Black Church Leadership Summit 2026

SERVING WITH WISDOM, ORDER, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A 45-Minute Workshop on Proper Protocol for the Board of Trustees in the Black Baptist Church

Presented by:
Rev. Dr. Tahlib McMicheaux

Theme Scripture:
"Let all things be done decently and in order." — 1 Corinthians 14:40

WORKSHOP PURPOSE

The purpose of this workshop is to help trustees understand that serving on a church board is not simply an honor, title, or position of influence. It is a ministry of **stewardship, accountability, governance, protection, planning, and service**.

Within the historic Black Baptist church, trustees have often carried tremendous responsibility. In many Black communities, the church building was never merely a sanctuary. It served as a **meeting place**, **organizing center**, **educational space, refuge, community resources,** and symbol of **Black ownership, dignity, and independence**.

Our churches were built by generations who **prayed, sacrificed, cooked dinners, sold plates, raised building funds, worked multiple jobs, and gave sacrificial offerings.**

Because of that history, trustees are not simply maintaining property.

Trustees are protecting legacy.

At the same time, every Baptist congregation is autonomous. The exact authority of trustees must be determined by the church's **Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, Bylaws, congregational decisions, policies, and applicable law**.

Tradition should never automatically override the **governing documents of the church.**

45-MINUTE WORKSHOP FLOW

Minutes 1–5: Opening and biblical foundation
Minutes 5–10: Understanding the role of trustees
Minutes 10–16: Constitution, bylaws, authority, and congregational governance
Minutes 16–21: Pastor, trustees, and healthy boundaries
Minutes 21–27: Building a strong board and selecting qualified trustees

Minutes 27–33: Financial, property, legal, and fiduciary responsibility
Minutes 33–38: Trustee session planning and long-range planning
Minutes 38–45: Review questions, Q&A, and closing challenge

OPENING

Good morning, My name is Rev. Dr. Tahlib McMicheaux.

I want to begin this workshop with one important statement:

The church belongs to God.

The pastor does not own the church.

The trustees do not own the church.

The deacons do not own the church.

The founding family do not own the church.

The members do not individually own the church.

We have simply been entrusted with the responsibility of caring for what belongs to God.

Psalm 24:1 declares:

"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein."

That means trusteeship begins with **stewardship**.

One of the greatest mistakes a church can make is placing people on a trustee board simply because they have been members for a long time, give significant money, have influence in the congregation, belong to a prominent church family, or because "they have always been on the board."

Longevity does not automatically equal leadership.

Influence does not automatically equal integrity.

Business success does not automatically equal spiritual maturity.

And being faithful in worship does not automatically mean a person understands church governance.

A trustee must understand that every decision made in the boardroom can eventually be felt in the sanctuary.

If trustees mishandle finances, ministry is affected.

If trustees neglect the building, ministry is affected.

If trustees fail to maintain adequate insurance, the entire congregation may be exposed.

If trustees ignore the bylaws, conflict can arise.

If trustees attempt to control the pastor, spiritual leadership can be disrupted.

If the pastor ignores appropriate governance and accountability, the church can also be placed at risk.

This is why Scripture says:

"Let all things be done decently and in order." — 1 Corinthians 14:40

Order is not the enemy of the Holy Spirit.

Good order protects the ministry so that ministry can flourish.

1. WHAT IS A TRUSTEE?

A trustee is a person entrusted with responsibility for protecting and **properly managing the temporal, financial, legal, physical**, and **corporate interests of the church** within the authority granted by the **congregation** and its **governing documents**.

Trustees should think of themselves as **stewards rather than owners**.

1 Corinthians 4:2:
"**Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."**

The operative word is **faithful**.

Depending upon the church's governing documents, trustees may have responsibility for:

- Church property
- Buildings and grounds
- Insurance
- Financial oversight
- Contracts
- Banking relationships
- Major purchases
- Facility maintenance

- Risk management
- Safety and security
- Corporate responsibilities
- Long-range financial planning
- Protection of church assets
- Capital improvements
- Vendor relationships
- Financial controls
- Record keeping
- Emergency planning

However, trustees only possess the authority actually granted to them.

A trustee board should never assume:

“We are the trustees, so we can do whatever we believe is best.”

The correct question is:

“What authority has this congregation, through its governing documents, actually entrusted to us?”

