



G^{OVERNANCE}

Conversations with Community Leaders



SHINING WATERS
REGIONAL COUNCIL
The United Church of Canada





In a Nutshell

Use these slides to introduce the topic of governance.



Questions for Conversation

These slides could be divided among small groups or choose one to reflect on at each meeting.



Quotes for Reflection

Invite people to choose one that speaks to them as a discussion starter.



Best Practices

Choose one of these slides to explore/create your own list of best practices and ideas for moving forward.



In a nutshell

Encouraging the spiritual, administrative and financial wellbeing of the congregation.

More of a mouthful

Governance is the exercise of **authority, direction,** and **control** of an organization to ensure that its purpose is achieved and proper accounting is given for results. The governing body is responsible for ensuring that due diligence has been exercised in the organization including providing a safe environment and protecting the assets of the organization, through good practices.



The governance structure
must free people
to live out their commitment
to God and to each other.



The Manual B.2.1.7



The governing body has general **responsibility** for leadership in the care and oversight of the spiritual life and the interests of the congregation.



The Manual **B.7.4**



The governing body **follows the policies** set by the congregation in fulfilling these responsibilities.

- Spiritual Matters
- Financial Matters
- Pastoral Relations
- Proposals
- Ministry Leadership
- Property
- Representation
- Reporting, Records and Forms



The Manual **B.7.4**



The governing body may be **any structure** that

- a) fulfills bylaws, membership and requirements in The Manual;
- b) is approved by the congregation or pastoral charge; and
- c) is approved by the regional council.



The Manual B.7.2



These three **structures** are common:

- Session (spiritual leadership) and Stewards (financial management) called the Official Board when they meet together
- Unified Church Board –one board to coordinate whole
- Church Council – develops policy and plans are implemented by committees/teams

Other models

- Mission Team Model –policy, planning, leadership, management, M+P
- Streamlined Church Board





QUESTIONS

for your
Consideration + Conversation



How would you **characterize**
your governance?

Informal → Formal

Top down → Bottom up

Traditional → Innovative

Labour-intensive → Nimble

Heavy → Life-giving

Dull → Exciting



What has changed
in your **environment**
that has affected your
governance?



Sketch your structure

How many people?

How many leadership roles?

How many meetings in a month?

How many vacancies?

How do the parts connect/communicate?



What gets in the way of **effective** governance?

- ☐ Distracted by management issues
- ☐ Bad behaviours
- ☐ Poor leadership
- ☐ Lack of willing and qualified volunteers
- ☐ Something else?

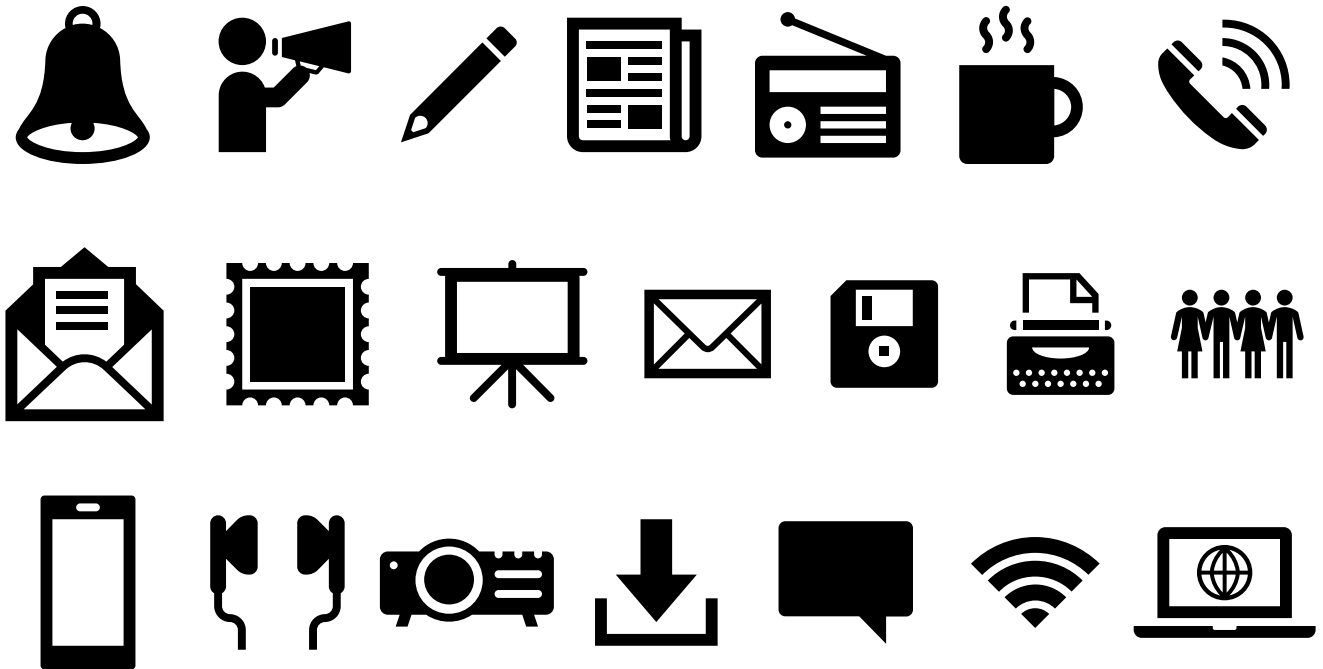


How easy it is to describe
how **decisions are made**
in your community of faith?

