

EVALUATING MODERN CHURCH ADMINISTRATION THROUGH ACTS 6:1–7: A BIBLICAL AND PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CONTEMPORARY CHURCH LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

Church administration has become increasingly demanding as contemporary congregations grow in size, organizational complexity and social diversity. Pastors and other church leaders are expected to preach, teach, counsel, supervise staff, manage finances, coordinate programmes, respond to welfare needs, resolve conflicts and provide strategic direction. These responsibilities raise an important question: how can the church preserve its spiritual identity while developing sound administrative practices? This article evaluates modern church administration through Acts 6:1–7 and proposes the passage as a practical biblical guide for

contemporary church leadership. The study adopts a qualitative theological approach, combining exegetical reading of Acts 6:1–7 with critical engagement with literature on church leadership, administration, conflict management, servant leadership and organizational development. The study argues that the crisis concerning the daily distribution to widows was not simply a minor disagreement but an administrative challenge arising in a rapidly growing and culturally diverse Christian community. The apostles responded by listening to the complaint, recognizing the structural problem, consulting the congregation, establishing leadership criteria, delegating responsibility and protecting their primary responsibility for prayer and the ministry of the Word. The article identifies ten administrative principles from the passage: mission-centered leadership, attentive listening, equity, participatory decision-making, competence-based appointment, delegation, accountability, conflict transformation, teamwork and continuous evaluation. It further proposes the ACTS administrative model—Accountability, Consultation and Communication, Teamwork and Task Delegation, and Spirituality and Service—as a practical framework for today's church. The article concludes that effective church administration is neither a secular intrusion into ministry nor a substitute for spiritual leadership. Rather, when administration is shaped by biblical values, competent structures can protect unity, strengthen service, reduce avoidable conflict and enable the church to fulfil its mission more faithfully.

Keywords: *church administration, Acts 6:1–7, church leadership, delegation, servant leadership, conflict management, pastoral leadership, contemporary church.*

Introduction

The church is a spiritual community, but it is also a community that must organize people, time, money, information and material resources. Whenever people gather around a common mission, questions of leadership and administration arise. A local congregation may have only a few members, while another may have thousands spread across several branches. Both congregations require some form of administration. The difference is that the larger church normally faces more complicated questions of staffing, finance, welfare, communication, records, facilities, programmes and leadership coordination. The contemporary church therefore cannot afford to treat administration as an unimportant activity that can be left to chance.

The relationship between spirituality and administration is particularly important in Christian ministry. In some church settings, administrative language can sound too corporate, and leaders may fear that planning, budgeting, delegation or accountability will make the church less spiritual. At the other extreme, a church can become so occupied with structures, programmes, money and institutional expansion that its spiritual purpose is weakened. The central concern is not whether the church should be administered, because every organized church is administered in one way or another. The more

important question is what kind of administration is consistent with the church's identity and mission.

Acts 6:1–7 offers an unusually helpful biblical case study. The early Jerusalem church experienced remarkable numerical growth, but growth brought pressure. The Hellenistic believers complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. The apostles did not dismiss the complaint as unspiritual, nor did they attempt to carry the entire burden themselves. They gathered the community, explained the problem, proposed a division of responsibilities and required the selection of people whose character and competence were recognized by the community (Acts 6:1–4). The narrative then reports that the proposal pleased the whole group and that the ministry continued to grow (Acts 6:5–7).

The administrative importance of the passage has attracted sustained scholarly attention. Ngele and Peters (2019) interpret the crisis as a problem of inequity and fair treatment that threatened the cohesion of the Jerusalem community. Breed and Breed (2010) caution against assuming too quickly that Acts 6 simply records the formal creation of the later office of deacon; they emphasize instead the dynamic work of the Spirit in a growing church that needed to respond to practical service problems. Pao (2011) places the episode within Luke's wider concern with table fellowship and social relationships. More recent studies continue to identify the passage as relevant to delegation, conflict management, participatory leadership and church organization (Mundhluri, 2026; Sihombing et al., 2024).

This article therefore approaches Acts 6 neither as a simple recipe for church management nor as a proof-text for modern organizational theories. The text belongs to a particular historical and theological setting, and contemporary churches must respect that setting. At the same time, biblical narratives can provide principles that illuminate present challenges when they are interpreted carefully. The purpose of this study is to evaluate modern church administration in the light of Acts 6:1–7 and to develop a practical framework that can assist pastors, elders, deacons, ministry coordinators and other church administrators.

