

Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry (2nd Edition)

Robert M. Welch
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This book might just as well be titled, “Almost Everything You Need to Know About Church Administration.” This is not designed to be a book on the shelf, but a book for everyday use. It is not so much designed to be read as it is to be used – it is more of a tool. It could be better described as a handbook, manual or encyclopedia and is designed for practitioners of church ministry.

The sub-title describes the nature of this volume – “Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry.” It is a second edition – an updated version of a well-known and well-used book. It is filled with resources to assist anyone involved in administration, including D.Min. Directors.

It is authored by Robert H. Welch (Ph.D., M.A.R.E.) a retired professor of Administration and Hugh Seborn Simpson Chair of Administration in Religious Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He is presently Chairman of the Christian Education Division and Professor of Church Administration at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. His book indicates expertise in both academics and church settings.

I find the coverage of the subject to be comprehensive. Titles of the chapters indicate the book's thoroughness: Introduction; Basics for Administration; Documents, Organizing the Church. Chapters 5-12 look at the key facets of the subject; (each begins with "Administering...: Personnel; Resources; Financial Resources; The Office; Risk Management; Planning; Programs; Support.")

This work is probably more geared to M.Div. students in ministry preparation than D.Min. students. It is definitely textbook quality. For leadership and management-type courses, it is a great review. Professors in courses dealing with this subject could find great ideas along with charts and graphs.

Each chapter begins with a reference from Scripture. The author's connection to Scripture indicates his biblical/theological context to be Evangelical (Southern Baptist). The chapters end with an excellent review of the content.

There are many strong points throughout. I appreciated that the book was laid out in a very academic style with objectives clearly stated (p. 5) for the leadership of the administration's responsibilities of the church. He includes many examples, forms, descriptions, etc., including a brief case study (p. 36). I found the definition sections to be both academic and practical; for example, Introduction to Management with a description of the various theories (pp. 7-13). The Dynamics of Leadership (pp. 38-46) chapter is superb. The chapters reveal an overview of Biblical, Theological and Practical Issues. His work on church polity was excellent.

Welch makes a point and plea for the need for seminaries to enlarge and enhance courses on this subject. He uses research carried out with 148 schools from ATS and

TRACS. He did this by going to each school to see what is offered in courses about Church Administration. He found the following in the study: Twenty-one institutions required a church administration course; thirty-one institutions required a leadership course that had little to do with administrative skills development; four institutions required both an administrative and leadership course; nine schools required an elective that could have included an administration course; two schools required an elective that could have included a leadership course; fourteen institutions offered a church administration course that could be taken as a free elective if the M.Div. student chose (p. ix).

I found several sections of the book to be very helpful and demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the book. The attention to detail is clearly seen.

The first was a review of theories (pp. 40-47) of leadership. Nothing new, but it is a review of categories of leadership theories: Traits Situational and Behavioral, Under Behavioral Theories, one gets a reminder of McGregor's Theory X/Theory Y, Levin's Leader Continuum, and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid and Likert. Four System. Welch. Applying principles from their principles, he identifies four dysfunctional leadership style.

The Showman; The Doubting Thomas; the Monk, and the Control Freak. Anyone in administration for a long period of time can probably put names on all these personalities.

Another example is found in Chapter Four, p. 66, where the author has a section on "Developing an Organizational Scheme for the Church (Institution). He presents

different ways to organize by style, by sizes, by function. He gives practical application to these theories. By style, Welch refers to formal or informal, centralized, nonorganization (no one central line of authority or responsibility). His philosophy for a staff (p. 77) is excellent and is applicable to not only churches, but to academics.

This volume gives great attention to details and the emphasis is found throughout the book. For example, he gives a chart with all terms needed in the housekeeping of a facility (p. 210) and another chart describing in detail the tasks related to proper care of a facility.

He has a detailed chart on which files are to be kept indefinitely and permanently and those to be kept for lesser periods of time. He goes even to the point of files to be kept seven years, three years, as long as the record is applicable and in use.

As a Christian Educator, I was pleased to see a section on Administering Programs of Discipleship (Chapter 11, Administering Program Ministries).

I would recommend this book as a text in a Masters of Divinity. I recommend it to D.Min. students as a handbook and guide. I recommend this book to D.Min. Directors for their own use.

I conclude by my strong feeling that this book does a great job in exegeting the church. Often our students can exegete the text, but fall short in exegeting the church and the people in it.