2. EVERY TRUSTEE MUST KNOW THE CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Every trustee should receive a copy of the church's Constitution and Bylaws before beginning service.

A trustee should not vote on matters governed by documents he or she has never read.

Hosea 4:6:
“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

In church governance, ignorance can become expensive.

Every trustee should know:

- How trustees are elected or appointed.
- How long trustees serve.
- Whether there are term limits.
- How officers are selected.

- What constitutes a quorum.
- Who may call meetings.
- Who presides over meetings.
- What authority belongs to the board.
- What authority belongs to the pastor.
- What authority belongs to the congregation.
- What financial decisions require congregational approval.
- Who may sign contracts.
- Who may sign checks or authorize electronic transactions.
- How property may be purchased, mortgaged, leased, or sold.
- How vacancies are filled.
- How trustees may be removed.
- How special meetings are called.
- How amendments are made.
- What procedures apply when conflict occurs.

Every trustee should be able to answer three questions:

What do our bylaws say?

What authority has the congregation given us?

What is the proper procedure for making this decision?

"We have always done it this way" is not a governing document.

3. CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND TRADITION ARE NOT THE SAME THING

Many church conflicts happen because people confuse **tradition with governance**.

Someone may say:

"That is how Pastor Johnson did it."

"That is how Mother Williams told us it was supposed to be done."

"Our trustees have always handled that."

"That has been the custom of this church for forty years."

Those traditions may deserve great respect, particularly in the Black church where elders preserved congregations through generations of struggle.

We should never casually dismiss the wisdom of those who came before us.

However, honoring our elders does not require us to ignore the church's governing documents.

Our heritage deserves respect, and our governance requires clarity.

When an established practice conflicts with the church's governing documents, leadership should identify the discrepancy and follow the proper process for correcting the practice or formally amending the governing documents.

4. WHEN IS A MODERATOR NEEDED?

The church's bylaws should determine who serves as moderator and when a moderator is required.

Generally, a moderator is the person authorized to **preside over an official church business meeting** and ensure that business is conducted fairly, orderly, and according to established rules.

Depending upon the church, the pastor may normally serve as moderator. Another elected officer may serve, or the bylaws may allow an alternate or independent moderator under certain circumstances.

A moderator can be particularly important when:

- Conducting congregational business meetings.
- Handling elections.
- Considering significant property matters.
- Considering major financial decisions.
- Amending governing documents.
- Conducting meetings where substantial disagreement exists.
- The normal moderator has a conflict of interest.
- The pastor is the subject of the matter being considered.
- The bylaws specifically require another moderator.
- A neutral person is necessary to maintain procedural fairness.

The moderator's responsibility is not to control the outcome.

The moderator protects the process.

A good moderator ensures people are heard, motions are properly presented, discussion remains focused, voting procedures are followed, and the governing documents are respected.

Proverbs 18:13:
“He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.”

5. THE BOARD IS NOT THE CONGREGATION

This distinction is especially important in Baptist polity.

A Board of Trustees should not automatically assume authority that the church's governing documents reserve to the membership.

Depending upon the congregation, matters requiring congregational approval may include:

- Calling or dismissing a pastor
- Purchasing or selling real estate
- Incurring substantial debt
- Major capital expenditures
- Amending the Constitution or Bylaws
- Electing officers
- Approving budgets
- Mergers
- Dissolution
- Other major church decisions

The board may research.

The board may analyze.

The board may negotiate.

The board may develop recommendations.

But when it comes to the final authority that belongs to the **congregation**, the board must bring the matter to the **congregation**.

Trustees should never use access to information as a substitute for congregational authority.

6. PASTOR AND TRUSTEES: UNDERSTANDING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

A helpful general framework is:

The pastor provides spiritual and pastoral leadership.

The trustees provide stewardship and oversight of the church's temporal, financial, property, administrative, and corporate responsibilities.

The church's governing documents ultimately define the precise authority of each office.

The pastor should not have to personally decide which company repairs the air conditioner.

The trustees should not determine what the pastor is permitted to preach next Sunday.

Trustees should not become a shadow pastoral office.

Pastors should not treat trustees as irrelevant when financial, property, contractual, legal, or corporate responsibilities are involved.

There must be partnership.

Ephesians 4:16 reminds us that the body is joined together by what every part supplies.

Different responsibilities.

Same church.

Same mission.

Same Lord.