The central argument is that the administrative response in Acts 6 demonstrates a form of leadership that is simultaneously spiritual, participatory, accountable and practical. The apostles recognized a legitimate institutional problem, involved the congregation, created a workable division of labour and ensured that the leaders selected for the task possessed recognized character and wisdom. The solution did not diminish the spiritual mission of the church. Instead, it protected that mission by preventing administrative demands from consuming the apostles' primary calling. This balance has direct significance for churches today.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The broad purpose of this study is to evaluate contemporary church administration through the administrative experience recorded in Acts 6:1–7. The study specifically seeks to:

- examine the administrative crisis that emerged in the Jerusalem church;
- analyze the leadership response of the apostles to the complaint of the Hellenistic believers;
- identify administrative and leadership principles embedded in Acts 6:1–7;
- evaluate the relevance of those principles to contemporary church administration;
- develop a practical administrative framework for today's church; and
- demonstrate how sound administration can support rather than compete with the spiritual mission of the church.

Research Questions

What administrative challenges are evident in Acts 6:1–7?

How did the apostles respond to the complaint concerning the daily distribution?

What principles of leadership, delegation and conflict management emerge from the passage?

How can these principles be responsibly applied to contemporary church administration?

What practical administrative model can be developed from Acts 6:1–7 for today's church?

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative theological research design. It combines exegetical analysis of Acts 6:1–7 with a critical review of scholarly literature on leadership, church administration, conflict management and practical theology. The exegetical component considers the literary movement of the passage, its historical and social setting, the problem that generated the complaint, the apostles' response and the outcome recorded in Acts 6:7. The literature component places the biblical interpretation in conversation with modern scholarship rather than treating the biblical text as an isolated administrative manual.

The study uses purposive engagement with books, peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly studies that address Acts 6, Christian leadership, servant leadership, conflict management and practical theology. Particular attention is given to studies that challenge simplistic readings of Acts 6, since a useful administrative guide must acknowledge both what the text says and what it does not say. The approach is therefore interpretive and evaluative rather than merely descriptive.

The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, the passage is read closely to identify the administrative problem and the sequence of actions taken by the apostles. Second, those actions are interpreted within the wider theological and organizational context of Luke–Acts. Third, the resulting principles are translated into contemporary administrative practices, with attention to the dangers of forcing an ancient narrative directly into modern organizational structures. The aim is not to claim that the

first-century church had modern boards, finance departments or human-resource offices. Rather, the aim is to identify enduring leadership values that can guide the design of such structures today.

Conceptualizing Modern Church Administration

Administration refers broadly to the processes by which an organization plans, coordinates, directs, implements and evaluates its activities. In a church, administration cannot be reduced to paperwork. It includes the stewardship of people, finances, facilities, programmes, information and institutional relationships. It also includes the processes through which leaders make decisions, assign responsibilities, resolve disputes and account for resources.

Modern church administration should therefore be understood as stewardship in an organizational form. The administrator is not simply a person who makes the institution run efficiently; the administrator is a steward of a community whose resources and activities are directed toward a religious mission. This distinction matters because efficiency by itself is not the highest value of Christian administration. A church could be highly efficient while being unjust, manipulative or spiritually empty. Christian administration must therefore ask both whether something works and whether it is faithful, just, transparent and consistent with the character of Christian service.

In practical terms, contemporary church administration covers leadership structures, membership records, staff supervision, budgeting, financial controls, welfare

services, property management, communication, education, evangelism, discipleship, safeguarding, event planning, conflict management and leadership development. The larger the congregation becomes the more important role clarity and institutional systems become. Without clear systems, responsibility becomes personalized, decisions become difficult to audit and leaders become vulnerable to fatigue and accusations of favoritism.

Northouse (2022) explains leadership in terms of processes through which individuals influence groups toward a common goal. Church administration extends this insight by asking how influence is translated into systems, responsibilities and coordinated action. Osmer (2008), from the perspective of practical theology, also emphasizes the importance of interpreting situations carefully before deciding what faithful action requires. These perspectives are useful for Acts 6 because the apostles did not respond impulsively. They first recognized what was happening, interpreted the significance of the complaint and then created a response appropriate to the situation.

The church must consequently resist two administrative errors. The first is administrative neglect, in which leaders assume that prayer and preaching remove the need for systems, procedures and accountability. The second is administrative domination, in which procedures become so powerful that the people and mission of the church are treated merely as organizational variables. Acts 6 provides a model of balance: practical service is taken seriously, but the

entire response remains ordered toward the church's spiritual mission.

The Historical and Literary Setting of Acts 6:1–7

Acts 6 occurs at a significant point in Luke's account of the growth of the early Christian community. The church in Jerusalem had moved from a small group of disciples to a rapidly expanding community. Acts repeatedly links the growth of the church with the proclamation of the Word, the work of the Holy Spirit and the formation of a shared life among believers. Growth, however, does not eliminate human differences. On the contrary, growth brings more people, more expectations and more opportunities for misunderstanding.

