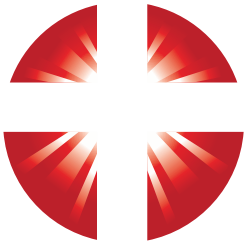

Ten Core Principles of Leadership and Organization for a National Evangelical Alliance

WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

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National Evangelical Alliances (NEAs) have formed around the world since the late 1840s. They have taken various forms that reflect different cultural values and diverse systems of organization. In that sense, there is no such thing as "the way" every National Evangelical Alliance organizes itself and makes operational decisions or leadership appointments. The same could be said for local church polity. While most denominations point to biblical texts and examples that support their ecclesiological distinctives, the Scriptures are more a resource for organizational principles than a definitive rule book on how to play the game. Some National Evangelical Alliances are large and highly formal in their structure; others operate with a high degree of informality.

That said, there are guiding principles around organization, decision-making and leadership appointments that most Evangelical Alliances follow. These have been time-tested and founded on New Testament teaching (that evangelicals attest as the word of God) and against which they measure themselves with respect to how and why they do what they do.

What follows are ten core leadership and organizational principles that help shape an Evangelical Alliance. They transcend ethnic and cultural patterns and reflect the distinctive behaviour of those who dwell within the kingdom of God. They offer a framework for measuring the systemic health of an Alliance — whether one newly forming or one that is reviewing its operations. Beneath each section (below) are questions for personal or group reflection.

1. NEAs are led by Servant Leaders:

Leadership in a Christian organization is distinctively different to models of leadership in the cultures of our world. Jesus admonished his disciples for following worldly paradigms of leadership where leaders "lord it over" and bully those they lead. Such approaches to leadership are common in many cultures, but they are not the way of God's kingdom. In the kingdom of God leaders have a different attitude and approach to leadership: they serve those they lead.

- Christian leadership (e.g., a Pastor or General Secretary or President or Chair/member of the Board) is not about social standing and status or prestige
- Christian leadership is not about power and hierarchy
- Christian leadership is not about always being right or winning or having the last word

Questions to consider:

- What does servant-leadership look like in our culture?
- How is good leadership perceived in our culture?
- Why is servant leadership a more powerful model in any culture?

2. NEA Leaders are appointed by due process:

Appointment to a position of leadership in a Christian organization (e.g., church, denomination Alliance) comes as the result of process and discernment. Leaders of healthy National Evangelical Alliances are not self-appointed and do not hold onto their position by virtue of their status in society or via political-type maneuvering. Leadership appointment is primarily determined by others who recognize and affirm godly character and a sense of the Spirit's leading. Good leaders win followership by their godly behaviour.

- Christian leadership is not a birth-right or defined by class distinction
- Christian leadership is not nepotistic – automatically transferring within families
- Christian leadership is recognized and affirmed by others

Questions to consider:

- By what process were leaders of your Evangelical Alliance appointed?
- Was the process fair and transparent?
- What systems of term, review and renewal of appointment are in place?

3. NEAs have clear lines of authority, responsibility and accountability:

Clear documentation (e.g., a constitution or charter) defines leadership appointment processes, length of terms for governance and executive leaders (e.g., Chair of Board, General Secretary, etc.), limits of decision-making authority, roles and responsibilities, parameters of governance and management, and financial accountability.

- Clarity and processes are valued and defined before they are needed
- Clarity and processes avoid misunderstanding and misappropriation of power
- Clarity and processes provide organizational security and stability

Questions to consider:

- What leadership appointments and decision-making processes need more clarity?
- What are strengths and/or weaknesses of limiting the term of an appointed leader?
- Have clear job descriptions and specifications of authority been defined for leaders in our organization?
- What types of organizational decisions might fall into the category of "governance" (matters for the Board), and what types of decision are "management" (matters for the staff)?

4. NEAs work for unity across the body of Christ:

This is the core work of a National Evangelical Alliance. They are generously inclusive of ALL evangelical Christian communities, rather than biased or narrow in their constituency. They work diligently to provide place, voice and status for ALL ethnic, cultural, and demographic sectors of their constituent community. They do not allow unfair dominance by one sector (e.g., ethnic, denominational, demographic) of their constituency over other sectors.

- The priesthood of all believers means ALL are capable of representing God
- The priesthood of all believers means God can speak through ANY person or group
- The priesthood of all believers recognizes EVERY expression of God's grace and gifts

Questions to consider:

- What does unity look like in our context?
- What ethnic minorities are underrepresented in our Alliance?
- What denominations or NGOs are underrepresented in our Alliance?
- What demographic groups are underrepresented in our Alliance?
- What steps can be taken to be more representative and unified?