Healthy governance does not ask:

“Who has more power?”

Healthy governance asks:

“What responsibility has God and this congregation entrusted to each of us?”

7. HOW DO YOU BUILD A STRONG BOARD?

A strong board is not necessarily a board where everyone agrees.

A strong board is one where people can disagree **without becoming disagreeable**.

Proverbs 15:22:
"**Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established."**

A healthy trustee board benefits from people with different gifts and experiences.

Where possible, the board should include people who understand areas such as:

- Finance and budgeting
- Business
- Property and facilities
- Insurance
- Human resources
- Technology
- Cybersecurity
- Risk management
- Contracts
- Administration
- Strategic planning
- Community relationships

But professional knowledge alone is insufficient.

Character comes first.

The church needs trustees who are:

Faithful. Teachable. Ethical. Accountable. Spiritually mature. Confidential. Prepared. Dependable. Collaborative. Objective.

A mature trustee must be capable of saying:

"I disagree with the decision, and I will not leave this meeting with a spirit to undermine the board decision."

8. REQUIREMENTS OF A BOARD MEMBER

The church's bylaws should establish official qualifications, but strong trustee candidates should demonstrate the following qualities.

Spiritual maturity: They understand that trusteeship is ministry.

Integrity: Their word can be trusted.

Faithfulness: They consistently support the ministry.

Responsible stewardship: Someone overseeing church resources should demonstrate personal responsibility.

Confidentiality: They understand that everything discussed in a board meeting does not belong in the parking lot, beauty shop, barbershop, family group chat, or on social media.

Emotional maturity: They can disagree without becoming destructive.

Teachability: They are willing to learn.

Availability: They have sufficient time to fulfill the responsibility.

Teamwork: They understand that one trustee does not constitute the board.

Understanding of governance: They are willing to study the Constitution, Bylaws, policies, and procedures.

Objectivity: They can make decisions for the good of the entire church rather than one family, ministry, age group, or friendship circle.

Accountability: They are willing to disclose conflicts of interest and submit to proper oversight.

9. WHO SHOULD NOT SERVE ON THE BOARD?

We are not talking about perfect people. If perfection were required, none of us could serve.

We are talking about patterns of behavior that may make someone unsuitable for fiduciary leadership.

A person should generally not serve, or should be carefully evaluated under the church's governing procedures, if that individual:

- Cannot maintain confidentiality.
- Consistently creates division.
- Refuses accountability.
- Has unresolved conflicts of interest.
- Uses money or giving to control decisions.
- Believes longevity gives them ownership.

- Consistently misses meetings.
- Refuses to study governing documents.
- Cannot accept properly authorized decisions.
- Carries personal agendas into board meetings.
- Uses the position to control the pastor.
- Uses the position to protect friends or relatives.
- Has demonstrated serious dishonesty in financial matters.
- Refuses appropriate financial transparency.
- Is unwilling to receive training.
- Cannot separate personal feelings from fiduciary responsibilities.

James 3:17 describes godly wisdom as peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and without hypocrisy.

That is an excellent character test for leadership.

10. EVERY BOARD DECISION HAS A RIPPLE EFFECT

Board decisions affect far more than money.

Suppose trustees postpone repairing the roof.

That sounds like a property decision.

Then the roof leaks.

A classroom becomes unusable.

Children's ministry has to relocate.

A community event is canceled.

Insurance concerns arise.

Repair costs increase.

Members become frustrated.

One deferred maintenance decision has now affected finances, ministry, children, outreach, morale, insurance, and worship.

Every board decision creates ripples.

Before major decisions, trustees should ask:

How does this affect the mission?

How does this affect the budget?

How does this affect the congregation?

How does this affect the pastor and ministry leaders?

How does this affect our community?

How does this affect the next generation?

What happens if we do nothing?

11. TRUSTEES HAVE A FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY

Trustees should understand three fundamental concepts of responsible nonprofit governance.

Duty of Care: Make thoughtful and informed decisions.

Duty of Loyalty: Put the church's interests ahead of personal interests.

Duty of Obedience: Help ensure that the church operates according to its mission, governing documents, and applicable requirements.

Luke 16:10:
"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much."

Church resources deserve careful stewardship because they were entrusted for ministry.

12. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

No single individual should have uncontrolled authority over church money.