The distinction between Hellenists and Hebrews is important. The Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, while the Hebrews were more closely associated with the Aramaic-speaking Jewish environment of Jerusalem. The exact social composition of the two groups is debated, but the narrative clearly presents a cultural distinction within the Christian community. The complaint therefore concerns more than food. It reveals how differences in language, background and social identity can become administratively significant when resources are distributed unevenly or are perceived to be distributed unevenly.

Pao (2011) places Acts 6 within Luke's wider interest in table fellowship. Eating together and sharing material resources are not marginal issues in Luke–Acts; they are expressions of community. Consequently, the daily distribution to widows had theological significance. The

question was whether the new community would embody the equality and mutual care that it proclaimed.

The passage is also significant because of the way it connects growth and institutional adaptation. The church did not interpret growth as proof that existing arrangements were automatically adequate. A system that may have worked at an earlier stage had become insufficient. The complaint exposed the need for a new distribution of responsibilities. This is a common reality in contemporary churches. Structures that work for a congregation of fifty may fail when membership reaches five hundred or five thousand.

Breed and Breed (2010) offer an important corrective to the common assumption that Acts 6 should be read simply as the formal institution of the diaconate. Their analysis draws attention to diakonia as service and to the dynamic activity of the Spirit within a church facing the practical pressures created by growth. This caution is valuable for modern administration: the point of the passage is not to copy a first-century organizational chart but to understand how a Spirit-led community responds responsibly to emerging needs.

Exegetical Analysis of Acts 6:1–7

Growth and the Emergence of Administrative Pressure

Acts 6:1 begins with growth: "the disciples were increasing in number." The first administrative lesson is therefore almost paradoxical. Growth is a blessing, but growth also creates pressure. When the number of people increases, informal systems that once depended on personal relationships become less reliable. Information

becomes harder to circulate, needs become more diverse and responsibilities multiply.

A contemporary church should not wait until a crisis occurs before reviewing its administrative structures. Growth should trigger questions about whether there are enough trained leaders, whether welfare procedures are clear, whether financial controls are adequate, whether complaints can be heard and whether responsibilities are appropriately distributed. In this sense, Acts 6 encourages anticipatory administration: leaders should notice when an institution is becoming more complex and adapt before small weaknesses become major divisions.

The Complaint and the Problem of Equity

The Hellenistic believers complained because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. The text does not require us to decide whether the neglect was deliberate discrimination or an unintended consequence of administrative weakness. What matters for leadership is that a significant group perceived that the system was unfair. Perceived injustice can damage trust even when leaders did not intend to cause harm.

Ngele and Peters (2019) emphasize inequity and lack of fair play as threats to the consolidation of the early Christian community. Their observation is particularly relevant to churches in plural and culturally diverse societies. When people believe that opportunities, welfare, appointments or resources are distributed according to ethnicity, family connection, social status or personal loyalty, the problem quickly becomes larger

than the original issue. It becomes a question of belonging and trust.

The modern administrator must therefore distinguish between intention and impact. A leader may say, "I did not mean to discriminate," yet the affected members may still have experienced a pattern of exclusion. Good administration listens to the experience of those affected and investigates the structure that produced it.

Listening Before Acting

The apostles' response is striking because they did not begin by attacking the complainants. They acknowledged the practical problem and brought the disciples together. This suggests that listening is itself an administrative practice. Leaders cannot solve problems that they refuse to hear.

Listening does not mean that every complaint is automatically correct. It means that complaints are treated as information requiring examination. Contemporary church leaders should establish safe and respectful channels through which members can raise concerns. These may include pastoral meetings, ministry reviews, welfare committees, suggestion mechanisms, confidential reporting procedures and congregational consultations where appropriate.

A church that has no legitimate mechanism for complaints; may unintentionally encourage members to use rumours, social media, factional meetings, or informal power networks. Formal listening mechanisms can reduce this risk by bringing concerns into a setting

where they can be investigated and addressed responsibly.

Consultation and Participatory Leadership

Acts 6:2 records the apostles gathering the multitude of disciples. The solution was therefore not imposed secretly by a small leadership circle. The community was brought into the process. This does not mean that every decision in a church must be decided by popular vote. It does mean that leaders should recognize the wisdom, experience and legitimate interests of the community they serve.

Participatory leadership is especially important when a decision affects trust. Members are more likely to accept a difficult administrative change when they understand the problem, see the criteria used and believe that the process was fair. Contemporary leaders can apply this principle by communicating the reasons behind major decisions, inviting relevant feedback and explaining how responsibilities will be assigned.