- ☐ Really easy, I could explain it right now
- ☐ Somewhat easy, I may need to check a few details
- ☐ Pretty complicated – lots of unwritten rules
- ☐ It's a mystery – I'm not sure anyone really knows



So much has changed in the world of
communication over the years.
What are the channels that work best
in your community, and why?
Where could you improve?





How well do different parts
of the governing structure
communicate?



How would you rank these **signs of health** in your governance system?

- ☐ Leaders Feel Engaged
- ☐ Good Decisions Are Made
- ☐ Voices Are Heard
- ☐ Roles Are Understand
- ☐ Leadership Succession is Ongoing
- ☐ Communication Flows Both Ways
- ☐ Shared Sense of Purpose
- ☐ Openness and Transparency



What would you **change** about your governance?

- ☐ Size: the number of people involved
- ☐ Model: the way we are organized
- ☐ Culture: the way that we participate
- ☐ Expertise: the skill of the leadership
- ☐ Meetings: the way we meet, # of meetings



QUOTES

To spark reflection
+ conversation




- Does this ring true for you?
- Can you recite your vision statement without looking it up?

Many are **skeptical**
of vision processes, having
gone through the "flip-chart
and sticky note retreat"
too many times
with too little consequence.





Does this ring true for you?
Can you recite your vision
statement without looking it up?

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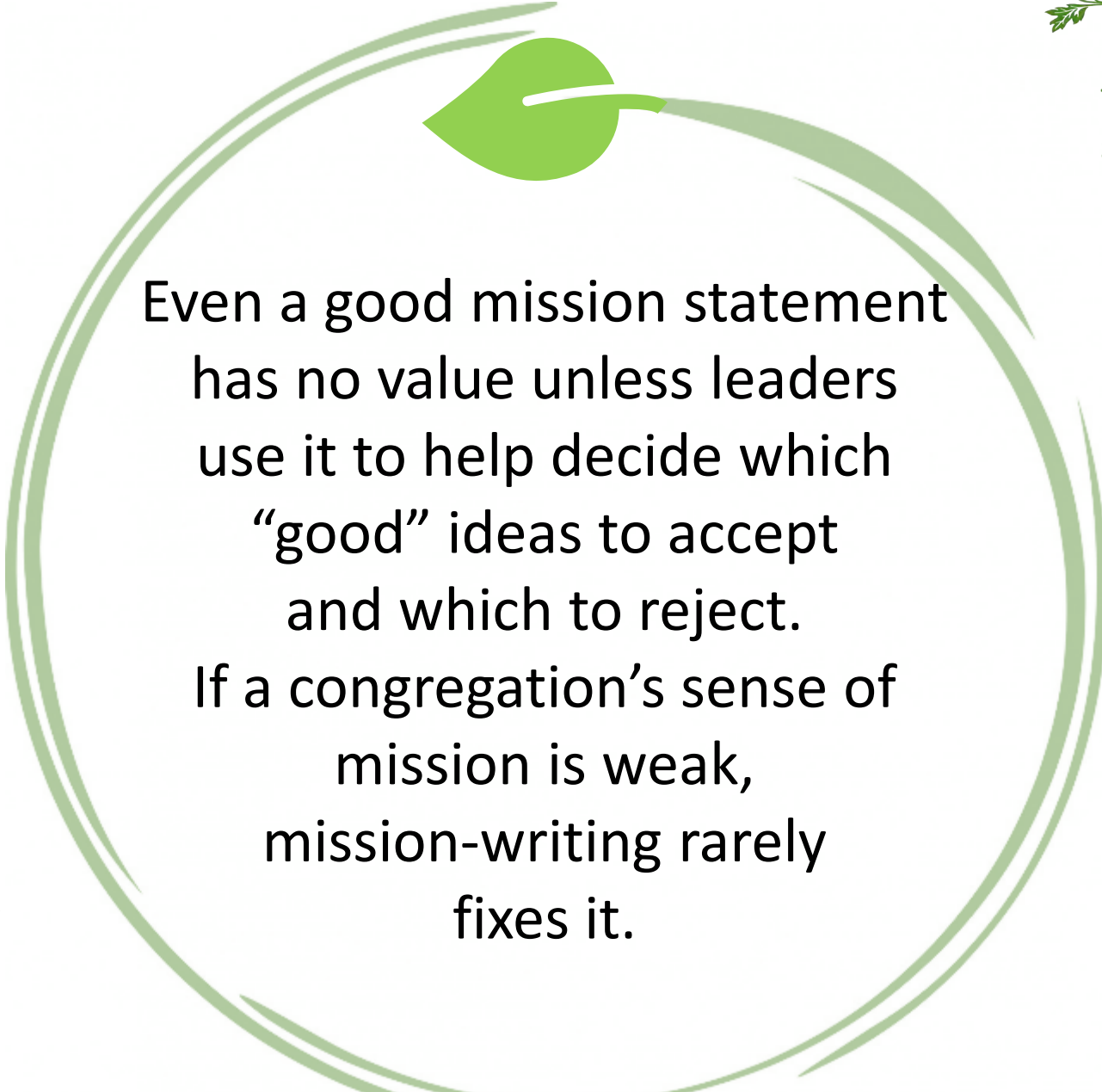
A congregation
without a
unifying and inspiring mission
is a dying congregation.



