

This article is intended as a practical illustration—not a hypothetical redesign or a critique of past decisions—showing how the proposed leadership structure would approach a fairly typical operational issue in the life of the church. The scenario itself is real and familiar: identifying staffing gaps, weighing operational needs, understanding budget implications, and determining who should act. What follows walks through how this decision moved through the current structure, and then shows how the proposed structure would handle the same issue. The goal is not to relitigate the decision itself, but to make concrete how information flows, responsibility is assigned, and decisions are made under each model—so that the differences are easier to see, understand, and evaluate.



Scenario Overview

For multiple good and thoughtful reasons, the church transitioned from full-time financial/accounting staff and custodial personnel to contracts with outside vendors. After several months operating under this new arrangement, church leadership and staff identified two significant challenges:

1. **Custodial coverage gaps.** While the custodial vendor reliably staffed the regular weekly schedule, there was no obligation or guarantee that custodial services would be available for special events or facilities rentals. Because these needs arose intermittently, part-time helpers were not always available on short notice.
2. **Front-door and building management strain.** With fewer staff regularly onsite, the church administrator was spending a disproportionate amount of time answering door buzzers and managing building traffic—greeting visitors, receiving deliveries, and redirecting guests and residential tenants.

These issues surfaced at Church Council. Leadership agreed that hiring **regular hourly help**—a part-time custodian and a part-time administrative assistant—was necessary to support the ongoing life of the church.

What followed illustrates how the decision moved through the **current structure**, and how the same decision would move through the **proposed structure**.

How the Decision Moved Through the Current Structure

Even after Church Council determined that additional staffing was needed, the decision followed a multi-step and largely sequential path:

- **Referral to Administrative Deacon Panel.**
Church Council referred the matter to the Administrative Deacon Panel, which has responsibility for the Personnel Resource Team.
- **Personnel Resource Team (PRT) review.**
After research and discussion, the PRT expressed support for adding staff assistance but indicated it needed clearer guidance on the scope and nature of the roles. The matter was sent back to the Administrative Deacon Panel.
- **House & Grounds input.**
Because the Administrative Deacon Panel also oversees the House & Grounds Resource Team, that team gathered information and concluded that a part-time custodian with a set number of weekly hours would address the custodial gaps.
- **Administrative staffing analysis.**
In consultation with the church administrator, the Administrative Deacon Panel also determined that an hourly administrative assistant working approximately 12–15 hours per week would ease pressure on existing staff.
- **Return to Personnel Resource Team.**
The Administrative Deacon Panel, after being brought up to speed on the earlier discussions and decisions, routed the proposal back to the PRT. The team reaffirmed support for making the hires but noted that no funds remained in the personnel budget to absorb the added expense.
- **Finance Resource Team involvement.**
The issue was then sent to the Finance Resource Team (also under the Administrative Deacon Panel). The Finance Resource Team supported the hires, but only after being brought up to speed on the earlier discussions and decisions.
- **Budget guidance provided.**
The Finance Finance Resource Team provided budgetary guidance to the Administrative Deacon Panel. Because reallocating funds had implications for other budget priorities, the matter returned to Church Council.

