

By Dan Hotchkiss

# 7 Things that your board could do **RIGHT NOW**



## Start a board **policy book**.



Stop relying on your minutes to find out what your board has done.

Collect existing board policies into a book with sections.

Make it a rule: “If it’s a policy, it’s in the book. If it’s not in the book, it’s not policy.”

## Use a **consent agenda**.

This is the key tool for keeping your board out of the “micro-mindset.”

Take routine approvals and reports out of your discussion agenda.

Reserve the right for any board member to move an item onto the Discussion Agenda.

### Meeting Agenda:

- Approve minutes
- ~~Review building maintenance schedule~~
- ~~Approve Sunday school room assignments~~
- ~~Report from music committee~~
- Discuss Mission and Ministry

## Establish a **covenant of expectations** with your board.

What do you expect of board members?

Personal religious growth?  
Financial support? Attendance?  
Diligence?

Write it down, revise it regularly,  
and use it in recruiting new board  
members.

The best people are attracted to  
the most demanding groups!



## Hold a regular **executive session**.

At the end of every meeting, excuse all clergy and staff members.

Have a brief conversation about how the meeting went. Are there concerns that need to be raised with the clergy or staff?

Immediately after adjournment, the board chair or other designated leader briefs the senior clergy leader about the executive session.



Photo by Chris Minnick

## Establish a **Governance Development Committee.**



Photo by Chris Minnick

The Governance Development Committee is an integral part of the Board.

Leads annual board session on its Covenant of Expectations.

Maintains job description for board members, list of needed skills and qualities.

Works with or replaces the Nominating Committee in recruiting new Board members.

Leads annual new board member training (where old board members are invited).

## Create a list of **open questions** for the board agenda.



Photo by Oberazzi

Boards rarely discuss the things they say are most important.

For each of your key mission areas, identify the most important open questions:

- “What is our ministry to children?”
- “Will we invest in renovations, or move?”

Plan for a good board conversation without expecting a result today.

Fill the year. Having two meetings for evaluation leave ten for “open questions.”

## Hold town meetings about **open questions**.



Photo by Andrew Feinberg

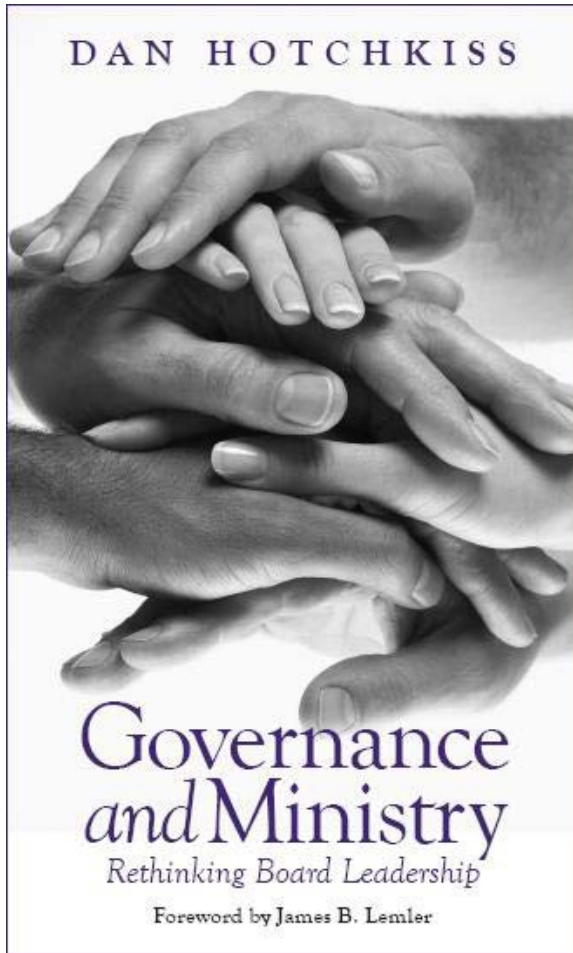
People feel included when they are invited to the table while questions are still open.

Prepare by having a board conversation first.

Then talk about: What information, outside resources, or process will create the best conversation?

Record what is said and feed it back in writing.

Reference the town meeting when the board makes its decision.



## Adapted from **Governance and Ministry: *Rethinking Board Leadership***

“If our faith is held as a ‘treasure’ in earthen vessels,’ then it matters deeply how we use those vessels called congregations. Board, staff, and members need to fulfill their critical roles and align appropriately for mission. Dan Hotchkiss helps. He provides a rich mix of ideas, language, models, and steps to help congregations use leadership well. And Dan writes like he talks—engagingly, with wisdom, and skirted with humor.”

— *Gil Rendle, Senior Consultant, The Texas Methodist Foundation Institute for Clergy and Congregational Excellence*



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## Says Dan Hotchkiss:

“I help congregations to move beyond frustrating and ineffective ways of managing the work of boards, clergy, and staff. Good governance starts with clearly defined roles and authority; it succeeds when lay and professional leaders lead ministry together as collaborating partners. How much time does your board or committee spend managing programs? How much time do your program leaders (paid and volunteer) spend seeking approval for choices they could be trusted to make on their own? True partnership begins with clear role boundaries, effective delegation, and a constructive system of accountability. ”

Dan can help you whether you want to sharpen leaders' skills, reorganize to grow, or consider an entirely new model for governance.

If you liked this e-book, pass it on to a friend. Visit [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org) and sign up for the free *Alban Weekly* e-newsletter.