5. NEAs are committed to training the next generations of leaders:

Leadership in the kingdom of God recognizes the creativity and contribution of younger and emerging leaders. Likewise, younger people honor and respect those who lead out of experience and accumulated wisdom. Wise organizational leaders have a perpetual eye on who the next generation of leaders will be and intentionally seek to mentor (involve) them. They allow new leaders to experiment and develop through experience, even failure, as part of the normal maturation process.

- Kingdom leadership embraces youthful innovation
- Kingdom leadership is not gender defined
- Kingdom leadership listens for the voice of the Spirit through the least and unlikely

Questions to consider:

- Is the average age of leaders in our organization what it should be?
- What is our strategy for engaging younger leaders?
- What room is there for women to lead in our organization?
- Who might be the next leaders of our organization?

6. NEAs embrace the diversity of spiritual gifts given to the church:

From the Day of Pentecost onwards those who minister and lead in the Christian church are whomever the Spirit of God empowers — men, women, young, or old. The clergy are not the exclusive servants of God, nor necessarily his only mouthpiece, as he speaks and leads through people of any and all professions. Every Christian is a recipient of spiritual gifts given by God for service and expression of his grace.

- Good leadership listens to those they lead
- Good leadership is not dictatorial or authoritarian
- Good leadership is respectful and patient

Questions to consider:

- How defensible is the distinction between clergy and laity in light of Pentecost or New Testament teaching about the body of Christ and spiritual gifts?
- Why are most Christian organizations led by ordained clergy?
- What opportunities exist for businesspeople to serve God in our organization?
- What opportunities are there for women to use their spiritual gifts in our organization?

7. NEAs model financial integrity:

Financial honesty and accountability are fundamental to a healthy Christian organization. Money given or raised for a specific purpose is used for that purpose, and its use reported upon to those who donate it. NEA staff are prudent in their stewardship of finances and time management. They set the benchmark for other Christian entities through fiscal responsibility and transparent auditing of financial records.

- Honesty in money-matters glorifies God
- Honesty in money-matters builds trust
- Honesty in money-matters releases blessing

Questions to consider:

- What policies exist for authorizing expenditure of resources in our organization?
- How often, and by whom, are our organization's financial books audited?
- How are staff positions reviewed in our organization?

8. NEAs are visionary:

They follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in what they do. They perpetually ask the question, "What is next Lord?" and seek to discern their future according to the leading of the Spirit. They learn from the experience of other Alliances, and in turn they share what they have learned with others, but they also recognize they are unique under God and his direction. There is not a "one-size-fits-all" in terms of an NEA's agenda and operational schedule. A healthy NEA responds to specific needs within their own context, rather than necessarily replicating the structure of other NEAs.

- Healthy NEAs are innovative, creative and risk-takers
- Healthy NEAs find ways to hear God's voice and to catch the wind of His
- Spirit Healthy NEAs perpetually evaluate what they are doing

Questions to consider:

- What is the vision for our organization – the picture of the future that beckons?
- By what process does our organization determine its future plans?
- What is unique about our organization compared to others?

9. NEAs are self-sustainable:

They recognize that God empowers, sustains, and enables that which he sets in place. They look to the Lord (rather than to others) to meet their needs. Principles of Christian generosity and sustainability are universal, and applicable in every nation under heaven. Healthy Alliances teach, model, encourage and enjoy financial stewardship across the body of Christ. When it comes to external financial help, they believe in the principle of "hand up" rather than "hand out" and actively cultivate dependency upon God, rather than upon others.

- Sustainable NEAs are not beggars
- Sustainable NEAs have an active faith in God as their provider
- Sustainable NEAs have a generous outlook toward others

Questions to consider:

- From where does our organization's income primarily come?
- What needs to change for our organization to be sustainable?
- What might be the impact of our organization not achieving self-sustainability?

10. NEAs model international partnership:

The body of Christ is universal and always bigger than the one part of it to which we personally belong. NEAs take their place alongside other NEAs within their Regional Alliance and the wider World Evangelical Alliance, sharing their resources, participating in gatherings, and praying for one another during times of special need.

- The body of Christ is bigger than what we see or understand
- The body of Christ is diverse in its makeup and ability – by God's design
- The body of Christ is the expression of God's grace to our world

Questions to consider:

- How is the relationship between our NEA and our Regional Alliance?
- In what ways can our NEA engage more with the World Evangelical Alliance?What can
- we do to support or enhance the ministries of NEAs around the world?