Effective and Accountable Administrative Systems

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"Discovering the importance of good administration in the local congregation.
Everything from a member's roll to financial systems."

1.   What is Administration?

Kofi Annan (previous General Secretary of the United Nations) once said: "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating." But Uncle Ben (from Spiderman) reminds us that: "With great power comes great responsibility."

Administration, for me, can best be described as:

The efficient collection, management and recording of information and,
or data for the purpose of effective use thereof at a later stage.

Efficient … whatever system you choose to use it must be efficient (i.e. achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or expense.) Remember that administration is a way of doing things. Ideally it should involve simple procedures, but always with grace and adaptability.

Collection … the first stage in any administrative system is the collection of information, or data for the first time. The type and amount of information required will be based on the needs of the organisation. But remember: "More is not always better. More is sometimes just more!"

Management … all information collected MUST be managed. This means keeping it up-to-date and useful. There is nothing more USELESS that information that is not current. This require constant vigilance.

Recording … "But we don't have a computer!" This is a common complaint amongst potential administrators. Good administration is not directly linked to technology. Good administration if directly linked to good systems, protocols, procedures and an administrative mindset.

- Obligatory
As administrators in the church we are obliged to comply with some denominational administrative requirements (annual returns, presbytery reports, directory information, remits, etc.) and also as legal officers we are obliged to comply with certain legal administrative jobs.

So, some things we HAVE to do …

- Elective
And some things, we CHOOSE to do …

- Clerical / Financial
Remembering always that the admin system is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Administration is a servant role.

2.   Why do we Administrate?

- It glorifies God. ***Soli Deo Gloria!***
- It's the "spine" of the body upon which just about everything depends. 1 Corinthians 12.
- It makes caring easier. (Love is… attention to detail)
- It makes planning easier.
- It keeps us out of trouble.
- It's obligatory.
- It creates a record. And like the Scriptures good records testify to the activity of God in the world.
- Scripture tells us that everything should be done in an orderly manner.

    I Corinthians 14:40 But all things should be done decently and in order. (ESV)

- Scripture also speaks of Administration as a gift of the Spirit.

        I Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. (ESV)

3.   What makes a good administrator?

Have you got the right stuff?
- Attention to detail
- A good balance between being people centred and task orientated.
- Systematic (filing, procedures, etc)
- Flexible and Gracious, but steadfast in applying the principles and practices of the organisation.
- Understanding the higher purpose - not a **perfect** system, but a **caring** system.
- Forward Thinker / Planner

- Support
- Able to work under pressure (sometimes not of ones own making)

4. <u>Examples</u>

- A good Roll (also Baptismal rolls)
        - computer, cards, books, file based
        - Keep it SIMPLE – you can have too much info!!!
        - Decide WHAT information you want (and why) then endeavour to keep it current.
- Birthdays and Anniversaries (wedding, death, baptism)
        - calls
        - cards (Sunday school kids can make the cards)
        - SMS' (BulkSMS services)
- Calendars
        - Publicise – Paper or Online
- Visitor's (Guest) Cards & Info Packs

5. <u>Electronic Communication</u>

- Email (often people are overwhelmed and easily ignore) Mailing Distribution Lists.
- Whatsapp / BBM / Viber (instant and interactive)
- Social Media (Facebook and Twitter - participative communication - can be lost/missed)
- Keep it personal - Don't overwhelm people.
- Settle on key applications (keep alive)
- Websites are often more for static information that visitors are seeking while Social Media is for the community.

6. <u>Minutes</u>

- Simple minutes (Eliminates uncertainty)
- recording the basics
- indicating responsibilities
- circulated quickly

7. <u>Finances</u>

- Plan: Budget
   - more than simply an income and expenditure statement.
   - budgeting is an annualised process.
   - not all months have equal income and expenditure.
        - it is necessary to generate 12.5 months income in 12, or sometimes even 11 months.
- Monitor: Income and Expenditure
- Have a system.

8. <u>Conclusion</u>

To re-iterate: Why do we do Admin?
- Bring glory to God
- Care for people.
- Keep the Body healthy
- Help the Body grow.