Stephan Ross
Simple Governance:
Liberating Your Church for Mission



Is there a “missional” decision that comes to mind in your story?

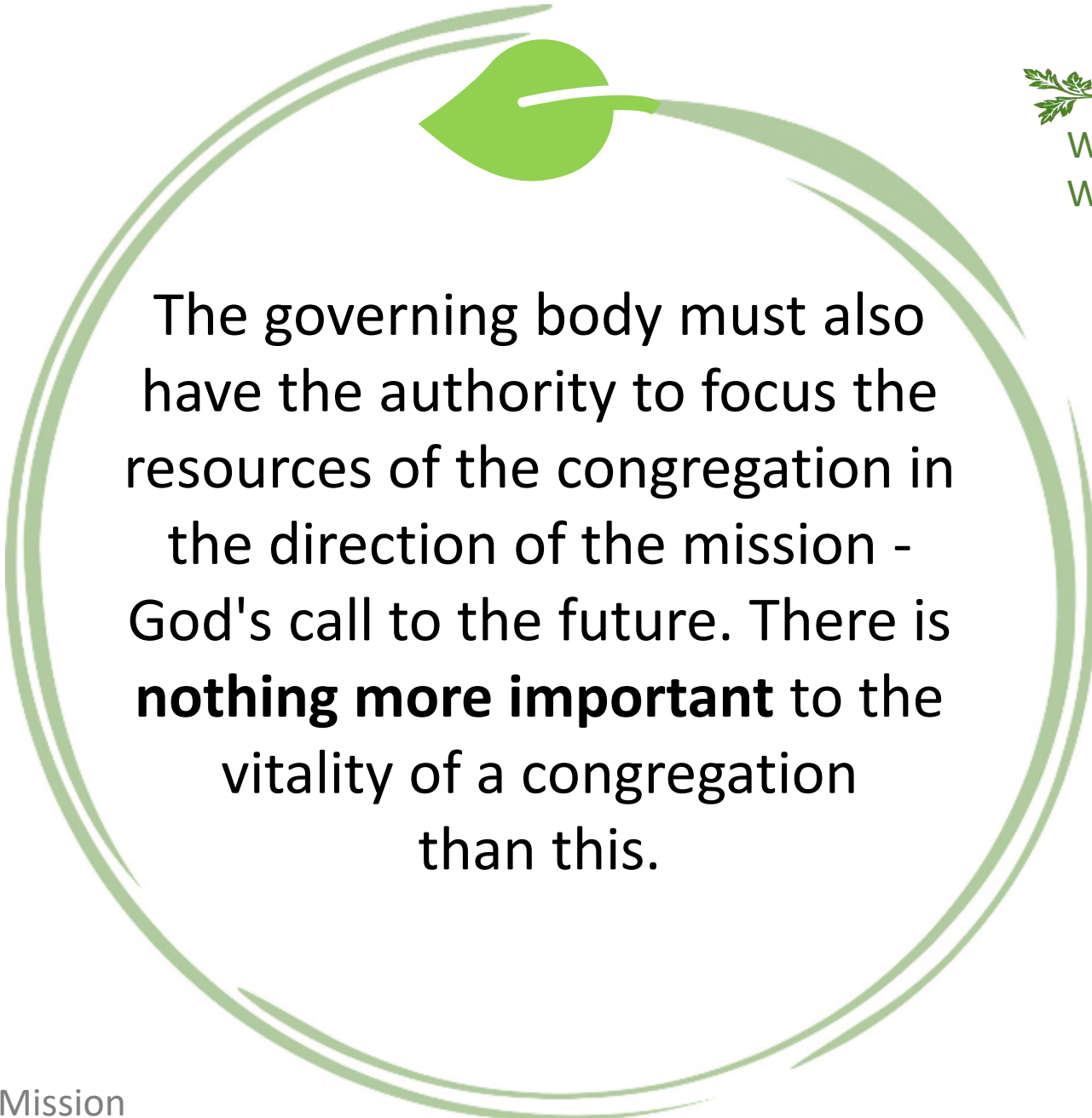
A large green circular graphic with a thick, slightly irregular border. A green leaf icon is positioned at the top center of the circle.

