


Congregational Church of New Fairfield

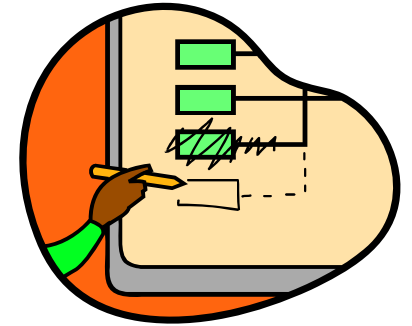
Church Structure
April 16, 2005



Introduction

- Why are we here?
 - Discuss the church's current and future structure
- Why call a meeting?
 - Collaboration is the best method to decide “thorny” issues
- Why brainstorming?
 - The best ideas come when people are given a chance to think, throw out, and vote on ideas
- Moderator's role
 - Will act as facilitator
 - As is the custom, the moderator will hold a neutral position throughout the session (but he does have an opinion!)

Drivers for structural change



- Number of discrete areas of responsibility and autonomy
- Coordination issues
 - Example: Summer play and Vacation Bible School in 2004
- Many people, but not as many participants
 - Burnout – not because there is too much to do, but because of the way it is organized!
 - How many times have you come to an event and wondered why things weren't organized better?
 - How many times did an event creep up on you and happen seemingly at the last minute?
 - Have you ever lamented that people aren't participating in events?

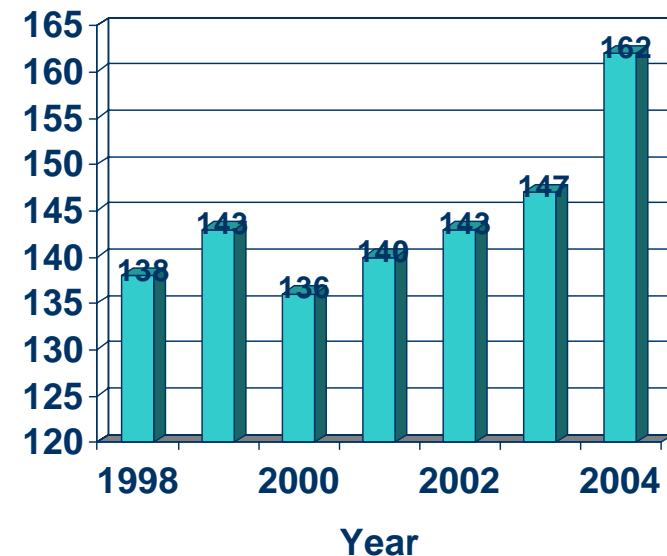
Drivers (continued)



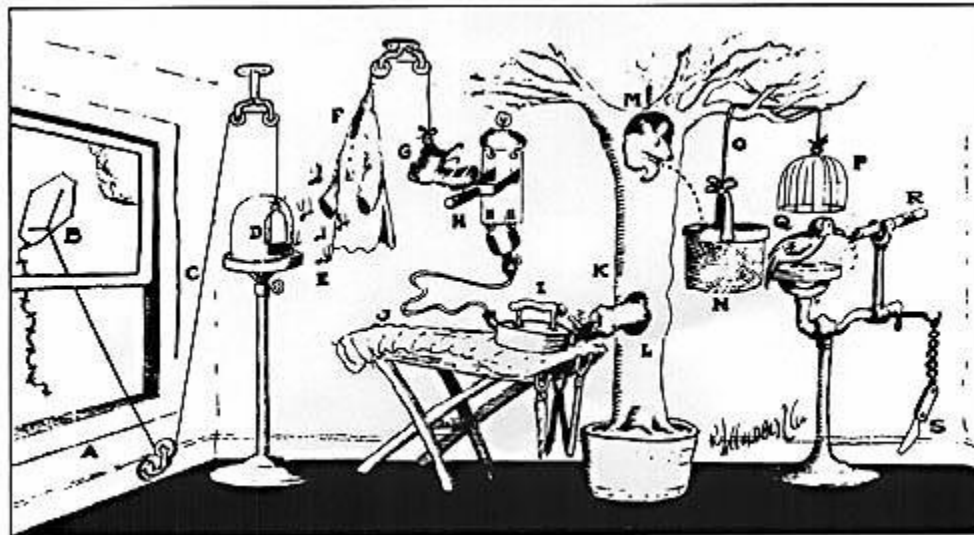
- Growth

- Over the last several years we have seen a significant amount of growth – especially in worship attendance
- Why attendance? It is the best measure of *active* members
- Percentage change from 2000: **+19.1%**