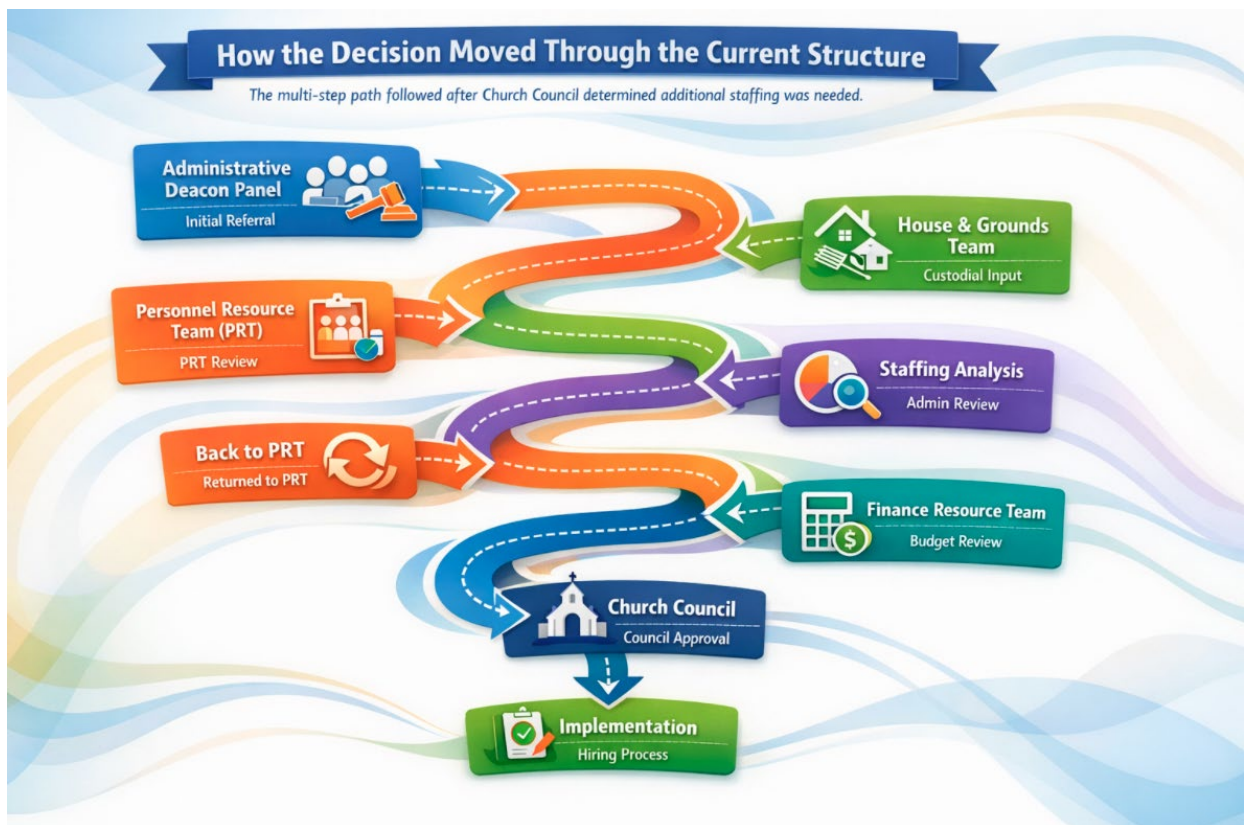
- **Church Council affirmation.**

Church Council, after being brought up to speed on the earlier discussions and decisions, affirmed the plan and gave its blessing to proceed.

- **Implementation.**

The Administrative Deacon Panel relayed direction to the Personnel Resource Team, which posted the positions and—working with staff and House & Grounds—ultimately made the hires.

Result: A good and necessary decision was reached, but only after multiple handoffs, repeated briefings, and back-and-forth between groups with overlapping responsibilities.



How the Decision Would Work Under the Proposed Structure

Under the proposed structure, the same decision would follow a more integrated and coordinated path:

- **Need identified.**

The need for additional staffing is identified by staff and/or church leadership and routed to the **GA Panel**, either directly or through Church Council.

- **Integrated information gathering.**

The GA Panel includes deacons responsible for **budget, personnel, and facilities/grounds**. Relevant GAs—either directly or through additional volunteers—gather the necessary information (custodial needs, administrative workload, budget implications) and share it with one another and the GA Panel chair *in real time*.

- **Development of a recommendation.**

The relevant GAs collaborate and formulate a coordinated recommendation addressing scope of roles, hours, and funding.

- **GA Panel consideration.**

The full GA Panel reviews, refines, and affirms (or modifies) the recommendation.