Even a good mission statement has no value unless leaders use it to help decide which “good” ideas to accept and which to reject. If a congregation’s sense of mission is weak, mission-writing rarely fixes it.





What does this look like in action?
What do we mean by resources?

A large green circular graphic with a thick, slightly irregular border. A green leaf icon is positioned at the top center of the circle.


The governing body must also have the authority to focus the resources of the congregation in the direction of the mission - God's call to the future. There is **nothing more important** to the vitality of a congregation than this.



Stephan Ross
Simple Governance:
Liberating Your Church for Mission

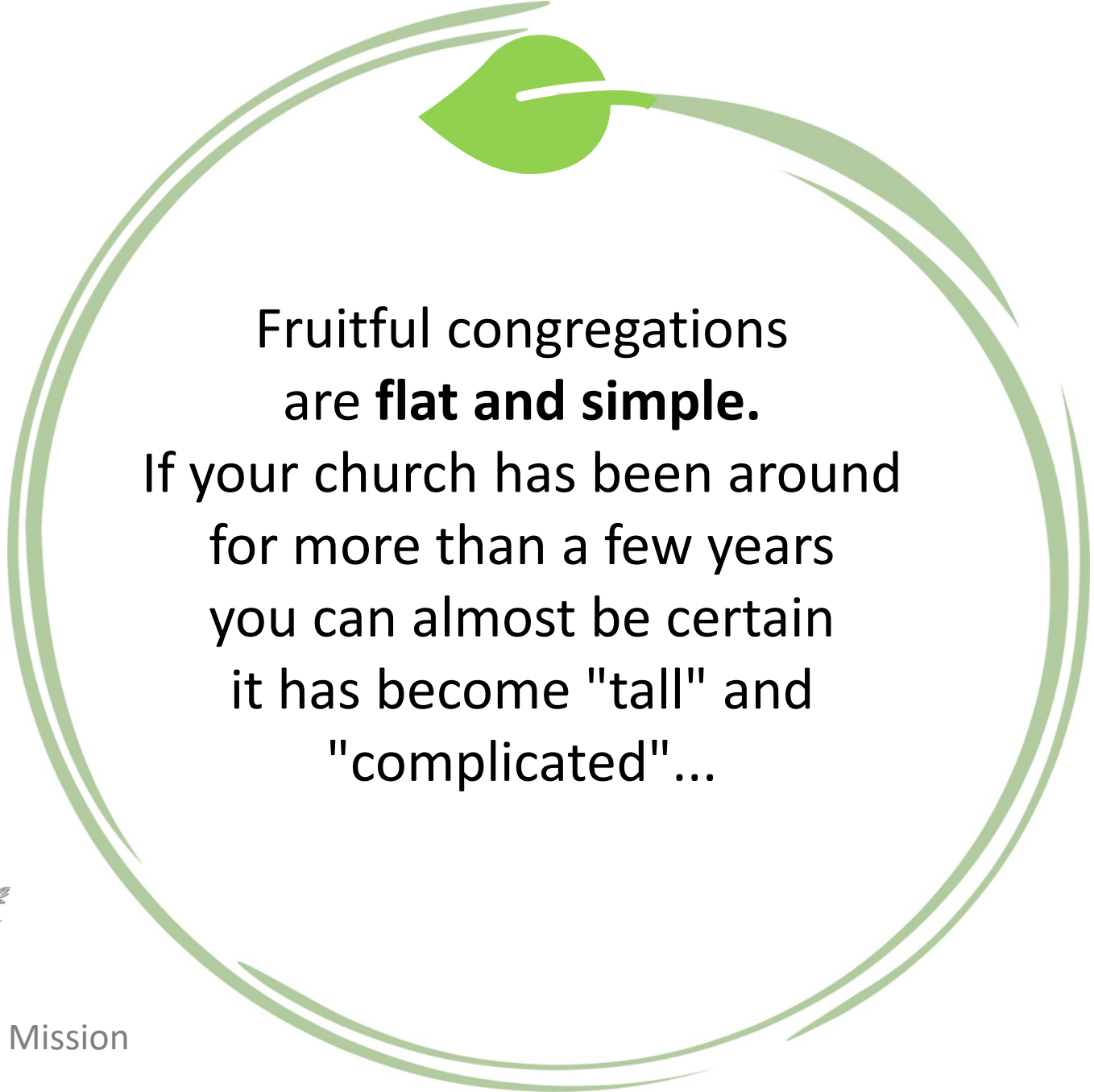


Does this ring true for you?

