



Lewis Center
for Church Leadership

Leading Ideas

November 8, 2006

Deal with People

By Lovett H. Weems, Jr.

Have you noticed how frequently one person can cause a problem in an organization? The response often is to develop a policy for everyone in order to solve the dilemma with one person. Most of us wish to avoid conflict, so people often are reluctant to deal directly with the problem person. As a result, a policy is designed instead of dealing with the real problem. Almost never do these policies serve the organization well.

Here are some examples from church life: A denominational body set tenure limits on all staff as a method of dismissing one ineffective staff person. A school tied faculty paychecks to receipt of student grades because one teacher never turned grades in on time. A small membership church established a mandatory rotation system for officers to change some entrenched leaders. A large membership church developed a cumbersome written reporting system for all staff because a few staff did not do their work.

Surely there is some redeeming merit in each of these policies. Yet such policies are often not appropriate. Policies should serve the best interests of the total organization, quite apart from a few individuals. Total group policies should not serve as an excuse to avoid facing squarely the real problem. It is simply not fair to impose unnecessary policies on everyone because of the actions of one or a few people.