Average Worship Attendance



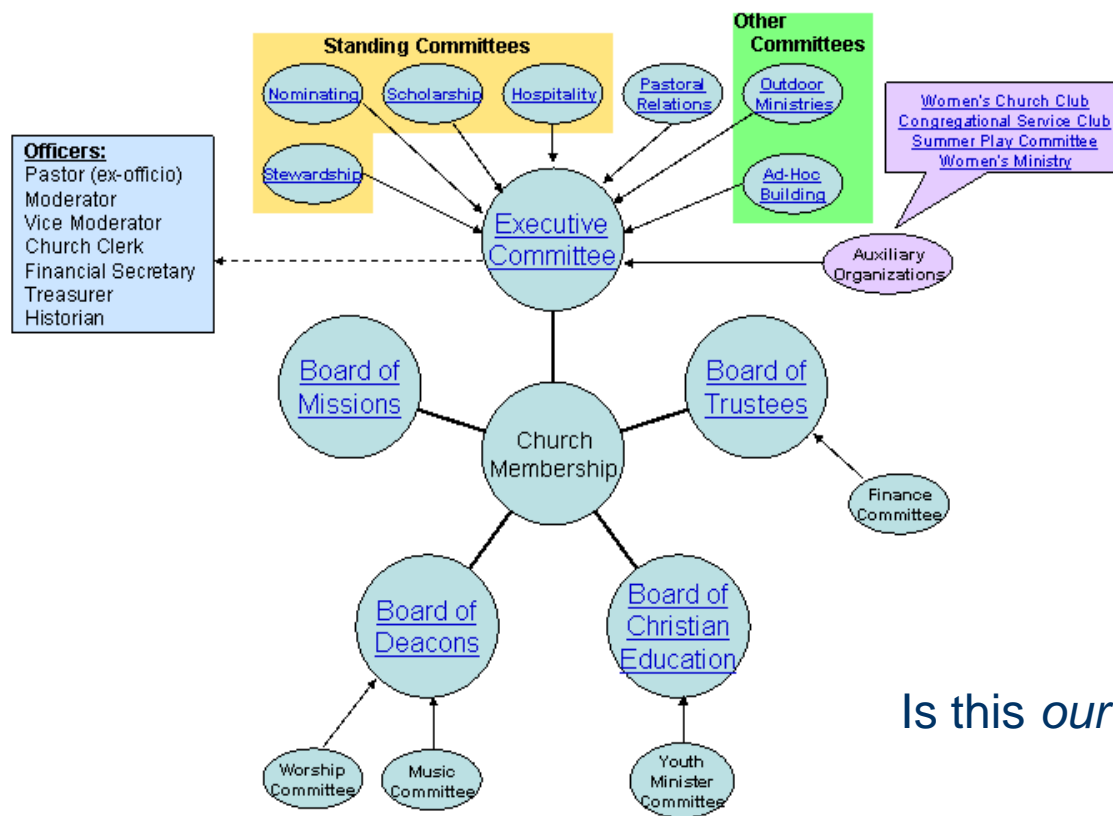
How to sharpen a pencil^[1] ...



