

Setting Our Staff Up for Success

Clear Lines of Communication, a Culture of Honor, and a Plan for Growth

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls.”

Hebrews 13:17

1. Lay the Foundation First

A staff does not drift into unity — it is built, on purpose, the same way a ministry team is built. As a church grows and adds personnel, the challenge of maintaining one singular vision only increases. Structure is not the enemy of anointing. Structure is what protects the anointing long enough for it to bear fruit. A staff that argues about direction has already lost the direction — so we settle it in writing, before we ever need it.

Our Non-Negotiables

- **Honor** — We say the true thing to the right person, in the right order — never sideways, never behind a back.
- **Loyalty** — We protect the vision and the leader publicly, and we bring disagreement privately, through the chain, not around it.
- **Excellence** — We do the job right the first time. Half-effort in the house of God is still half-effort.
- **Clarity** — Every person on staff knows exactly who they report to, and who reports to them. No one is left to guess.

The Chain of Command

Every staff member should be able to answer, without hesitation: who do I go to first? Our structure exists to make that answer obvious. The Senior Executive Pastor role below is optional — a church may operate with the Pastor directly over the Executive Team, or may add a Senior Executive Pastor to carry that day-to-day weight as the staff grows.

Role	Carries
Pastor	Final vision, direction, and authority for the entire house. Sets the course every department builds toward, and has the final word on any matter that reaches this level.
Senior Executive Pastor (Optional)	When this role is added, oversees the full Executive Team on the Pastor's behalf and carries day-to-day operational authority across every department. Reports directly to the Pastor.
Executive Team Pastors (Minimum of Four)	Each oversees one or more departments, sets department-level vision within the church's overall vision, and is the direct point of contact for the department heads under them.
Department Heads	Day-to-day leadership of their specific ministry area, and the direct point of contact for every team member under them.
Team Members / Staff	Excellence in their assigned role, and honest, timely communication up through their department head.

A concern or decision moves one link at a time: Team Member → Department Head → Executive Team Pastor over that department → Senior Executive Pastor (if that role exists) → Pastor, only if it remains unresolved after every prior link has had a fair chance to address it.

2. Downward Communication — How Leadership Keeps Staff Informed

- **Build a predictable rhythm** — Hold a weekly staff meeting on the calendar every team member can count on, and a separate weekly Executive Team meeting where the Pastor (and Senior Executive Pastor, if that role exists) aligns all department leadership before anything reaches the wider staff.
- **Staff hear it before the church does** — No staff member should ever hear a major decision, change, or announcement from the congregation before they've heard it from their own department's leadership. If it affects their work, they hear it first.
- **Recast vision constantly, not annually** — Vision isn't cast once a year from a stage — the Pastor casts it to the Executive Team, the Executive Team Pastors carry it into their departments, and department heads repeat it until it shapes how every team makes decisions.
- **Information cannot die at the top** — When information stops at an Executive Team Pastor or a department head and never reaches the team, the team is not less informed — they're more likely to fill the gap with their own guess, and guesses are rarely charitable.
- **Put it in writing** — Anything with a date, a dollar amount, or an expectation attached goes out in writing, in addition to being said out loud.

3. Upward Communication — How Staff Voice Concerns and Ideas

Our handbook already says it plainly: “The cornerstone of effective communication is the employee-supervisor relationship.” Here is what that looks like in practice.

- **Bring it to the person who can fix it** — A concern goes to the immediate department head first. If it isn't resolved there, it goes to that department's Executive Team Pastor next, then the Senior Executive Pastor if that role exists. The Pastor is not the first stop for a problem that hasn't gone through the chain — that isn't distance, it's order.
- **Say it up, not sideways** — A frustration shared with a coworker instead of a supervisor doesn't get solved — it gets spread. Sideways venting is the fastest way to turn a fixable problem into a culture problem.
- **Bring a solution, not just a problem** — Come with the issue and, wherever possible, a suggested solution. Staff who bring solutions are shaping the culture; staff who only bring complaints are describing it.
- **Build a safe, regular rhythm** — Regular one-on-ones between every staff member and their supervisor mean concerns surface in a calm conversation, not a crisis meeting.
- **Disagree in private, support in public** — Disagreement with a decision is allowed and expected. Disagreement voiced in front of volunteers or the congregation is not honest — it's discord, and it costs everyone.

4. Top 5 Struggles Church Staffs Face

1. Role Confusion and Vision Drift

Without a current, written description of who does what, staff begin building their own version of the ministry instead of the shared one — and the vision quietly fractures into several smaller ones.

2. Information Silos

Updates and decisions stop at a department head and never reach the team, leaving staff to learn about their own church from the congregation instead of their own leadership.

3. Sideways Communication and Offense

Frustrations get vented to coworkers, or worse, to volunteers, instead of going up through the proper chain — turning a fixable problem into gossip and a morale issue.

4. Blurred Boundaries and Burnout

Ministry that never has a closing time produces staff who eventually resent the very calling that once excited them. Passion without rest becomes exhaustion, and exhaustion becomes cynicism.

5. Going Around the Chain of Command

Staff — or well-meaning members of the congregation — skip a department head and go straight to the top, quietly undermining leaders and creating confusion about who is actually in charge of what.

5. Top 5 Areas for Growth

1. Written Job Clarity, Reviewed Yearly

Every staff member should have a current, written description of their role and who they report to, revisited at least once a year so the org chart never quietly goes stale.

2. A Real Meeting Rhythm in Both Directions

A standing weekly staff meeting for information to flow down, and regular one-on-ones for feedback to flow up — so communication runs on a schedule, not just a crisis.

3. Honor as the Standard for Conflict

Teach every staff member the order to bring concerns in, and the expectation that leadership's reputation is protected in public even when it's challenged honestly in private.

4. Protect Rest as a Ministry Value, Not an Afterthought

Build Sabbath, time off, and real boundaries into the culture on purpose. A staff that never rests will eventually quit — some on the spot, some slowly, over years.

5. Develop the Next Leader Under Every Leader

Every department head should be actively training a successor — the same discipleship principle already built into our youth and altar ministries, now applied to paid staff. A staff that reproduces leaders will outlast a staff that only produces output.

Closing Word

Excellence is not the enemy of grace — excellence is what grace looks like when it shows up on time, does the job right, and tells the truth in love. A staff that knows exactly who to go to, exactly what's expected, and exactly how to be heard is a staff that can be trusted with more. Build the structure, protect the honor, and the growth will follow.

“One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 4:4-6
