down on reports; and, less committees and more focus on talents/passions. When asked “what do you like about the proposed streamlined board model of governance?”, responses included: no long-term commitment; smaller Congregational Leadership Team; shorter and fewer meetings and time commitment; rotation of representatives and responsibilities; the spiritual grounding sessions sound interesting; and a chance for new life and continuing evolution of Visions United.

At a Special Congregation Meeting held on Sunday, June 19th, 2022, the following three motions were passed:

#### Motion #1

That Visions United Pastoral Charge approve the change from the present Church Council Model of Governance (CLT) to a Streamlined Board, effective November 1st, 2022, for a trial period of one year; and that we accept the following principles for a new draft governance model to be approved by the congregation no later than October 16, 2022:

The governing body will have 7 members called Vision Keepers, including the Treasurer and the Minister.

The governing body will be called the Congregational Leadership Team (CLT)

The CLT will elect a chairperson and secretary annually from its membership; these officers will also serve as chair and secretary to the congregation for congregational meetings.

Standing Committees will include Ministry & Personnel and Trustees

Ministry programs and mission will be the responsibility of the congregation through “Circles of Service and Learning”.

#### Motion #2

To extend the term of the present CLT and Teams until the fall of 2022 when a congregational meeting is held to approve a final governance document and slate of new nominations.

#### Motion #3

That the Governance Review team of Jill Baycroft, Joan Hawkes and Claudia Schaerer be authorized to prepare a draft governance document, consult with the Region, and ensure a slate of nominations is presented to the congregation for approval.