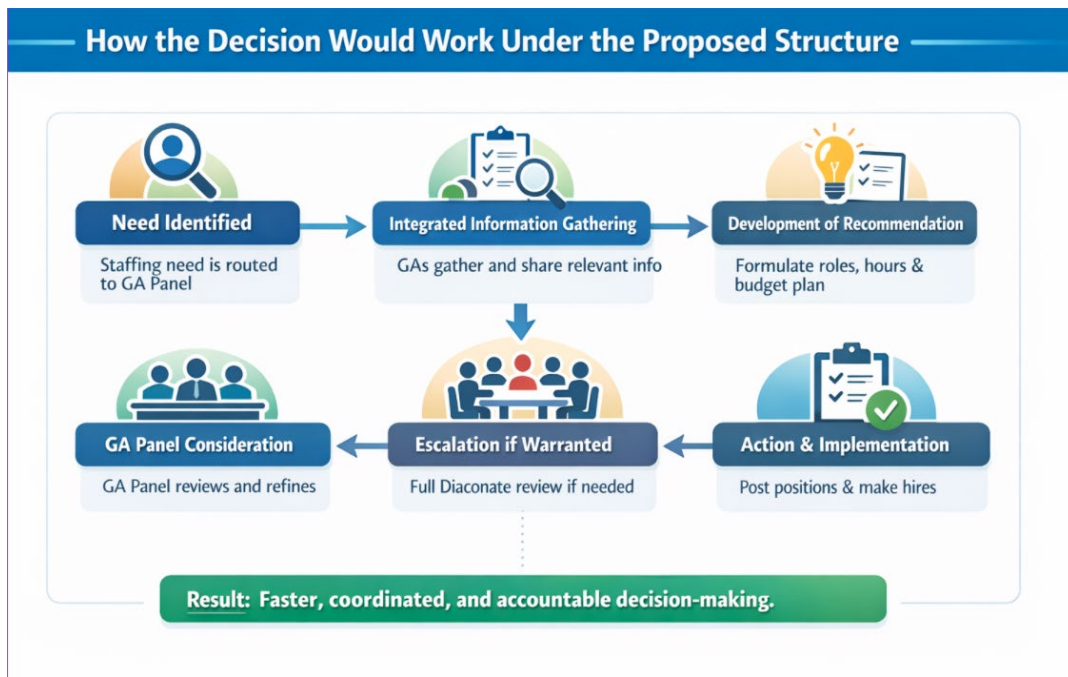
- **Escalation if warranted.**

If the GA Panel or Church Council believes the decision has broader implications, the matter can be brought to the full diaconate (both GA and RA panels) for discussion and affirmation.

- **Action and implementation.**

The appropriate GAs are directed to act—posting positions, coordinating with staff, and making hires.

Result: The church reaches the same decision, but with fewer handoffs, clearer accountability, and better shared understanding.



Side-by-Side Comparison

Current Structure	Proposed Structure
Issue identified and discussed at Church Council	Issue identified by staff or leadership and routed to GA Panel
Matter referred to Administrative Deacon Panel	GA Panel immediately engages budget, personnel, and facilities perspectives
Sequential back-and-forth between Personnel, House & Grounds, and Finance RTs	Parallel information-gathering within a single panel
Repeated re-briefing of different teams	Shared facts and context from the outset
Budget visibility comes late in the process	Budget impact considered early and alongside operational needs
Multiple handoffs before implementation	Clear ownership from discussion to action
Longer timeline and higher coordination cost	Shorter timeline with fewer points of friction

Why the Proposed Process Is More Efficient and Effective

- Fewer handoffs and less rework.**
 Decisions don't stall waiting for the "next group" to be briefed; key perspectives are present from the beginning.
- Earlier financial clarity.**
 Budget implications are surfaced alongside staffing and facilities needs, not after momentum has already built.
- Clear accountability.**
 One panel owns the issue from identification through execution, reducing diffusion of responsibility.
- Better use of volunteer time.**
 Volunteers spend less time repeating discussions already held elsewhere and more time discerning the best path forward.

- **Still preserves appropriate checks.**

Significant or church-wide impacts can still be elevated to Church Council or the full diaconate when warranted.

- **Supports staff responsiveness.**

Operational issues that affect day-to-day ministry can be addressed more quickly and thoughtfully.

This is part of a series of four essays on the Simplify to Strengthen leadership proposal.