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# Decision Making Scale for Church Leaders and Pastors

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Having clarity about where the various decisions in the life of the church and the ministry of the pastor are made and who is involved in making them is critical for healthy governance, effective ministry, and safe and empowered pastoral leadership. Understanding the type of decision and who is involved in making it is as important often as the decision itself.

I have identified a 5-stage scale for decision making involving pastors. Here I use governance group to refer to the peak group in the church's decision making, answerable to the membership whether it is the elders, deacons, council, or church board. This is also the group who empowers the pastor and to whom the pastor is accountable.



# STAGE 1

## GOVERNANCE GROUP DECIDES FOR THE PASTOR

The governance group makes the decision and notifies the pastor. The Governance Group may seek input from the pastor, but it is their decision to make.

These are usually decisions about the pastor rather than the church such as pay and conditions, leave entitlements, or personal ministry resources (new laptop, car etc.)



AUTONOMY OF PASTOR  
IN DECISION MAKING

VERY LOW



INVOLVEMENT OF  
GOVERNANCE GROUP  
IN DECISION MAKING

VERY HIGH



# STAGE 2

## GOVERNANCE GROUP AND PASTOR DECIDE TOGETHER

This type of decision is a team decision in which the Pastor and Governance Group together make the decision. Neither party is able to make it on their own.

Examples of this are church budget proposals, strategic plans, agenda for members meetings, significant conflict, changes to policies and governance documents.



AUTONOMY OF PASTOR  
IN DECISION MAKING

LOW



INVOLVEMENT OF  
GOVERNANCE GROUP  
IN DECISION MAKING

VERY HIGH



# STAGE 3

## PASTOR RECEIVES ADVICE FROM GOVERNANCE GROUP TO MAKE WISE DECISION

The pastor makes the decision but receives wise counsel and perspective from the Governance Group, who can raise concerns, offer encouragement, present perspectives, and alert to risks involved. Council gives advice to pastor - pastor decision with wise council.

Examples of this kind of decision are selecting preaching series, ministry leader appointments, pastoral care and mid conflict situations.



AUTONOMY OF PASTOR IN DECISION MAKING

HIGH



INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNANCE GROUP IN DECISION MAKING

MID



# STAGE 4

## PASTOR NOTIFIES GOVERNANCE GROUP OF HIS OR HER DECISION

The pastor is authorised to make the decision without input from the Governance Group, but because of the implications or need to advise the group for their awareness, the pastor chooses to notify the governance group. The reasons for this are communal (helpful perspective on the church community), practical, courtesy, risk management, and record keeping.

Examples of this kind of decision are starting or closing a small group, minor conflict situations, swapping a work day and a day off, and major changes to ministry events.



AUTONOMY OF PASTOR IN DECISION MAKING

VERY HIGH



INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNANCE GROUP IN DECISION MAKING

LOW



# STAGES

## PASTOR MAKES DECISION, NO NEED TO NOTIFY GOVERNANCE GROUP

Here the pastor is authorised to make decisions without any input or communication from or to the Governance Group. These are routine and low risk decisions.

Examples of this kind of decision are schedule of pastoral visitation, personal devotion topics, low risk pastoral care, agreed low level expenditure, daily scheduling of ministry, and minor changes to ministry events.



AUTONOMY OF PASTOR  
IN DECISION MAKING

VERY HIGH



INVOLVEMENT OF  
GOVERNANCE GROUP  
IN DECISION MAKING

NIL