A large green circular graphic with a thick, slightly irregular border. A green leaf icon is positioned at the top center of the circle, with its stem pointing towards the center.

All it takes is one
fearful person to say,
"We didn't follow the proper
procedure,"
to **stop** anything
we haven't done before.



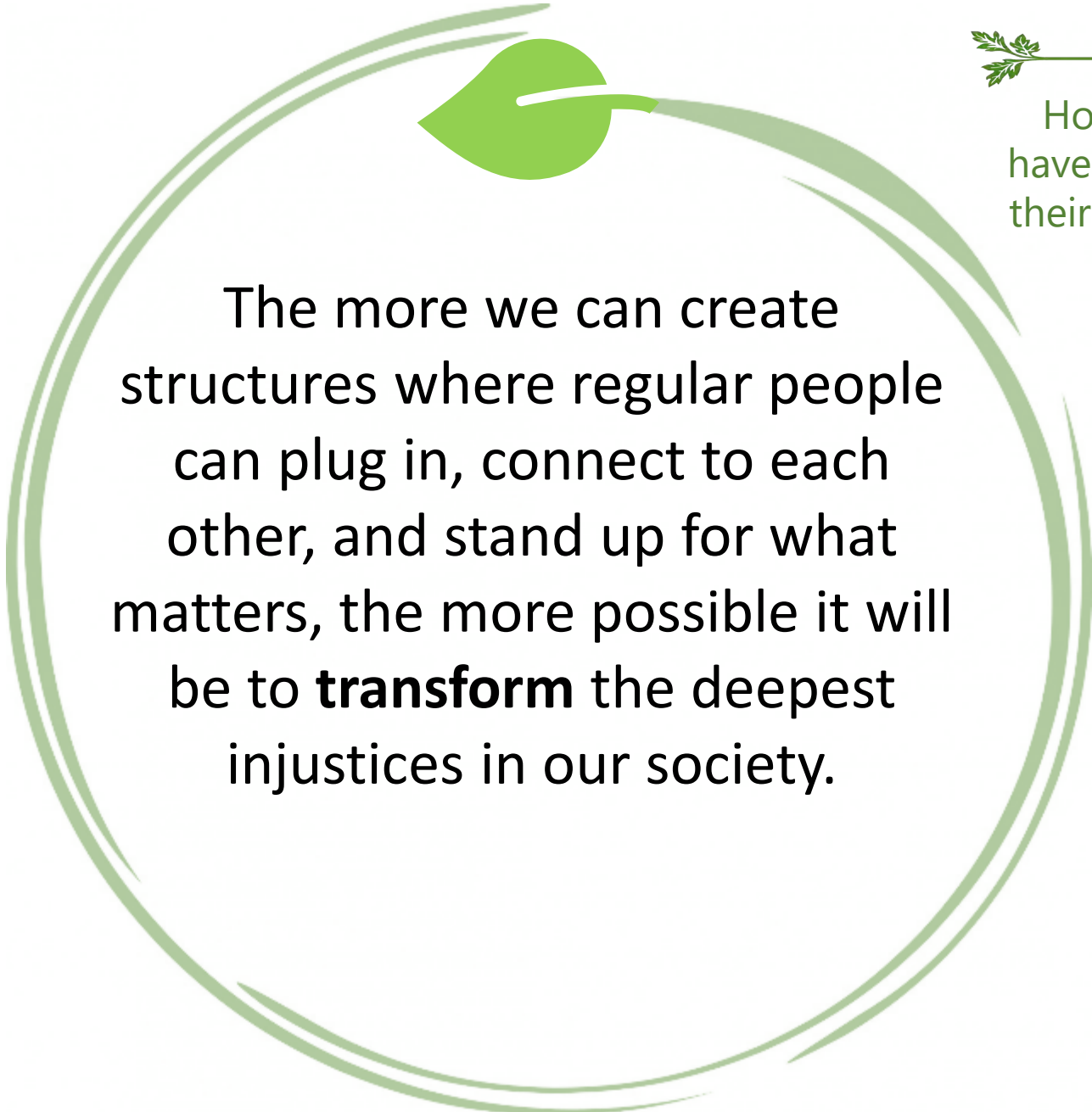


Fruitful congregations
are **flat and simple**.
If your church has been around
for more than a few years
you can almost be certain
it has become "tall" and
"complicated"...