Sihombing et al. (2024) identify collaboration and integrated service as significant features of the leadership response in Acts 6. Mundhluri (2026) likewise identifies communal consultation as one of the leadership lessons that can be learned from Acts. These observations reinforce the view that consultation in the passage is not incidental; it is part of the way the crisis was managed.

Delegation as a Leadership Responsibility

The apostles recognized that they could not personally administer every aspect of the church's practical life. They proposed the selection of seven persons to take responsibility for the daily distribution. The administrative principle is simple but profound: leaders should not confuse personal control with effective leadership.

Delegation becomes increasingly important as churches grow. A pastor who insists on personally approving every programme, counseling every member, handling every financial question, organizing every event and supervising every ministry may initially appear dedicated. Over time, however, such concentration creates bottlenecks, exhaustion and dependence on one individual. It also prevents other members from developing their gifts.

Strategic delegation differs from abandonment. The apostles did not say that the matter was no longer important. They ensured that competent people were appointed and that the community recognized them. Delegation therefore involves assigning responsibility while maintaining appropriate oversight. Modern church leaders can delegate welfare, education, youth ministry, communications, facilities, finance and programme coordination while retaining overall governance and accountability.

Mundhluri (2026) explicitly identifies strategic delegation in Acts 6 as a means of preventing leadership burnout and clarifying roles. This is highly relevant to

contemporary ministry, where emotional exhaustion and excessive pastoral workload are common concerns. Delegation is not a sign that a pastor cares less; properly practiced, it is a way of creating a healthier ministry system.

Character and Competence in Leadership Selection

The seven were not selected merely because a task needed to be filled. Acts 6:3 describes people of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom. This provides a strong principle for contemporary appointments. Administrative competence is necessary, but competence without character can become dangerous. A person may be talented with money, technology or organizational systems and still be unsuitable for leadership if integrity is weak.

The order of qualifications also reminds the church that administration is a moral activity. Those entrusted with resources and vulnerable people require trustworthiness. Contemporary selection processes should therefore consider character, reliability, emotional maturity, communication skills, technical competence and commitment to the church's mission.

This principle challenges appointment practices based primarily on family relationships, social influence, financial contributions or personal loyalty. Such practices can weaken institutional trust. A church that wants credible administration must develop transparent criteria for leadership selection and apply those criteria consistently.

Preserving the Core Spiritual Mission

The apostles' state that they should not abandon the ministry of the Word in order to "wait on tables" (Acts 6:2–4). The statement should not be interpreted as a dismissal of practical service. The very problem being addressed concerned the care of vulnerable widows, and the chosen leaders were respected because the task mattered. Rather, the apostles were identifying different forms of service and ensuring that responsibilities were distributed according to calling and capacity.

This distinction remains important today. Preaching, teaching, pastoral care, administration and practical service are all necessary, but one person does not have to perform every function. A healthy church recognizes different gifts and coordinates them toward a common mission. The pastor may concentrate more heavily on preaching and spiritual oversight while trained administrators, elders, deacons and ministry leaders coordinates practical responsibilities.

The deeper principle is mission protection. Administration should create space for ministry rather than consume the ministry. If a pastor spends so much time resolving avoidable financial disputes, correcting poor records or personally organizing routine programmes that prayer, teaching and pastoral care are neglected, the administrative system has failed.

The Appointment Process and Community Ownership

The congregation accepted the proposal, selected the seven and presented them to the apostles. This sequence

suggests a shared process of recognition and commissioning. Leadership is strengthened when the community can see why a person was chosen and can recognize the person's credibility.

Modern churches can apply this through nomination procedures, interviews, background checks where appropriate, ministry training, clear job descriptions and defined terms of service. Such procedures may sound formal, but they protect both leaders and congregations. Clear processes reduce accusations of favoritism and help leaders understand what is expected of them.

The Outcome: Growth after Administrative Reform

Acts 6:7 provides the outcome: the Word of God continued to spread and the number of disciples increased. The narrative therefore connects administrative resolution with mission continuity. The church did not grow because administration replaced spiritual ministry. It grew because the practical crisis was addressed in a way that protected the community's mission.

This is an important correction to the idea that administration is secondary to "real ministry." When poor administration causes repeated conflict, financial suspicion, neglected members or leadership exhaustion, it directly affects ministry. Good administration is therefore a form of stewardship. It creates conditions in which preaching, discipleship, fellowship, welfare and mission can flourish.

Theoretical Framework Servant Leadership Theory

Servant leadership provides a useful lens for interpreting Acts 6 because the leadership response begins with service to people rather than the preservation of authority. Greenleaf (1977) famously argued that the servant-leader begins with a desire to serve and that leadership becomes legitimate when it advances the well-being of those being served. Christian leadership adds an explicitly theological dimension to this idea because Jesus' model of leadership places greatness in service rather than domination.

