

Academy of Servant Leaders



Vision Document



Rev. Mark K. Richardson
State Pastor

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Academy of Servant Leaders (ASL)
Vision Document

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Academy of Servant Leaders (ASL)

Introduction

Over several years, The Church of God in Michigan participated in a multi-state ministry, the Institute for Servant Leadership (ISL). Through those excellent sessions, several hundred leaders progressed through a certified training and workshop process, taking place twice per year with assignments throughout the process. Initially the ministry was targeted at lay leadership in our congregations. Over time, it incorporated exponential leadership training and Church of God Doctrine as a supplement to the Credentialing Process. Over time, the attendance at the ISL events decreased, and the program was ended in Michigan, Ohio, and Western Pennsylvania.

ISL was a great ministry for many years, but as with many ministries, they run their course and end and/or are replaced. There were some inherent challenges with ISL. Namely the cost for the average person in our churches to participate over an 18 month to two-year process. The events took place on a Friday and a Saturday, necessitating for many at least a day off from work to attend. The sessions also required for many a hotel stay, some meals, travel expenses, and tuition for the sessions. Yet, it was a very effective and needed leadership development vehicle for many in our congregations. The need for a quality leadership development and training ministry in the state is still present today, and perhaps even more so given the leadership challenges many of our congregations face. The need to develop younger leaders in our congregations to serve in key leadership roles is becoming urgent, especially as our leaders age, and the need to reach younger generations grows greater.

Regardless of the age of our congregational makeup, the ministerial, practical, and legal aspects of congregational life and ministry are consistent and complex. Hence, we are introducing the **Academy of Servant Leaders (ASL)** to provide substantive leadership development opportunities for our pastors and key leaders across our congregations. We are also looking to partner with our Credentials Committee to provide support with Church of God Doctrine for candidates who are pursuing vocational credentialing and ministry within the Church of God. There is also a need for developing a pipeline of future pastoral candidates in The Church of God in Michigan and across our movement. We will develop a track that will help people recognize and respond to a call to ministry.

Overview of the Academy of Servant Leaders (ASL)

The initial design of the Academy of Servant Leaders will target three groups of leaders with three leadership development tracks.

- I. Track 1 will focus on Pastors and Key Board Leaders, Elders, and Trustees in our congregations.
- II. Track 2 will focus on Ministerial Candidates who are pursuing vocational credentialing within the Church of God.
- III. Track 3 will focus on people, including youth, who sense that God may be calling them into vocational ministry as a pastor, minister, or chaplain.

The design for each track will focus on affordable, one-half-day sessions on a Saturday, combining both in-person and online formats. The in-person sessions will be in May and September. The online sessions will be in January. The in-person sessions will make it possible for most people across the state to attend without having overnight stay. The tracks will be on a rotation that will run slightly over two years and repeat. New leaders will be able to join at any time and complete the rotation to receive all the training. Resources will be shared, recommended, and utilized in workshop format throughout the tracks. The emphasis will be on sharing quality information and practical team-based workshops, facilitated by proven leaders. The cost of each session will be \$25 per person. For Track 1, which will launch on May 20, 2023, we want to encourage pastors to come with their leaders. We will offer the sessions at \$125 per church up to 8 attendees.

Track 1: Pastors & Key Leaders Essentials

To quote a well-documented statement from John Maxwell, a noted facilitator and author on Leadership Development, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” In our congregations, leaders are in several places, pastors, boards, trustees, ministry teams, and small groups. Key leadership in our congregations make significant ministry, practical, and legal decisions frequently. In many cases these decisions are far more complex than perhaps we realize, and regularly congregations face challenges and issues that can derail or curtail ministry. We will partner with our pastors and congregational leaders to provide training and tools that will facilitate their leadership efforts to pursue excellence in how they serve. Over seven sessions, we will cover a range of topics that will encompass much of what pastors and their key leadership teams deal with in their ministry service. A brief description of these sessions is below.

For the Kickoff session of Track 1 of ASL, Rev. Karl Vaters, highly respected Author and Teaching Pastor of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in Orange County, CA, shared with us at New Creation Church of God in Flint Township, MI. He shared on his efforts of ministry in small churches (under 250 members, which is over 95% of our state’s congregations). This doesn’t mean that what he shared is not pertinent for all of our congregations, rather he shared some very keen insights on vision, mission, structure, and functioning in ministry from his 40+ years of experience.