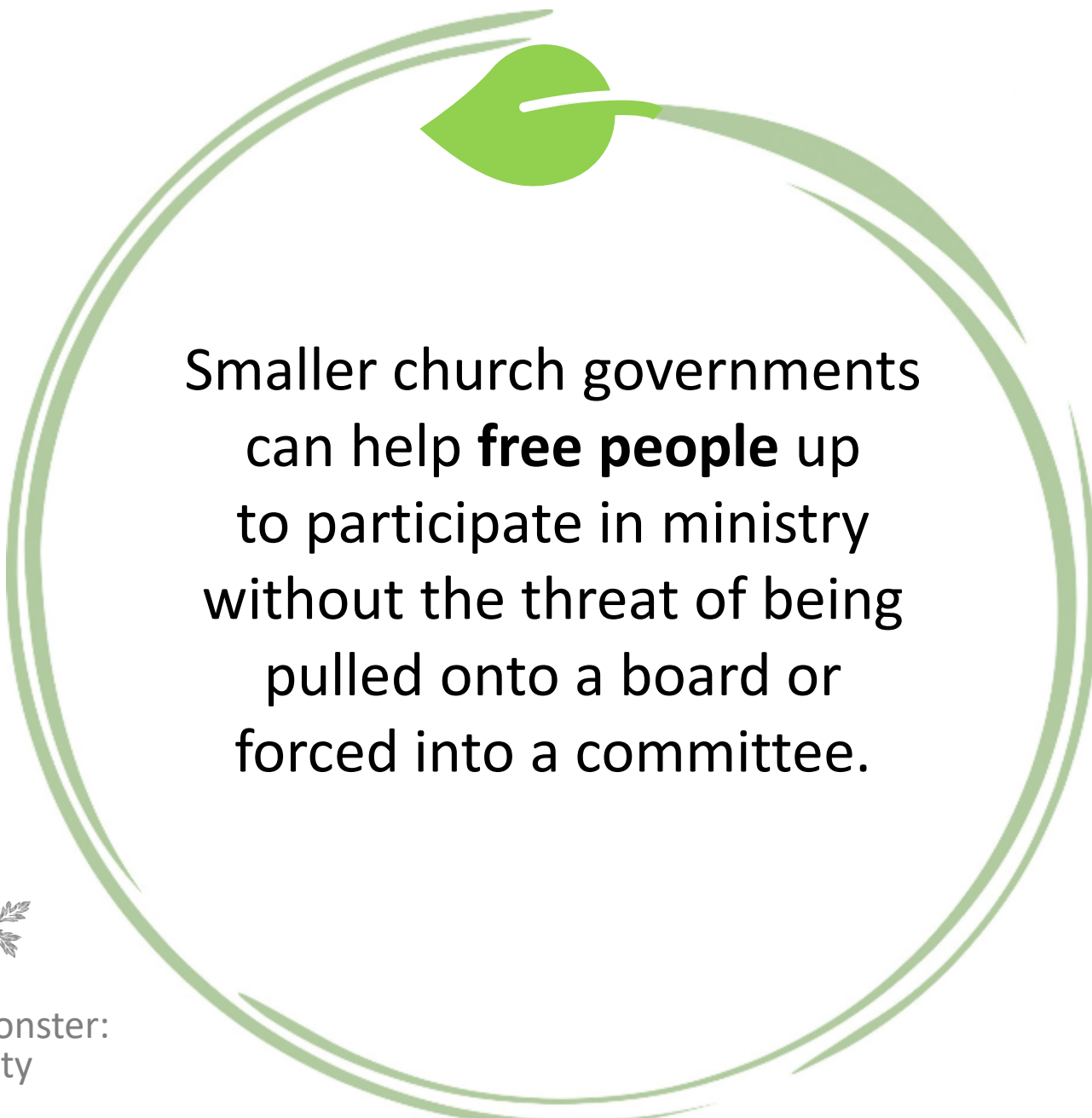
How much does someone have to know before they find their place in our community?

A large green circular graphic with a leaf icon at the top. The circle is formed by two concentric green lines. A green leaf icon is positioned at the top of the circle, with its stem pointing towards the center.

The more we can create structures where regular people can plug in, connect to each other, and stand up for what matters, the more possible it will be to **transform** the deepest injustices in our society.




Nicole Carty
SumOfUs




Smaller church governments
can help **free people** up
to participate in ministry
without the threat of being
pulled onto a board or
forced into a committee.