Acts 6 reflects this orientation. The apostles were not concerned simply with protecting their own status. They were concerned that vulnerable widows were being served fairly and that the church's mission was not damaged by internal tension. The appointment of the seven also empowered other members to exercise meaningful responsibility. Servant leadership therefore helps explain why delegation and care belong together rather than being opposites.

For contemporary churches, servant leadership means that authority should be exercised for the good of the community. Leaders should ask not only, "What gives me control?" but also, "What structure will best serve the people and mission entrusted to me?" This changes the tone of administration. Policies become instruments of stewardship rather than mechanisms of domination.

Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation is also relevant because the problem in Acts 6 was not resolved by suppressing disagreement. The complaint revealed a structural weakness in the way resources were distributed. The response therefore altered the structure by assigning responsibility to additional leaders. In this sense, the solution addressed both the immediate grievance and the organizational condition that allowed the grievance to emerge.

Dajwan and Kanu (2022) interpret Acts 6 in relation to intra-church dialogue and conflict resolution in African contexts. Their emphasis is useful for churches where ethnic, linguistic or social differences can become sources of tension. A conflict-sensitive church does not pretend that differences do not exist. Instead, it creates procedures that allow differences to be discussed without destroying fellowship.

Conflict transformation also requires attention to relationships. Administrative procedures cannot repair every relationship, but transparent procedures can reduce suspicion. When people understand how decisions are made and believe that rules apply consistently, conflict is less likely to become personalized. Thus, administration can function as a peace building instrument.

Major Administrative Principles for the Contemporary Church

Mission-Centred Administration

The first principle is that administration must serve mission. A church should not measure success only by the number of committees, programmes, buildings or meetings it operates. Every administrative structure should be connected to worship, discipleship, evangelism, pastoral care, community service or another legitimate expression of the church's mission. Mission-centred administration prevents bureaucracy from becoming an end in itself.

Equity and Fairness

The complaint in Acts 6 demonstrates that fairness is central to community life. Contemporary churches should develop transparent criteria for distributing welfare, scholarships, ministry opportunities and institutional resources. Equity does not always mean giving everyone exactly the same thing. It means making decisions according to fair and publicly defensible principles.

Listening and Communication

Leaders should create channels through which members can raise concerns without fear of retaliation. Communication should also move in the opposite direction: leaders must explain important decisions clearly. Silence creates room for rumours, while transparent communication builds trust.

Competence-Based Appointments

People entrusted with church responsibilities should be selected because they possess appropriate character and competence. Spiritual maturity and technical skill should not be treated as competing qualities. A finance officer needs integrity and financial competence; a counselor needs compassion and appropriate training; a ministry coordinator needs both commitment and organizational ability.

Delegation and Shared Responsibility

A church should deliberately distribute responsibility. Delegation creates opportunities for members to serve according to their gifts, reduces leadership bottlenecks and prepares future leaders. It should be accompanied by clear job descriptions, reporting relationships and evaluation.

Accountability and Transparency

Church resources belong to the mission of the church and should therefore be managed responsibly. Financial records, procurement procedures, approvals and reporting systems should be clear. Accountability protects both the institution and its leaders.

Conflict Management

Conflict should be addressed while it is still manageable. Leaders should avoid both extremes: ignoring complaints until they become destructive and treating every disagreement as rebellion. A wise approach listens,

investigates, mediates and reforms structures where necessary.

Leadership Development

Acts 6 demonstrates that a healthy church creates new leadership capacity. Contemporary churches should invest in mentoring, theological education, administrative training and practical ministry experience. Leadership development should not begin only when an office becomes vacant.

Teamwork

Church administration works best when people understand that they are contributing to one mission. Teams should have complementary responsibilities and regular opportunities to review their work. Collaboration should replace unnecessary competition between departments.

Continuous Evaluation

No administrative structure should be treated as permanently perfect. Churches should periodically ask whether their structures are serving members effectively. Evaluation may include financial reviews, programme assessments, leadership feedback, member surveys and strategic planning sessions.

The ACTS Model for Modern Church Administration

On the basis of the analysis above, this study proposes the ACTS Model as a practical framework for

contemporary church administration. The model does not claim that the apostles used the modern term "ACTS." Rather, the acronym is a contemporary teaching device that summarizes four interconnected principles evident in the passage.

A — Accountability

Accountability means that leaders accept responsibility for decisions, resources and delegated tasks. In a church, accountability should operate at several levels. Pastors and senior leaders should be accountable to appropriate governing structures; committees should report to the church leadership; finance teams should maintain records and submit reports; and ministry leaders should evaluate programmes against agreed objectives.

Accountability should not be confused with suspicion. Its purpose is to protect trust. A transparent financial system, for example, protects the treasurer from false accusations as much as it protects the congregation from misuse of funds. Similarly, written procedures for welfare distribution protect both beneficiaries and administrators.

