

Shared Governance

Definition: Shared Governance is the process by which the Church Community respectfully shares responsibility for reaching collective decisions.

"Shared governance consists of a shared decision-making process and a set of values which regard the members of the various constituencies as essential for the success of the church and its ministries.

There are three primary concepts of shared governance:

- awareness of interdependence,
- usefulness of communication among all constituents,
- the power of joint action

These will continue to be part of the essential nature of a healthy church. And will continue to be powerful concepts for strengthening the church.

Shared Governance will provide;

1. Informed and inclusive decision-making,
2. Transparency and clarity of operations and decision-making,
3. Open lines of communication between and among all components and members of the VSU community,
4. Accountability and full community participation. No passive segment.
5. Mutual respect and trust.

Shared governance should embody the following principles:

- A climate of shared governance relies upon consistent, trustworthy communication that is multidirectional.
- An understanding between various stakeholder constituencies acknowledging the mutual acceptance of principles and processes is essential.
- All participants in the shared governance process are accountable for the proper execution of their role.
- The principles of shared governance should permeate all levels of decision-making. Shared governance is a model to be used in all segments of the church.
- Participation: Those who will be affected by a decision on policy or procedures are entitled to be informed of and have opportunity to influence the discussion of these governance issues.
- Selection of Representatives: The various stakeholder constituencies should select their representatives to governance committees.
- Areas of Primary Concern: While many governance issues will involve multiple constituencies the process needs to acknowledge the fact that certain areas are the primary concern of one group either because the matters considered are of almost exclusive interest of one group or because one group holds the expertise in these matters.

Integrity in Action:

- Authority: Shared governance recognizes the congregation as the ultimate authority in our church polity.
- Openness: The process should be transparent.
- Notification: Decision-making should provide stakeholders with opportunities for discussion prior to making final recommendations.
- Timeliness: Recommendations and decisions on proposals need to be made in a manner that is timely and appropriate to the issue. The status of any proposal should be available to all stakeholders.
- Oversight: Responsibility for oversight and review of the process needs to be designated to maintain the spirit of shared governance at all levels of the Church.