Healthy systems may include:

- Written financial policies
- Multiple levels of authorization
- Regular financial reports
- Bank reconciliations
- Documentation of expenditures
- Separation of financial duties
- Annual budgets

- Periodic financial reviews
- Conflict-of-interest policies
- Clear reimbursement procedures
- Proper handling of restricted gifts
- Records-retention procedures
- Safeguards for electronic banking

Financial controls are not evidence that we distrust everybody.

Financial controls protect everybody.

They protect the church.

They protect the treasurer.

They protect the pastor.

They protect trustees.

They protect the reputation of the ministry.

2 Corinthians 8:21:
"Providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

13. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Imagine that the church needs a new roof and one trustee owns a roofing company.

Does that automatically mean the company cannot be considered?

Not necessarily.

But the relationship should be disclosed and addressed according to the church's policy and governing procedures.

The interested trustee should not manipulate the process for personal benefit and may need to step away from discussion or voting.

Transparency protects both the trustee and the church.

The question should not simply be:

"Can we do this?"

The church should also ask:

“Is this ethical, transparent, fair, and consistent with our policies?”

14. CONFIDENTIALITY IS NOT SECRECY

Trustees must understand the difference.

Confidentiality protects legitimate private information.

Secrecy can hide misconduct.

Board members should protect sensitive information involving personnel, finances, legal matters, contracts, negotiations, pastoral matters, and private member information.

But confidentiality should never be used to conceal fraud, abuse, serious misconduct, or unlawful activity.

A healthy board is confidential without becoming secretive.

15. BOARD MEETING PROTOCOL

A trustee meeting should have structure.

Whenever possible:

1. Begin with prayer and Scripture.
2. Establish that a quorum is present.
3. Follow a prepared agenda.
4. Review and approve previous minutes.
5. Receive financial reports.
6. Receive committee or officer reports.
7. Address unfinished business.
8. Address new business.
9. Clearly state motions.
10. Allow appropriate discussion.
11. Record official actions accurately.
12. Assign follow-up responsibilities.
13. Establish deadlines.
14. Close appropriately.

Minutes should document **what the board did**, not reproduce every argument that occurred.

Good minutes create institutional memory.

16. THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUSTEE SESSION PLANNING

One of the most important responsibilities of an effective Board of Trustees is **session planning**.

A strong board should not spend every meeting responding only to problems that happened since the last meeting.

Good trustees must learn to look ahead.

Proverbs 21:5:
"The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty."

A trustee planning session is dedicated time for the board to step away from routine monthly business and examine the larger picture.

The board should ask:

Where are we now?

Where are we going?

What will the church need when we get there?

What problems can we prevent rather than simply react to?

What must we prepare for financially?

What must we repair physically?

What must we strengthen administratively?

What should we leave for the generation coming behind us?

Too many boards operate in crisis mode.

The roof leaks, so we call a meeting.

The air conditioner stops working, so we call a meeting.

The insurance premium increases, so we call a meeting.

The parking lot deteriorates, so we call a meeting.

The church van breaks down, so we call a meeting.

Eventually, trustees spend most of their time **putting out fires instead of preventing fires.**

Session planning helps the board move from **reactive leadership to proactive stewardship.**

17. WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A TRUSTEE PLANNING SESSION?

A good planning session should examine several major areas.

Governing Documents

Review the Constitution and Bylaws.

Ask:

Are we following them?

Are they current?

Are there outdated provisions?

Do our practices match our written policies?

Do trustees understand their authority?

What decisions belong to the congregation?

Property

Walk the church property.

Examine:

- Roof
- Plumbing
- Electrical systems
- Heating and air conditioning
- Parking areas
- Restrooms
- Kitchen
- Classrooms
- Sanctuary
- Offices

- Accessibility
- Security
- Fire and emergency equipment
- Technology infrastructure

Then ask:

What needs attention this year?

What will likely need attention within three years?

What may need replacement within five years?

Financial Health

Review:

- Income
- Expenses
- Cash reserves
- Debt
- Insurance costs
- Utility expenses
- Deferred maintenance
- Major contracts
- Capital needs
- Emergency reserves
- Long-term obligations

Luke 14:28:
“For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost...?”

Vision without planning can become unfinished work.

Insurance and Risk Management

Trustees should ask:

Is the church properly insured?

Do we understand our coverage?

When was the policy last reviewed?