C — Consultation and Communication

The second component is consultation and communication. Acts 6 shows the apostles bringing the disciples into the process. Contemporary leaders should communicate the nature of problems, invite relevant input and explain decisions. Consultation is particularly valuable when a decision affects a large part of the

Congregation Or Has The Potential To Generate Mistrust

Communication should be regular rather than crisis-driven. Churches can use announcements, meetings, newsletters, digital platforms and ministry reports. The medium may change, but the principle remains the same: people should not have to rely on rumours to understand what their church is doing.

T — Teamwork and Task Delegation

The third component is teamwork and task delegation. The apostles did not attempt to solve the problem by doing everything themselves. The selection of the seven demonstrates the value of shared responsibility. Contemporary churches should define areas of responsibility and appoint capable people to lead them.

Delegation should be accompanied by authority. It is unreasonable to give someone responsibility while denying the resources or decision-making authority necessary to fulfil that responsibility. Leaders should therefore define what a ministry leader may decide independently, what requires approval and how reporting will occur.

Teamwork also requires coordination. Separate departments should not operate as isolated kingdoms. Finance, welfare, youth, education, missions and administration should understand how their work contributes to the larger mission of the church.

S — Spirituality and Service

The final component is spirituality and service. Administration must remain rooted in the church's spiritual identity. Prayer, Scripture, worship, discipleship, compassion and service should shape administrative decisions. This prevents the church from adopting organizational practices that may be efficient but inconsistent with Christian ethics.

At the same time, spirituality should not become an excuse for administrative disorder. Prayer does not remove the need for accurate records; faith does not remove the need for financial accountability; and pastoral authority does not eliminate the need for delegation. Spirituality and sound administration belong together when both are directed toward faithful service.

A Practical Administrative Guide for Today's Church

The following guide translates the ACTS model into practical questions that a local church can use during leadership meetings, annual reviews or strategic planning.

Area	Key Question	Recommended Practice	Biblical Principle
Leadership	Who is responsible for what?	Use clear roles and reporting lines.	Delegation
Finance	How are resources controlled?	Budgeting, dual approvals, records and periodic review.	Stewardship
Welfare	Who receives assistance and	Transparent criteria and	Equity

	why?	documented distribution.	
Complaints	Can members safely raise concerns?	Create clear and respectful complaint channels.	Listening
Appointments	Why was this person selected?	Use character, competence and clear criteria.	Good reputation and wisdom
Conflict	How are disputes handled?	Listen, investigate, mediate and reform structures where needed.	Reconciliation
Communication	How are decisions explained?	Regular, accurate and accessible communication.	Consultation
Leadership development	Who is being prepared for future service?	Mentoring, training and supervised responsibility.	Shared ministry
Evaluation	Is the structure still working?	Periodic review of ministries and systems.	Adaptation
Spiritual life	Does administration support the mission?	Protect prayer, teaching, worship and pastoral care.	Mission focus

Application to Contemporary Church Challenges

Church Growth

Many churches experience growth without a corresponding expansion of leadership structures. A

pastor may continue to supervise every ministry personally because that arrangement worked when the congregation was smaller. Acts 6 suggests that growth should lead to structural adaptation. As membership increases, churches should identify new responsibilities and develop leaders capable of carrying them.

The practical question is not simply, "How many people attend?" It is also, "Can our present structure care for these people fairly?" Growth should therefore be accompanied by leadership development, welfare systems, financial controls, communication structures and clear ministry coordination.

Financial Administration

Financial administration is one of the most sensitive areas of contemporary church life. Trust can be damaged quickly when members believe that offerings, donations or project funds are not properly accounted for. Acts 6 does not provide a modern accounting system, but its concern for fair distribution supports the wider principle that resources intended for ministry should reach their intended purpose.

A contemporary church should therefore prepare budgets, separate authorization from payment where practical, maintain supporting documents, reconcile accounts and provide appropriate reports. Independent review or audit may also be appropriate depending on the size and legal context of the church. Such practices are not evidence of weak faith. They are expressions of stewardship.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

The distinction between Hellenists and Hebrews makes Acts 6 especially relevant to multicultural churches. Contemporary congregations may contain people from different ethnic groups, languages, regions and social backgrounds. Diversity can enrich the church, but it can also create misunderstanding if leadership positions and resources appear concentrated in one group.

Leaders should therefore monitor representation, communicate clearly and avoid practices that create the impression that one cultural group owns the church. This does not require artificial equality in every position. It requires fairness, transparency and a willingness to recognize patterns that members experience as exclusionary.