Module 1: Sharing Vision, Mission, Structure, and Function

The Lord has always given vision to His people, beginning with Adam and Eve. God’s vision for the Church is certainly in line with that. The Lord Jesus Christ gave several powerful vision statements to the Church, like the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commission (Matthew 22:37-40). There are several others. These statements provide a foundation for the mission, structure, and function of the Church. The Lord has a distinct way of revealing vision to His pastors and key leadership that inspires passion and directs how congregations should serve to make disciples in the communities in which they are planted.

Module 1 will provide significant information to our pastors and key leaders, and provide workshop tools to help these groups review, refine, and if necessary define vision, mission, structure, and function together. This will provide a framework for a true sense of partnership and ownership of what the Lord is revealing for each congregation to work through in ministry long-term. This will be a key opportunity for our congregational leaders to examine how they are working through these important areas now, and how they can refine them to be most effective going forward. It will provide avenues for inspiring their congregations to own the vision and mission that God has given them, in partnership with their leaders.

Module 2: Managing Expectations, Evaluations, and Rules of Engagement

Many of the situations that cause the biggest conflicts in our congregations, and which lead to pastoral and leadership transitions, happen because of unfulfilled expectations. Everyone has expectations of our congregations, our pastors, and our leaders. The challenge is that they are often not clearly understood, agreed upon, and documented. They are just expected. Pastors deal with this most significantly, and it can lead to mental and physical health issues, as well as burnout and transition to another ministry or leaving ministry altogether.

This module will focus on the clear stating of the expectations of congregational leaders for their pastors, as well as the pastors' expectations of congregational leaders and the members of the congregation. Resources will be provided that will encourage clearly developing these expectations and agreeing upon them in writing as a part of an agreement between pastors and their congregation. This will provide a practical opportunity for pastors and their key leadership to build upon the partnership that they have in leading the congregation. It will also provide a way for pastors and leaders to evaluate how effective they have been in fulfilling the vision, mission, structure, and function of the congregation. While guidance will be given in terms of compensation for pastoral leadership, the hope is that our key leaders will utilize it as a way of working together to be most effective in the ministry as partners. In addition, it is crucial that pastors, leaders, and the congregation have clearly defined rules of engagement that govern how people interact with one another in the church and carry out its vision and mission. We will provide guidance for the development and functioning of how we engage each other in the course of ministries of the congregation.

Module 3: Pastors & Governing Board Roles & Responsibilities

Building upon the strategies and expectations of the previous two modules, it is important that pastors and their key leaders (Elders, Councils, Boards, and/or Trustees) have a clearly defined sense of roles and responsibilities that deal with the governance of the congregation. These areas are very important for the proper functioning of the congregation. We will share the process of governance that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each, and how they work together and hold each other accountable for their successful completion.

This recommended model of governance goes beyond the legal documents which will be the focus of Module 4 (bylaws, policies, and practices). It focuses on how leaders can empower their pastors to lead the congregation in accomplishing the vision and mission they've been given by God, while providing boundaries that insure integrity and accountability. It will help

provide foundation for the proper functioning of the systems and logistics of the congregation. Following this session, pastors and their leaders will have some helpful tools to refine their governance structures to provide strong systems throughout future leadership efforts and transitions.

Module 4: Bylaws, Policies, Practices, and Financial Accountability

Every congregation is required by law to have a set of bylaws that describe the structure, legal representation of the congregation, and so much more. Many churches have updated and/or totally revised their bylaws in recent years. Some haven't and perhaps are operating with a set of bylaws that might be over 50 years old. There have been many things that have happened in the courts and the culture that necessitate bylaws that protect the congregation and its assets. During this module, we will help pastors and their key leaders to review their current bylaws and lay the foundation for updating them to be current in today's increasingly hostile culture.

In addition to current bylaws, congregations need to have clearly written and periodically reviewed and updated policies. Policies are important because they define how the day to day functions of the congregation are to work, and they are important in giving specifics to things in the bylaws of the congregation. They need to be written and clearly shared with the congregation so that people will know what can and can't be done in and through the congregation. We will provide policy templates that cover nearly every aspect of church life, so that pastors and their key leaders can develop a policy manual for the congregation.

Along with bylaws and policies, there are practices that help to keep the daily functioning of the congregation operating as smoothly as possible. These are things that aren't necessarily documented like bylaws and policies, but they are a key part of congregational functioning. They are purposefully flexible so that as things change and new ideas and ministries emerge, ministry can develop and solidify. Financial accountability is also a crucial aspect of church functioning. It is essential legally, and it helps in the encouragement of the membership for good stewardship and giving. We will provide guidance for insuring that our congregations are aware of the financial requirements of a congregation and the legal reporting requirements. We will also provide information on potential partners that can help our congregations pursue excellence in the financial areas of the congregational life.