Pencil Sharpener RUBE GOLDBERG (tm) RGI 038

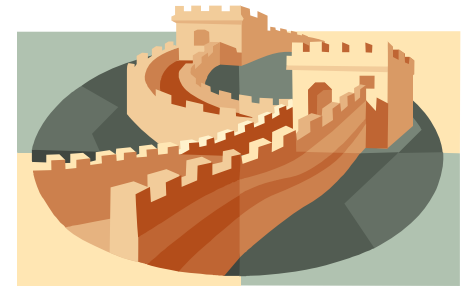
Open window (A) and fly kite (B). String (C) lifts small door (D) allowing moths (E) to escape and eat red flannel shirt (F). As weight of shirt becomes less, shoe (G) steps on switch (H) which heats electric iron (I) and burns hole in pants (J). Smoke (K) enters hole in tree (L), smoking out opossum (M) which jumps into basket (N), pulling rope (O) and lifting cage (P), allowing woodpecker (Q) to chew wood from pencil (R), exposing lead. Emergency knife (S) is always handy in case opossum or the woodpecker gets sick and can't work.

Our current structure



Is this *our* Rube Goldberg?

Current structural barriers



- Communication is difficult
 - Multiple independent, autonomous boards and committees
 - No central coordination
- Not always accountable to the congregation!
 - Example #1: Children taking communion
 - Decided by the Board of Deacons without consulting the congregation
 - Example #2: Organ purchase
 - Appropriately brought to the congregation for approval, but initial plan was to circumvent the congregation

“Challenging the Church Monster *from Conflict to Community*”

- What is “the church monster”?
 - The personification of a wide variety of problems which have arisen as a result of heightened levels of conflict and anxiety
- Goal: To help pastors and laity deal with conflict and work through issues that cause, among other things, stagnation and discord that detract from the mission and vision of the church

“Challenging ...” (*continued*)

- Core principles
 - Downsize and centralize church government
 - Develop a radical commitment to congregational decision making
 - Focus on mission and ministry instead of organization and government
- Expected results
 - Enables ministry and mission to become priorities
 - People can feel their time and energy are being used for productive purposes

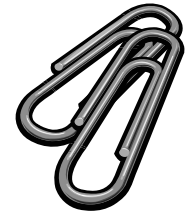
“Challenging ...” (continued)

- Concepts
 - “Overly organized church”
 - Result of the belief that getting people involved meant putting them on a committee
 - Flawed thinking – characteristic of flawed or declining churches
 - Downsizing
 - Participating in ministry versus administration
 - Eliminating unrealistic expectations
 - No authority without responsibility

What is a brainstorm?

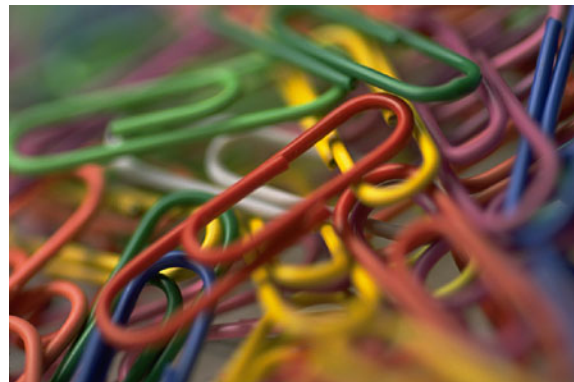


- Other terms: “thought shower”, “word storm”
- A means of enhancing *divergent production* by aiming to facilitate problem solving through the maxim *quality breeds quality*.
 - The greater the number of ideas generated, the greater change of producing a radical and effective solution.
- Process
 - Idea generation – ideas are generated and captured without comment on the idea itself (no criticism)
 - Fosters “unusual” ideas
 - Idea evaluation – vote for the best ideas (“dotmocracy”)
- What do we do with these ideas?
 - Addressed in follow-on work sessions as the basis for change



Preparing for a brainstorm ...

- An idea generating game
 - Purpose: To free our minds and get into the mood of generating ideas for the “real” brainstorm



Brainstorming a solution



- Brainstorm #1: Defining what our structure should look like
 - Purpose: Define a structure that is more agile and meets the needs of our growing congregation
 - Some rules
 - We do need to keep our officers (Pastor, Moderator, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and Clerk)
 - All other areas are open
 - Result: A list of guiding principles for our organizational structure
- Brainstorm #2: How do we get there?
 - Purpose: Define what actions the current church leadership needs to take to implement what was broadly defined in the first brainstorm.
 - No rules!
 - Result: A list of actions that the current leadership needs to take to implement the guiding principles