Leadership Burnout

A modern pastor may be expected to preach several times a week, attend meetings, counsel members, visit hospitals, oversee staff, manage projects, respond to emergencies and maintain an online presence. When all these responsibilities are concentrated in one person, exhaustion becomes likely.

Acts 6 offers a strong corrective. The apostles recognized that they could not carry every responsibility and still give adequate attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Contemporary leaders should therefore distinguish essential personal responsibilities from tasks that can be delegated. Delegation becomes a means of protecting both leadership health and ministry quality.

Technology and Digital Administration

Contemporary churches also administer information digitally. Membership databases, online giving, live streaming, messaging platforms, electronic records and social media have created new opportunities but also new responsibilities. Digital systems require policies concerning privacy, access, data accuracy, financial security and communication. Although Acts 6 obviously does not address digital technology, its principles of responsible stewardship, role clarity and accountability remain applicable.

A church should know who can access sensitive information, who approves online financial transactions and who speaks officially on behalf of the church. Digital convenience should not replace responsible governance.

Managing Conflict before Division

Church conflict is not necessarily evidence that a church has failed. Communities consist of people with different histories, expectations and interests. The danger comes when conflict is denied, personalized or allowed to become destructive. Acts 6 shows a healthier approach: a complaint is heard, the issue is discussed, responsibility is redistributed and the community accepts the solution.

Igir and Sitepu (2023) identify listening, self-evaluation, mediation and delegation as important elements in the apostles' response. The lesson is practical: leaders should resist the temptation to label every complainant as rebellious. Some complaints reveal genuine weaknesses in systems. Wise leaders separate the tone of a complaint

from the substance of the problem and respond to the substance responsibly.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that Acts 6 is relevant to contemporary church administration because it presents leadership under pressure. The early church was not an idealized community without practical difficulties. Its growth produced complaints and exposed weaknesses in its distribution system. What makes the narrative significant is not the absence of conflict but the quality of the response.

The first major insight is that spiritual maturity does not eliminate administrative problems. The Jerusalem believers were followers of Christ, yet they still experienced tension around resources and cultural differences. Contemporary churches should therefore stop treating every administrative conflict as evidence that the people involved are spiritually defective. Some conflicts are created by inadequate structures, unclear responsibilities or poor communication. Spiritual maturity is demonstrated partly by the way a community responds to such problems.

The second insight is that leadership must be responsive. The apostles did not protect themselves by denying the complaint. They acknowledged the situation and initiated a process for change. This is especially important in contemporary churches where strong pastoral authority can sometimes make members reluctant to raise concerns. Authority is healthier when it is combined with openness to correction.

The third insight concerns delegation. The apostles' decision demonstrates that responsible leadership includes knowing what one should not personally do. In modern churches, this principle can transform ministry culture. Rather than building congregations around one personality, leaders can build teams and systems that allow many people to contribute. Such an approach also creates a pipeline for future leadership.

The fourth insight concerns the relationship between fairness and unity. Unity does not mean asking people to ignore perceived injustice for the sake of peace. Sustainable unity requires credible fairness. If one group repeatedly believes that it is overlooked, simply preaching unity will not solve the problem. Administrative structures must make fair participation visible and practical.

The fifth insight is that administration should protect mission. The apostles' concern about prayer and the ministry of the Word does not diminish practical service. Instead, it shows that different forms of ministry must be coordinated. The contemporary church can learn from this by clarifying which responsibilities belong to pastors, elders, deacons, administrators and ministry leaders. When roles are clear, leaders can focus on their strongest contributions while supporting one another.

Finally, Acts 6 suggests that organizational development is part of discipleship. The seven were not merely office holders; they were members of the community entrusted with service. Developing responsible leaders therefore forms people for ministry. A church that delegates well is not simply becoming more efficient; it is creating

opportunities for believers to exercise gifts, learn accountability and serve others.

Implications for Church Leadership in Nigeria and Other African Contexts

The lessons of Acts 6 are especially relevant in African church contexts where congregations may be deeply connected to ethnic, regional and linguistic identities. Churches often bring together people who have different experiences of social and political life. In such settings, administrative decisions can easily be interpreted through the lens of identity. A decision about employment, welfare, leadership or project location may therefore carry meanings beyond the immediate issue.

Church administrators should consequently pay attention to both actual fairness and the perception of fairness. Transparent criteria are important because they allow decisions to be evaluated on principles rather than rumours. Where a church has multiple cultural groups, leadership teams should also communicate deliberately across those groups and ensure that no group feels permanently marginalized.

The Nigerian context makes this particularly significant because many congregations operate within highly diverse social environments. A church that models fair administration can contribute to wider social trust. Its internal practices can teach members how to listen across differences, resolve grievances peacefully and distribute resources responsibly. In this sense, church administration can have a social witness beyond the walls of the congregation.