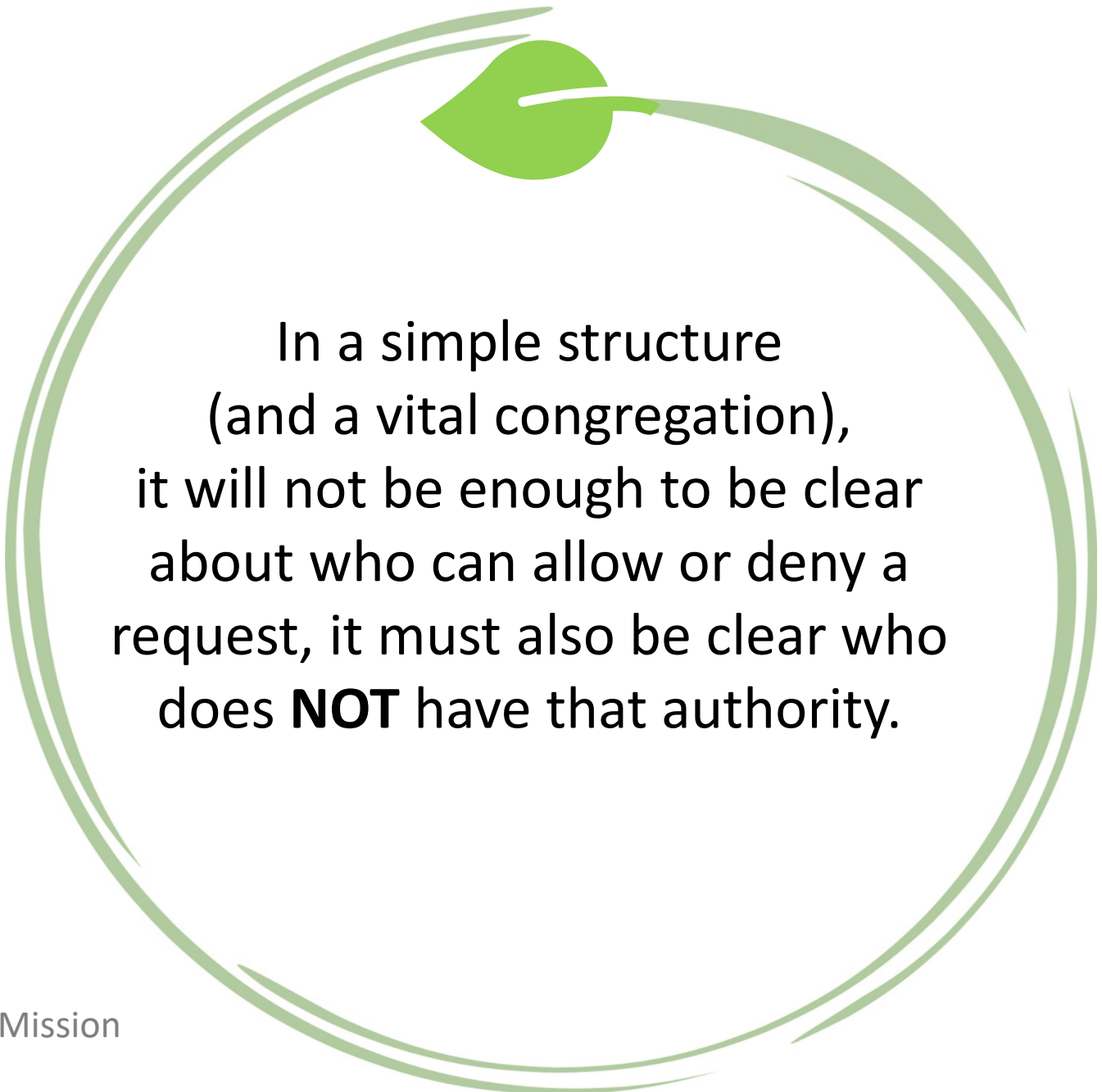




To be fruitful we need to start
calling people to fulfill their
vocations, instead of recruiting
them to do their chores.




Rev. Douglas J. Bixby
“Challenging the Church Monster:
From Conflict to Community”




In a simple structure
(and a vital congregation),
it will not be enough to be clear
about who can allow or deny a
request, it must also be clear who
does **NOT** have that authority.







Policy that is too complicated
or too extensive for your staff
to remember and understand
is worse than no policy at all.