Do we have emergency procedures?

Do we know what happens if someone is injured on the property?

Are church vehicles properly covered?

Do we have adequate safety policies?

Contracts and Vendors

Review:

- Contract expiration dates
- Automatic renewals
- Pricing
- Performance
- Vendor relationships
- Potential conflicts of interest
- Authorized signers

Ministry Alignment

Planning should involve communication with the pastor.

If the pastor sees expansion in children's ministry, trustees should understand the facility and financial implications.

If the church wants increased community outreach, trustees should consider parking, security, utilities, insurance, maintenance, and accessibility.

The pastor helps articulate where the ministry is going spiritually and missionally.

The trustees help determine how the church's temporal resources can responsibly support that direction.

Planning creates communication before crisis creates confrontation.

18. SAMPLE ANNUAL TRUSTEE SESSION PLAN

The following model can be adapted for the individual church.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNUAL PLANNING SESSION

Suggested Length: 3–4 hours

Purpose: To prayerfully evaluate the physical, financial, administrative, and operational health of the church and establish priorities for the coming year.

Opening Devotion and Prayer — 15 Minutes

Scripture:

Proverbs 16:3:
"Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established."

Opening question:

"What kind of church are we preparing to leave for the next generation?"

Review of the Previous Year — 20 Minutes

Discuss:

What did we accomplish?

What goals were not completed?

What unexpected challenges occurred?

What did we learn?

What mistakes should we avoid repeating?

Constitution and Bylaws Review — 30 Minutes

Review trustee responsibilities.

Confirm terms of office.

Review election or appointment procedures.

Review quorum requirements.

Review financial authority.

Review congregational authority.

Review property procedures.

Identify policies needing clarification.

Financial Review — 30 Minutes

Review current financial position.

Review income and expenses.

Review reserves.

Review debt.

Review upcoming expenses.

Review internal financial controls.

Identify major financial risks.

Property and Facilities Review — 30 Minutes

Review building inspection findings.

Identify immediate repairs.

Identify preventive maintenance.

Identify one-year needs.

Identify three-year needs.

Identify five-year needs.

Break — 10 Minutes

Insurance, Safety, and Risk Management — 20 Minutes

Review insurance.

Review emergency procedures.

Review security.

Review fire safety.

Review facility-use policies.

Review documentation and reporting procedures.

Ministry Vision Alignment — 30 Minutes

Invite the pastor to share major ministry priorities for the coming year.

Discuss how those priorities affect:

Facilities

Budget

Technology

Security

Transportation

Insurance

Community use

Staffing or operational needs

Trustee Development and Succession — 20 Minutes

Ask:

Who is being prepared for future leadership?

Do new trustees receive orientation?

Do we have younger members learning governance?

Do trustees receive annual training?

What institutional knowledge needs to be documented?

Establish Annual Goals — 30 Minutes

Develop three to five measurable priorities.

For each goal identify:

What needs to happen?

Who is responsible?

What resources are required?

When should it be completed?

How will progress be measured?

Closing Review and Prayer — 15 Minutes

Review decisions.

Review assignments.

Establish next review date.

Close with:

1 Corinthians 4:2:
"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."

19. SAMPLE TRUSTEE ANNUAL CALENDAR

A planning session should produce a calendar.

A sample schedule might include:

January — Budget and Financial Review
Review previous year financial results, current budget, bank procedures, and financial controls.

February — Insurance and Risk Management
Review property, liability, vehicle, and other coverage.

March — Property Inspection
Conduct a full building and grounds inspection.

April — Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Review emergency procedures, security, fire safety, and facility evacuation.

May — Capital Improvements
Review major repair and replacement priorities.

June — Midyear Financial Review
Compare actual income and expenses to budget.

July — Constitution and Bylaws Review
Review trustee authority and identify needed policy updates.

August — Ministry and Facility Planning
Meet with pastoral leadership regarding upcoming ministry needs.

September — Vendor and Contract Review
Review major vendors, contracts, renewals, and pricing.

October — Preliminary Budget Planning
Identify anticipated expenses and capital needs for the next year.

November — Annual Planning Session
Set board priorities for the coming year.

December — Evaluation and Leadership Transition
Evaluate board effectiveness, prepare incoming officers, and preserve important records.

What gets scheduled is more likely to get addressed.