Module 5: Legal Issues & Court Decisions Affecting the Church

Every year for decades there are court decisions, tax issues, and other legal issues that affect congregations. Decisions are made that have severe consequences and present destructive landmines to our congregations if they are not considered and properly handled. Many of these are a part of Module 4, and may make it into our bylaws and policies. Yet, there are new court decisions and laws passed that affect us beyond our bylaws and policies. We will have an attorney share with our pastors and key leaders the most current and significant court decisions and issues that we must be prepared to handle. We will also expose our leaders to resources, like ECFA and Law and Tax Guidance, to which our congregations can subscribe that will keep them up to date on issues and tax concerns as they happen.

Module 6: Developing a Conflict Resolution Process That Works

One of the realities of people coming together to do ministry, or anything in life, is that there will be conflict. People work together from different backgrounds, education levels, social and economic differences, etc. There is bound to be conflicts and disagreements, both small and large. This is not necessarily a bad thing if handled properly. Properly managed conflict provides a great growth opportunity for pastors, leadership, and the congregation to grow together. Poorly managed conflict always leads to painful fallout and problems for our congregations. It is clearly known that the worse time to develop a process for dealing with conflict is when it has already happened. It is difficult enough for angry and hurt people to come together to resolve conflicts. When there is no clearly developed process within the congregation to resolve it, with trusted people, it will be nearly impossible to handle without significant fallout. Many pastors and leaders have been to conflict resolution seminars, but they rarely have put in place a process for their congregation.

In this module, We will provide a clear definition of conflict within the congregation, including its sources and its impact. We will provide a recommendation for developing a team of trained and trusted conflict resolution first responders that can help to deal with conflict when it first happens within the congregation. We will also provide resources that can help to share this with the congregation so that they will trust the process developed and provide help for pastors in resolving conflict before it does harm to the congregation.

Module 7: Developing a Succession Plan

Every pastor will eventually either retire, leave the church, or move out of ministry at some point in time. In addition, every position in the leadership of the church will transition, usually far more frequently than the pastors. Every congregation needs to be prepared for leadership transition at every level, including a clear plan for it. It is far more than a statement in the bylaws on how to replace a pastor or the term limits of leadership within the congregation. The leaders of the congregation, both pastors and key leaders, need to always be helping the congregation prepare for transition. There are so many issues that this impacts, like development of people that have the gifts, call, and passion to be in leadership, both as vocational ministers and church leadership. In this module, we will provide some resources and guidance to help pastors and leaders recognize people with leadership and perhaps pastoral leadership potential. We will seek to help them develop mentoring relationships so that when transition happens people are prepared to step into leadership without a lengthy ramp up process. We will help them develop a succession plan for the congregation that will consider the challenges of changing times and culture so that the congregation is prepared. This is really significant when it comes to pastoral succession. Far too many of our congregations are not prepared for this and are unduly stressed when it happens. This is in both the ministry and in compensation. We will look to resource our leaders to be ready to lead the congregation effectively through this.

Track 2: Church of God Doctrine – Theological Commitments

The doctrinal positions and distinctions of the Church of God, Anderson, IN, are a significant part of our heritage and history. We also believe that they are soundly, Biblically based. As credentials candidates are working through the process of credentialing, including Leadership Focus, they are required to write their Theological Statements that cover these areas of doctrine that we espouse. We are finding on many occasions that many candidates need additional help in understanding our doctrinal positions, as spelled out in Scripture. They also need help in working through, documenting, and sharing how these things impact their lives. They are more than just an exercise that they need to complete for credentialing. They are foundational to who we are, and they are a significant area that can cause ministers to have their credentials sanctioned if they teach doctrinal positions in opposition to what we believe.

Currently, the Leadership Focus process, as defined in the current Credentials Manual, has 16 Theological Statements that must be written and presented to the Credentials Committee as a requirement for ordination. Later this year the process will be refined to consolidate these statements into 7 Theological Commitments. Track 2 will be developed in partnership with our Credentials Committee and resourcing from across the Church of God. Our focus will be on providing a workshop environment to our candidates, and anyone else from our congregations and pastors who want to participate, to develop their statements in detail. The schedule and delivery vehicle may differ from Track 1 and Track 3 of ASL, but we will have seven modules, each covering one of the Theological Commitments. In addition to these theological commitments, candidates will articulate their understanding of several Church of God distinctives, including: Women in Ministry Leadership, Church Membership, Ordinances (Communion, Baptism, Foot Washing), Eschatology, Sexual Ethics, and Divine Healing/Supernatural Gifts.

The timing and structure of this track will be defined and shared after the transition has been made with the Leadership Focus process later this year.

