Alignment

Are all our ministries walking the same path?

> *"Alignment is the arrangement of all ministries and staff around the same simple process."*
>
> Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church*

What Rainer and Geiger mean

Alignment means every ministry, from the nursery to the adult groups, uses the same path, so a family hears one way of growing instead of five. It also means leaders measure success by the whole process, not only by their own ministry's numbers. In a misaligned church, ministries compete for the same people, nights, volunteers and dollars, and each one quietly builds its own little church. The book's examples come mostly from churches with paid staff. At Pathway, alignment is mostly about volunteer ministry leaders and the Local Board of Administration (LBA).

Where Pathway stands

We have real strengths here. Pathway Trailblazers already uses trail language (Crawlers, Hikers, Navigators), which fits a church called Pathway and a path picture well. But our adult groups began at different times for different good reasons, each with its own pattern. Serving teams recruit separately from separate sign-up sheets. The bulletin, the newsletter, the website, the slides and the podcast all carry information, and nothing yet ties them to a common path. And the LBA mostly makes calendar and budget decisions one at a time, without a shared filter.

What alignment could look like here

1. **Start with the LBA.** When the board adopts the path, it also agrees to use it. Any request that comes to the board for money or a date answers one question first: which step of our path does this serve?
2. **Gather the ministry leaders twice a year.** A leaders' evening each August and January to pray, tell stories of people moving along the path, and plan the calendar together, so ministries don't collide.
3. **Write a one-page fit for every ministry.** The leader's guide template asks three things: which step this ministry serves, which step it points people toward, and what it might stop doing to serve the path better. Due September 30, 2027.
4. **Bring kids and youth onto the same path.** Andrea Smith and the Trailblazers team translate the four words for children and teens, so families hear one path at home, at church and in the car.

5. **Align our communication.** Tag every bulletin and newsletter item with its step. Build the "Our path" page on the website after Vision Sunday. Use the same picture and words on every channel.
6. **Recruit by the path.** Replace a dozen separate sign-up sheets with one "find your next step" form (a Custom Form on the website) that routes people to the right leader.
7. **Train every new leader in the path.** Add a short lesson to the volunteer training planned for learn.pathwaywes.com, so a new group or team leader learns the path along with the practical details.

A POSSIBLE TIMELINE

May 2027	The LBA adopts the path and the question it will ask of requests.
Aug 2027	First leaders' evening.
Sept 30, 2027	One-page fits are due from every ministry.
Fall 2027	Combined next-step form on the website; communication tagged by step.
Jan 2028	Second leaders' evening; the LBA reviews the fits.

WATCH FOR

- **Alignment confused with uniformity.** Band of Brothers and Wesleyan Women shouldn't become the same group. They should point in the same direction.
- **More meetings.** Done well, alignment lightens the load on volunteers because fewer requests compete for them. If it only adds meetings, we've missed it.
- **Forgetting who started things.** Many of our ministries exist because someone saw a need and acted. Aligning a ministry should honor that faithfulness and invite those founders into the conversation early.

TALK IT THROUGH

1. Where do two of our ministries compete for the same people, night or volunteers?
2. If a family attends worship, Trailblazers and a Life Group, do they hear one path or several?
3. What would make the one-page fit feel helpful to a ministry leader instead of like paperwork?

Source: Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: B&H, 2006).