20. DEVELOP A ONE-YEAR, THREE-YEAR, AND FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Trustees should think beyond one annual budget.

One-Year Plan

What requires immediate attention?

Examples:

- Safety repairs
- Financial-control improvements
- Technology upgrades
- Minor facility renovations
- Policy updates

Three-Year Plan

What major projects may be approaching?

Examples:

- HVAC replacement
- Parking lot repair
- Kitchen renovation
- Security upgrades
- Major technology investment

Five-Year Plan

What major capital issues should the church begin preparing for?

Examples:

- Roof replacement
- Major sanctuary renovation
- Property expansion
- Accessibility improvements
- Major electrical or plumbing work

Do not wait for tomorrow's problem to become tomorrow's emergency.

21. SUCCESSION PLANNING

A board should always be preparing people to serve after the current trustees are gone.

Ask:

Who is being trained?

Who understands the financial system?

Who knows the property?

Who understands the bylaws?

Who knows where important documents are stored?

Who understands the history behind major decisions?

A healthy board should never allow all of its institutional knowledge to live inside the head of one person.

2 Timothy 2:2 teaches the principle of entrusting what has been learned to faithful people who can teach others also.

The Black church must intentionally connect generations.

Older trustees bring history.

Younger trustees may bring new expertise.

The church needs both.

Psalm 145:4:
"One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts."

Strong churches do not simply replace generations.

Strong churches connect generations.

22. DISAGREEMENT WITHOUT DIVISION

The boardroom should be one of the safest places in the church for responsible disagreement.

Proverbs 27:17:
"As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."

If everybody is afraid to disagree with the chairperson, pastor, senior trustee, largest giver, or founding family, the church does not have healthy governance.

Trustees must be courageous enough to ask difficult questions and mature enough to accept responsible answers.

Attack the problem—not the person.

Question the proposal—not someone's spirituality.

Challenge the numbers—not someone's character.

Healthy dissent strengthens decision-making.

Destructive sabotage weakens the church.

23. QUESTIONS EVERY TRUSTEE BOARD SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER

Every trustee board should know:

Where are our Articles of Incorporation?

Where is our current Constitution?

Where are our current Bylaws?

When were they last reviewed?

Who may sign contracts?

Who has access to bank accounts?

Who may incur debt?

What insurance coverage do we maintain?

When was the property last inspected?

What is our emergency plan?

What is our financial reporting process?

Do we have a conflict-of-interest policy?

Do we have adequate internal controls?

Who maintains corporate records?

What repairs will be needed during the next five years?

What is our facility-use policy?

What happens if the pastor becomes unexpectedly unavailable?

What happens if the trustee chair becomes unavailable?

What decisions require congregational approval?

Who is being trained to serve after the current board?

If trustees cannot answer these questions, those are areas where training should begin.

24. TWENTY REVIEW AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who ultimately owns everything entrusted to the church?
Everything ultimately belongs to God; church property is administered according to the church's legal structure and governing documents.

2. What is the primary purpose of trustees?
To faithfully steward the temporal, financial, physical, administrative, and corporate responsibilities entrusted to them.

3. Why must trustees read the Constitution and Bylaws?
Because trustees cannot responsibly exercise authority they do not understand.

4. Does tradition override the bylaws?
No. Tradition deserves respect, but governance should follow the church's current governing documents and proper amendment processes.

5. Does the trustee board have unlimited authority?
No. Its authority comes from the congregation's governing structure.

6. What is a moderator's primary responsibility?
To protect the integrity, fairness, and order of the meeting process.

7. When might an alternate moderator be appropriate?
When required by the bylaws, when the normal moderator is unavailable, has a conflict, or is personally involved in the matter being considered.

8. What makes a strong trustee?
Character, faithfulness, integrity, knowledge, accountability, preparation, confidentiality, teamwork, and spiritual maturity.

9. Should someone automatically serve because they have been a member for thirty years?
No. Longevity should be respected, but longevity alone does not establish qualification.

10. Should the largest giver have greater governing authority?
No. Financial giving does not purchase governing authority.

11. What is a conflict of interest?
A situation where personal, family, financial, or business interests may interfere with objective decision-making.

12. What is the difference between confidentiality and secrecy?
Confidentiality protects legitimate private information; secrecy may improperly conceal wrongdoing.

13. What is the pastor's primary area of leadership?
Spiritual and pastoral leadership, consistent with the church's governing documents and polity.

