December 1, 2016  ***Structural Components*** Milepost 215

There are several structure related dynamics which need to be addressed before we can effectively discern congregational vision in January. One is *decentralization,* which is described in a separate attachment to this newsletter, as background for our conversation on December 11.

In this milepost, I will introduce a matrix for evaluating the health of any structure, also as background material for Dec. 11. Next week’s milepost and another attached document, will provide additional background information for Dec. 11.

When two or more people attempt to accomplish something together, structure is needed. That structure may be very simple, as in a marriage, or incomprehensibly complex, as in the U.S. government.

All structures have five components, which need to be clearly defined and assigned. For a structure to function well, the members of that organization need to understand and accept the definitions and assignments. In large organizations, these five components should be assigned to different groups.

The five components…

AUTHORITY: power to control direction, make ultimate decisions

GOVERNANCE: vision oversight, oversee key staff and policy

LEADERSHIP: motivate, equip, guide, unify all to achieve vision

MANAGEMENT: administrate, organize, communicate

LABOR: production of goods, services, objectives, etc.

The above definitions are intentionally brief and generic, so they can be applied to any organizational structure. While simplistic, I have found that those involved in large organizations (corporations, schools,

hospitals, etc.) resonate with this matrix. But applying it to a congregation seems foreign to many church folk. I believe this is the result of our attempt to make sure the church is different. But in doing so, we can ignore universal concepts of how humans relate in groups.

In a marriage, two partners may share some or all equally. To be a healthy relationship, what matters is not who does what, but that there is clarity and agreement. When children are added to the equation, there will be trouble if authority is not clearly assigned!

In a school corporation, authority ultimately resides in the citizens who elect a board, but functionally it resides with the board. The board

also governs; a superintendent leads; assistant administrators and principals manage; and teachers and staff do the work.

A congregation’s theology should determine how these five are assigned. Mennonite theology is clear about *authority* (resides in the congregation), and *labor* (every member is a minister). The other three

are not clearly assigned by our theology, and have become the source of great confusion and at times conflict. While authority clearly resides in the congregation, our theology does not address how it is best accomplished.

For this conversation, let’s set aside Shalom’s official structure, and reflect only on how Shalom actually functions. (I don’t think there is much difference between the two.)

Utilizing the above definitions so we are all on the same page…

Who has, or where is authority at Shalom?

Who is governing at Shalom?

Who is leading at Shalom?

Who is managing at Shalom?

Who is ministering at Shalom?

Are any of the five components missing?

Thanks for reflecting, and bringing your observations on Dec. 11.

If you cannot participate on Dec. 11, please e-mail your observations to

Gary.