The same principle applies to financial stewardship. Churches that handle offerings and development funds transparently can strengthen confidence among members and the wider public. Where financial decisions are opaque, suspicion can become a major source of conflict. Therefore, clear reporting, appropriate internal controls, and accountable leadership are not merely technical matters they are therefore, part of the church's public credibility.

The African church also needs deliberate leadership succession. In some congregations, the identity of the church becomes closely tied to a founder or senior pastor. Acts 6 challenges this concentration by demonstrating the importance of recognizing and empowering additional leaders. Churches that train successors and distribute responsibilities are more likely to remain stable when leadership changes.

Challenges and Limitations in Applying Acts 6 to Modern Churches

The first limitation is historical difference. The church in Acts 6 existed in a first-century Jewish and Roman environment. Modern churches operate under very different legal, technological, economic and denominational conditions. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to claim that Acts 6 supplies a complete modern administrative constitution.

The second limitation is interpretive debate. Scholars disagree about the precise identity and function of the seven. Breed and Breed (2010), for example, question whether Acts 6 should be treated as the formal origin of

the later diaconal office. Pao (2011) also demonstrates that the passage raises interpretive questions that cannot be settled by simplistic readings. The present study therefore uses Acts 6 for principles rather than claiming that every modern administrative position can be directly derived from the passage.

The third limitation is the danger of selective application. Leaders may quote the passage to justify delegation while ignoring its emphasis on equity and communal consultation. Others may emphasize the apostles' ministry of the Word while undervaluing practical service. A faithful reading requires holding the elements together: spiritual mission, practical care, community participation, competent leadership and structural adaptation.

The fourth limitation concerns context. What is appropriate for a small rural congregation may not be appropriate for a large urban congregation, and denominational structures differ. The administrative guide proposed here should therefore be adapted rather than copied mechanically. The enduring principles are more important than any single organizational form.

Conclusion

Acts 6:1–7 presents a church experiencing both growth and difficulty. The complaint concerning the widows exposed an administrative weakness and a threat to communal trust. The apostles responded by listening, consulting the community, establishing criteria for responsible leadership, delegating the task and preserving their central commitment to prayer and the

ministry of the Word. The result was not institutional collapse but renewed ministry and continued growth.

The significance of this passage for contemporary church administration lies in its balance. The apostles did not choose between spirituality and administration. They recognized that practical administration was necessary precisely because the church was a spiritual community with real people and real needs. Their response demonstrates that good administration can protect unity, release leaders from unnecessary overload, empower members and support the mission of the church.

Modern churches therefore need administrative systems that are spiritually grounded and professionally responsible. Leaders should listen to members, distribute resources fairly, appoint people on the basis of character and competence, delegate appropriate responsibilities, maintain accountability and evaluate structures regularly. These practices are not foreign to Christian ministry. They are practical expressions of stewardship and service.

The ACTS Model proposed in this study—Accountability, Consultation and Communication, Teamwork and Task Delegation, and Spirituality and Service—offer a concise framework for translating the lessons of Acts 6 into contemporary practice. Its central message is straightforward: administration should serve people, protect mission and strengthen the community. When leadership is exercised in this way, the church is better positioned to manage growth, respond to conflict and provide credible Christian witness in a complex world.

Recommendations

1. Churches should establish clear administrative structures that correspond to their size, ministries and responsibilities. Structures should be reviewed whenever significant growth or organizational change occurs.
2. Pastors and senior leaders should deliberately delegate appropriate responsibilities rather than attempting to control every area of church activity. Delegation should include clear authority, reporting and accountability.
3. Churches should develop transparent procedures for welfare distribution and other resource-allocation decisions. Criteria should be known and applied consistently.
4. Leadership appointments should be based on character, spiritual maturity, competence and demonstrated reliability rather than merely on family relationships, financial status or personal loyalty.
5. Churches should create respectful mechanisms for receiving and investigating complaints. Members should be able to raise legitimate concerns without fear of humiliation or retaliation.
6. Regular leadership training should be provided in areas such as conflict management, financial stewardship, communication, and safeguarding, strategic planning and team leadership.
7. Churches should establish appropriate financial controls, including budgeting, documentation, and separation of duties where practical, regular reporting

and periodic independent review appropriate to the size of the congregation.

8. Churches should intentionally develop emerging leaders through mentoring and supervised ministry responsibilities. Leadership succession should be planned before a crisis occurs.

9. Churches in culturally diverse settings should pay particular attention to perceived and actual inequities in leadership, welfare and resource distribution.

10. Finally, churches should evaluate every administrative structure by asking whether it supports the spiritual and social mission of the congregation. Administration should remain a servant of ministry rather than becoming an end in itself.

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