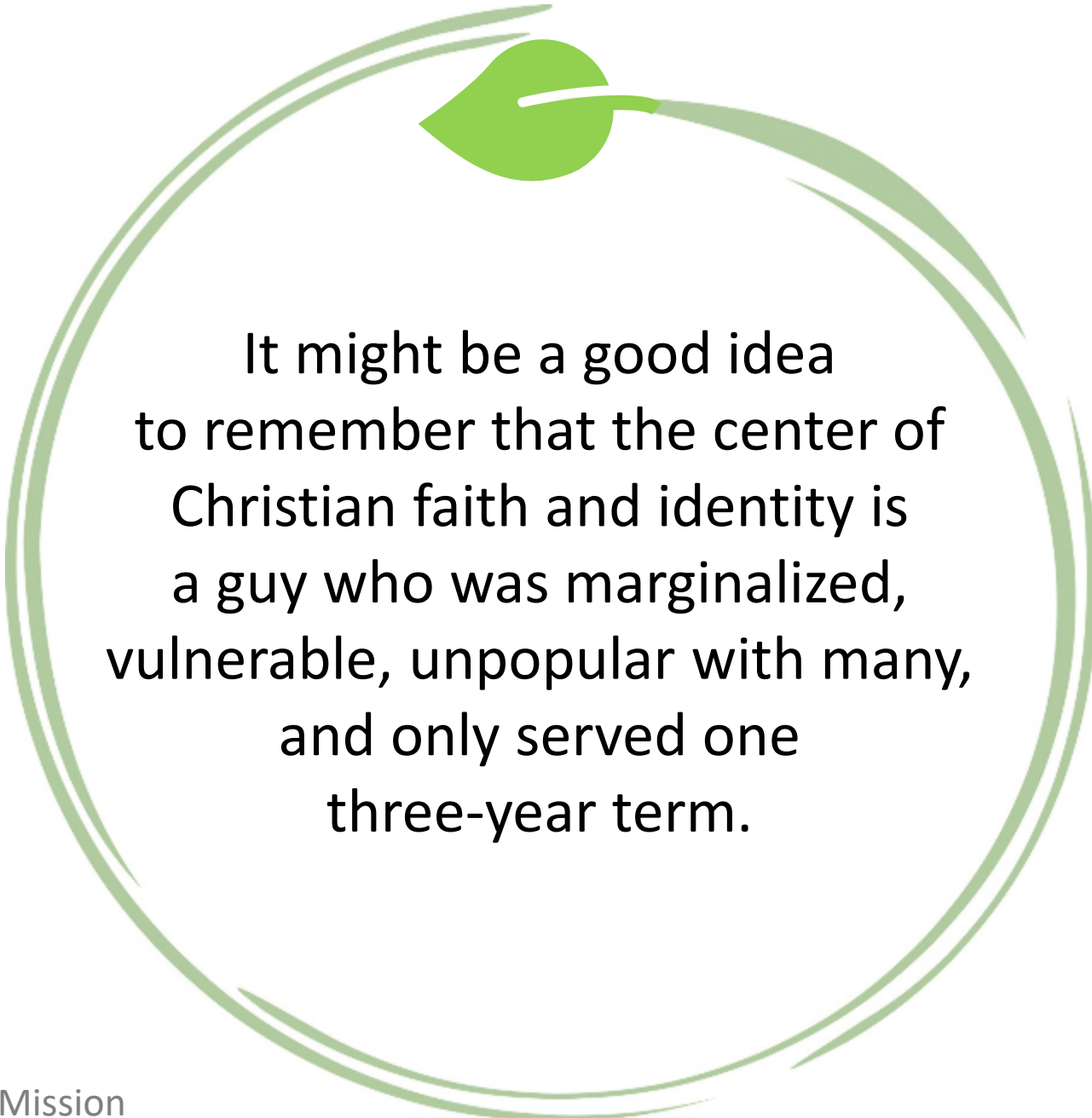
I think the whole world knows
about thinking outside the box,
but it's really about working
collaboratively with the
community as a whole
to identify solutions
within the circle.



The most important reason to flatten your structure is that your edge is closer to your changing mission field than your 'center'. In a changing environment the centre needs to be as immediately **connected to the edge** as possible.



If you and your fellow
congregational leaders
have some better ideas about how
to be faithful and fruitful in mission,
go for it.
We need fewer experts and more
experiments.



It might be a good idea
to remember that the center of
Christian faith and identity is
a guy who was marginalized,
vulnerable, unpopular with many,
and only served one
three-year term.



BEST PRACTICES

Ideas for moving forward



Do any of these **best practices** speak to your community as a goal going forward?

- ☐ Live by a board covenant.
- ☐ Learn to exercise your mission (to say yes and no)
- ☐ Do a few things well—don't stretch your members too thin.
- ☐ Run good meetings
- ☐ Create a policy manual for important fiscal and organizational matters and communicate them to your members
- ☐ Avoid micro-managing committees
- ☐ Empower an executive committee to make timely decisions between board meetings.
- ☐ Schedule at least one or two meetings a year to focus on mission



What's the Right Council Size?

no one size fits all

TOO BIG

- Struggle to engage all members
- Difficult to discuss issues/make decisions
- Delegate too much to an executive

TOO SMALL

- Not enough perspectives
- Too insular
- Overwhelmed by the amount of work



Clear Bureaucratic Clutter

- ☐ Keep Policy and procedures simple
- ☐ Reduce/combine number of sub-groups – less reports; less representation
- ☐ Dashboard reports – summarize key information
- ☐ Lightening videos – short reports
- ☐ No “For Information” items on your agenda
- ☐ Share informal “highlights” right away instead of waiting for minutes



Design Better Involvement

- ☐ Invite time limited task groups
- ☐ Choose flexible meeting patterns to accommodate more people's schedules
- ☐ Welcome and orient new members
- ☐ Reduce complexity
- ☐ Acknowledge and Thank people for their effort/presence

Missional Cycle of Governance Meetings