Module 1: Trinitarian Theology: The doctrine of the Trinity means there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While there are three distinct persons, each person of the Trinity is fully God.

Module 2: Sin and Salvation: Both original sin and our sin separated us from God. Jesus Christ lived a holy life, was crucified on the Cross, and rose from the dead so that we could receive salvation. Through the faithfulness and grace of Jesus, we are empowered by Holy Spirit to choose this gift.

Module 3: Holiness: The Holy Spirit continues to transform us by renewing our minds, understandings, and convictions to align with the mind and heart of Jesus. We are equipped with gifts of the Spirit and empowered to resist the enemy's temptation and to do the work and will of Father God for the mission of the Church.

Module 4: Nature and Authority of the Bible: The Bible is the authoritative word of God and our rule of faith. This commitment impacts the way we study the Bible, preach, and how we live holy lives.

Module 5: Imago Dei: We were created in the image of God. This unique relationship impacts how we worship and our relationship with all those created in God's image. Every woman and man who has experienced salvation is gifted by the Holy Spirit and has a unique destiny.

Module 6: Kingdom of God: The Kingdom is reigning here and now, and as such, citizens of the Kingdom have the power to daily live victoriously in Christ. We have everything needed for every good work and for fulfilling the mission God gave us.

Module 7: Unity: Unity is a means for revealing the nature of God, the transformed life in the Kingdom, and our deep commitment to the mission of reaching the lost. Unity is impossible without holiness, and holiness is evidenced by our unity.

Track 3: The Call to Vocational Ministry

This Track will be defined and developed in detail over the next year with a planned rollout for 2024. At a minimum, it will cover the following areas.

Module 1: Recognizing, Understanding, and Responding to the Call

Module 2: Sharing the Call with Pastoral Leadership & Congregation

Module 3: Mentoring Within the Congregation

Module 4: Exploring Options for Pursuing Vocational Credentials

Module 5: The Church of God's Formal Credentialing Process

Resourcing:

For each module, in all three tracks, there will be a list of resources that can be utilized by pastors and their leaders that will supplement what is shared in the modules. This will be books, articles, websites, subscriptions, etc. For the resources that will be utilized during the sessions, advance information will be provided that will be a lead-in to the modules. There will also be resources that will be output from the modules and recommendations that can help to further develop what is worked on during the modules

Value for Congregations

The Academy of Servant Leaders is committed to developing and making available specialists to serve congregations in governance, structure, finances, policies, practices, legal, and ethical church management.

| Track 1 - Pastors & Key Leaders Essentials | |
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| Module 1 - Sharing Vision, Mission, Structure, and Function | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define, refine vision and mission • Review structure and function • Special concerns of smaller congregations • Roles of pastor, boards, committees • Accountability in the processes of the church • Communicating vision, mission, and work to the congregation |
| Module 2 - Managing Expectations, Evaluations, Rules of Engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining expectations • Communication skills for leaders • Exploring the various leadership roles in the church • Evaluating progress • Developing partnership models |
| Module 3 - Pastors & Governing Board Roles & Responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing groups within the congregation - basic responsibilities from the perspective of a nonprofit organization board • Developing and executing agendas • Defining roles and responsibilities • Providing boundaries for integrity and accountability • Hiring, evaluating, and firing, setting compensation • Practical help on the how-to-do-it of governance • Communication to the congregation |
| Module 4 - Bylaws, Policies, Practices, and Financial Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal standards of bylaws • Basic parliamentary procedure • How to update bylaws and what to include and exclude • Why policies are important and how to develop them • Communicating ministry and money to the congregation • How the words we use matter and what modes of communication are recommended • Basic financial accountability and stewardship • Developing a giving congregation |
| Module 5 - Legal Issues & Court Decisions Affecting the Church | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent legal decisions and their impact on congregations • Getting legal counsel • Basic legal requirements of a nonprofit organization • Communicating complex legal information to the church • Avoiding legal entanglements with sound bylaws, policies, and practices • Avoiding the legal problems outside interest groups bring |

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| <p>Module 6 – Developing a Conflict Resolution Process that Works</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of conflict in the church • Preventing and de-escalating conflict • Conflict between individuals • Conflict between groups • Processes for resolving conflicts • Bylaws, policies, and practices that are constructive in conflict situations |
| <p>Module 7 – Developing a Succession Plan</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an emergency succession plan • Developing a long-term succession plan for pastoral leadership • Developing a long-term succession plan for key congregational leaders • How a succession plan works • Maintaining the health of a congregation during transition |



4212 Alpha Street
 Lansing, MI 48910
 517-393-7020
 micog.org