

## Why Moving Forward Now Matters

### Leadership, Timing, and Faithful Stewardship in a Season of Transition

As St. John's prepares to welcome a new Senior Minister on September 1, many have asked a thoughtful and understandable question: *Would it be better to wait until our new pastor is in place before making changes to our leadership structure?*

At first glance, waiting can sound prudent—even gracious. A new leader, after all, will bring fresh vision, energy, and insight. Wouldn't it make sense to let that person shape the structure alongside us?

The Church Council has spent significant time prayerfully considering that question, and we want to share clearly and transparently why we believe moving forward with the proposed leadership structure now—not later—is the more faithful, supportive, and wise course for St. John's.



### This Is About Stewardship, Not Haste

First, it is important to say what this decision is *not*. It is not about rushing. The conversation about leadership structure did not appear overnight. Deacon panels have spent months reviewing, questioning, refining, and listening. Congregational feedback has been invited and taken seriously. What we are talking about now is the culmination of long, careful discernment—not an impulsive change.

Strengthening our leadership framework before September is an act of stewardship. Structure exists to serve calling. When a structure no longer fits the life of the congregation, it quietly drains energy—often from the very places we care about most: pastoral care, worship, relationships, and mission. Addressing that reality sooner rather than later honors the people who are already carrying so much.

### A New Minister Deserves Clarity, Not Burden

One of the clearest reasons to move forward now is actually *for the sake of our incoming Senior Minister*.

Starting a new pastoral call is demanding. The first months are filled with learning names, stories, systems, traditions, and relationships—while also preaching, caring, listening, and

leading. Asking a new pastor to simultaneously untangle a complex leadership structure or redesign governance on the fly adds a heavy and unnecessary burden.

By contrast, offering a clear, right-sized, well-understood leadership framework is a gift. It gives our new minister space to focus on pastoral leadership rather than structural repair. It allows staff and lay leaders to say, with confidence, “Here is how leadership works at St. John’s right now—and here is where you fit.”

Importantly, this proposal is not rigid. It is intentionally designed to be a *living structure*, open to adjustment, reflection, and refinement over time. Moving forward now does not tie the hands of our future pastor; it creates a stable starting point from which shared discernment can continue.

### **Transitional Seasons Call for Grounded Leadership**

Leadership transitions can easily lead to ambiguity: Who decides what? How do concerns get addressed? Where does care get coordinated? When structures are unclear, even well-intended leaders can find themselves duplicating efforts or unsure where responsibility rests.

Implementing a simplified structure *before* September helps St. John’s move into the new pastoral season with grounded confidence. It ensures that congregational care, communication, and coordination are not left to improvisation during a transitional moment.

In other words, this change is not about control; it is about *care*. It ensures that people continue to be seen, supported, and connected while we enter a season of new leadership together.

### **Structure as a Resource, Not a Cure-All**

It is also important to be honest and realistic about what leadership structure can—and cannot—do.

Structure is a resource, not a magic potion. No leadership model, on its own, will suddenly increase outreach, bring new members through the doors, or transform St. John’s outward presence in the community. Those outcomes depend on prayer, relationships, hospitality, courage, and sustained engagement—work that no chart, committee, or title can accomplish for us.

What structure *can* do is help us hone our focus. It can give shape to the priorities we have already named as a congregation—care, worship, shared leadership, and mission—and help us align our time, energy, and attention around them. A clear structure makes it easier

to ask the right questions, to notice when something important is being neglected, and to hold ourselves accountable to the commitments we say matter most.

Just as importantly, structure only works when people take action within it. Policies do not provide care—people do. Committees do not build relationships—people do. Structure creates conditions for faithfulness, but it cannot substitute for it. The fruit of this proposal will depend on leaders who show up, listen well, follow through, and are willing to act—sometimes boldly—in service of the church’s shared calling.

Seen this way, the proposed structure is not an end in itself. It is a tool we place in our hands—a way to reduce distraction, sharpen focus, and support one another in the work God is already calling us to do. Used well, it can help St. John’s be more intentional and more honest about where we are investing our time and love. But it will only bear fruit if we, together, choose to live into it.

### **This Structure Reflects Who We Are Now**

Another reason not to wait is that the conditions prompting this proposal are already present. Our congregation’s size, volunteer capacity, and rhythms of participation have changed over time. These realities will not change simply because a new Senior Minister arrives.

Addressing structure now acknowledges honestly where St. John’s is today—and responds faithfully to that reality. It allows us to say, without apology, that simplifying leadership is not about doing less, but about focusing our shared energy where it matters most.

Waiting would mean asking current leaders and staff to continue operating within a system that we already know is too cumbersome for this season of our life together. Faithful stewardship invites us to respond when we recognize that mismatch, not postpone it.

### **Partnership Is Stronger When the Ground Is Firm**

Moving forward now also strengthens—not weakens—the partnership between congregation and pastor. A clear structure invites collaboration. It defines lanes of responsibility and trust, so that decisions, questions, and even disagreements can be discerned within shared expectations rather than confusion.

Rather than asking a new Senior Minister to inherit structural uncertainty, we are inviting that person into a community that has done its preparatory work thoughtfully and prayerfully—and stands ready to walk together.

## **A Step Taken in Faith**

At its heart, this decision is about trust: trust in the discernment already done, trust in the leaders who have carried this work, and trust that God continues to guide St. John's through seasons of change.

Moving forward now is not a closing of doors—it is an opening. It is a way of saying to our future Senior Minister: *We are ready. We have done our homework. We are eager to partner with you in ministry, grounded in clarity, humility, and hope.*

That is why we believe now is the right time.

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