14. What is the trustees' primary area of responsibility?
Stewardship of the church's temporal, property, financial, administrative, and corporate responsibilities.

15. Should trustees control the pastor?
No. Healthy governance requires appropriate boundaries and accountability, not domination.

16. Should the pastor control the trustee board?
Not outside the authority provided by the church's governing structure.

17. Why are financial controls important?
They protect the church's resources and the people entrusted with managing them.

18. Why is annual session planning important?
Because strong boards anticipate needs, establish priorities, prevent crises, and prepare for the future.

19. Why must churches prepare younger trustees?
Because healthy congregations intentionally transfer knowledge and leadership from one generation to another.

20. What should guide every trustee decision?
Scripture, prayer, mission, governing documents, accurate information, responsible stewardship, and the long-term welfare of the congregation.

25. TEN PRACTICES OF AN EXCELLENT TRUSTEE

An excellent trustee:

Prays before deciding.

Reads before voting.

Asks before assuming.

Listens before responding.

Plans before a crisis.

Discloses conflicts before they become problems.

Protects confidentiality without protecting wrongdoing.

Respects pastoral leadership without surrendering fiduciary responsibility.

Honors previous generations while preparing the next generation.

Remembers that the position is stewardship—not ownership.

FINAL CHALLENGE TO EVERY TRUSTEE

Before your next board meeting, I challenge every trustee to do five things.

Read your Constitution.

Read your Bylaws.

Review your most recent financial statement.

Walk through your church property and look at it through the eyes of a steward rather than simply a member.

Then ask yourself:

"If every trustee served exactly the way I serve, what kind of board would we have?"

That question requires personal accountability.

CLOSING

I want to close where we began.

"Let all things be done decently and in order." — 1 Corinthians 14:40

The Black church has survived too much for us to become careless with what previous generations sacrificed to place into our hands.

Somebody prayed for these churches.

Somebody gave sacrificially to purchase these properties.

Somebody cooked dinners and sold plates.

Somebody held building-fund programs.

Somebody worked all week and still brought an offering on Sunday.

Somebody marched for the right to live with dignity.

Somebody educated our children when others would not.

Somebody opened these church doors when our communities needed somewhere to organize.

Somebody sacrificed so that generations they would never meet could worship in buildings they helped provide.

And now, trustees, **it is in our hands.**

The keys may be in our hands.

The bank accounts may be under our stewardship.

The property may be under our oversight.

The contracts may require our signatures.

But none of it belongs to us.

We are stewards.

The question is not simply:

“What did you maintain?”

The question is:

“What did you prepare for the generation coming behind you?”

A weak board waits for something to happen.

A strong board plans for what could happen.

A visionary board prepares the church for what needs to happen.

A good trustee does not merely protect yesterday.

A good trustee prepares for tomorrow.

Every budget is connected to ministry.

Every building decision is connected to ministry.

Every financial policy is connected to ministry.

Every insurance policy protects ministry.

Every planning session strengthens ministry.

Every act of responsible governance creates room for ministry to continue.

So when you enter the boardroom, do not leave your Bible outside.

Bring your Bible.

Bring your bylaws.

Bring your wisdom.

Bring your experience.

Bring your questions.

Bring your integrity.

Bring your willingness to listen.

Bring your willingness to learn.

Bring a plan.

And most importantly, bring a servant's heart.

Because when the pastor and trustees understand their responsibilities, when the congregation understands its authority, when leaders respect appropriate boundaries, when finances are handled with integrity, when governing documents are followed, when the future is planned for, and when decisions are made prayerfully and transparently, the church can spend less time fighting over administration and more time fulfilling the Great Commission.

Jesus said:

"Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant." — Matthew 20:26

Trustees, your position is not primarily a seat of power.

It is a place of service.

Serve faithfully.

Lead wisely.

Govern responsibly.

Plan strategically.

Protect what previous generations entrusted to you.

Prepare what the next generation will inherit from you.

And when your season of service is finished, may those who come behind you be able to say:

"They did not simply occupy a seat. They strengthened the church. They protected the ministry. They planned for the future. They honored the sacrifice of those who came before them. And they left this house stronger than they found it."

That is trusteeship.

That is stewardship.

That is planning.

That is legacy.

And that is what it means to do the work of God's church **decently and in order.**

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