

1. Why ReOrg?

The purpose of the Vineyard USA ReOrg process is to equip, encourage, and empower local church pastors for the work of ministry. To do this, it is necessary to refocus, resource, and reorganize Vineyard USA at every level, so we are intentionally structured as an interdependent community of churches to pursue the vocation God has given us for the next forty years.

Nearly forty years ago, what we know today as Vineyard USA began with a small group of friends and colleagues who shared a powerful vision of what church could be like with Jesus's theology and practice of the Kingdom of God as its white-hot center.

In the years since then, we have grown much as a movement. We have planted many hundreds of churches, spread across the nation and across the globe. We have made a profound contribution to the transformation of musical worship and the accessibility of prayer ministry in the wider church. We have disciplined thousands of leaders who have served the church and the world in innumerable ways.

The emergence of the Vineyard over the past forty years has been a work of the Holy Spirit. God has called our movement into existence, given it a unique combination of characteristics and gifts, and used it to bear much fruit.

As individual leaders in the midst of this movement of God's Spirit, we have each had to learn and grow much along the way. No doubt each of us can remember many moments when the power of the Holy Spirit has inspired us, filling us with enthusiasm to seek first the Kingdom, to plant and pastor our churches, to develop leaders and grow our congregations. We have faithfully responded to the call and taken to the fields, wherever we found ourselves.

Forty years since we set out on this journey as a movement, the fields are no less white for the harvest. If anything, there is a greater need today in the church and the world for the gifts that the Vineyard brings.

But it is no secret that the world has changed in all sorts of dramatic ways in the last forty years. We know that there are new and different challenges to reaching people and more demands on our pastors than there ever were in the past. Even though we all know that life itself involves constant change, the pace of change is now quicker than ever. As individuals, our pastors have sought to adapt to changes as they came, but as a community of churches, we may have left too much to each individual church. We may have assumed too much that each could "plough their own field" without the necessary support and resources. While we have been there for each other in times of trouble, we have not always been there for one another day to day to help avoid the trouble in the first place.

All of this means that, if we are to continue to be faithful to our calling, we have to be better at responding to the changing culture around us, and smarter in how we do so. We have responded to God's calling for the last forty years. We now need to refocus on how we continue to do so for

the next forty. As a people of the presence of God, we have to pray, “Lord, lead us forward,” and then be ready to move with His presence where He leads. We need to be faithful to our characteristic gifts and values, and find a fresh way to express them in a changing, challenging world.

For decades we have been humbled and grateful for all that God has grown and developed in the Vineyard. From the perspective of church history, we are a very young movement. In terms of the Church universal we are very small. But as John Wimber famously insisted “the Vineyard is just a thread in a great tapestry, but it is a thread of God’s weaving.”

Our history makes it seem evident that the Lord has long loved and favored the Vineyard, promising, as Isaiah 27 has it, “to sing over it, to watch and to water it, to guard and protect it from harm.” But we have indeed come to an intersection – a crossroads – with the realization that what got us to this point will not take to the places that the Lord is leading us next.

In light of our changing world, we must re-express our vocation and our values for new generations. While this need for re-expression comes with challenges, it comes even more as an enormous opportunity. We need to respond to the Lord’s leadership as He equips the Vineyard for the next forty years of ministry, readying us for the expansion of the Church and the advance of the Kingdom. In other words, everything has changed while nothing has changed.

Many months ago now, Phil Strout, our National Director, felt very sure that the Lord was challenging the Vineyard to gratefully consider its past and look bravely to its future. He called the Vineyard to heed the words of Jeremiah 6:16 and “stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, walk in it, and find rest.”

It was in order to ask and answer these questions that Phil and the Vineyard USA Executive Team commissioned the ongoing ReOrg process. From the very beginning, the purpose of the Vineyard USA ReOrg process has been to equip, encourage, and empower our local church pastors for the work of ministry. To do this, it is necessary to refocus, resource, and reorganize Vineyard USA at every level, so we are intentionally structured as an interdependent community of churches to pursue the vocation God has given us for the next forty years.

2. Reality Check

John Wimber famously used to remind pastors and leaders that “our job is to be about our Father’s business,” and then ask them “So...how’s business?”

As we began the ReOrg process in early 2020, we asked the same question of Vineyard USA. Here are a few of the serious challenges we encountered.

1. We are a church planting movement that is planting new churches while closing others. We have planted 165 churches since 2013 – an average of 20 a year. Whether that’s enough or not, we have closed or disassociated more churches than we’ve opened – 171 closed or disassociated since 2013. For all our efforts, the number of our congregations has actually gone down by six. In 2013, we had 554 churches and an estimated 30 additional sites. In 2020, we have 535 churches and 43 sites. We are not growing as a movement, but rather running hard up a down escalator. *Churches close for a variety of reasons, but we want to keep as many as possible open whenever we can.*
2. As a movement, we are aging. Over a third of our senior pastors – 193 – are 60 years old or older. That means we should be helping them identify successors, as well as to make viable plans for their retirement. There are churches which have been built over the years, that we want to keep and keep building on. In order to do this, we need to develop culture and structures that support the development of a robust leadership pipeline.
3. More worrying for a movement committed to evangelistic growth is how limited our growth actually is. Nearly half of our churches – 47% – have less than 100 people attending. While this fact in and of itself is not necessarily a problem, we must also consider the fact that 101 of our churches did not baptize a single person in 2019. The simple truth is that the vast majority of Vineyard Churches in the USA are not growing in size.
4. We hold by default to some ideas – often ascribed to John Wimber and then named “Vineyard” – that may be getting in the way of our ability to fulfill the mission that God has given us as a movement. For example, some of these ideas are that:
 - a. We should not have national ordination.
 - b. We should ask churches for as little money as possible.
 - c. We should rely on volunteer labor for various mission-critical roles.
 - d. We are not a creedal movement.
5. Most people serving within our structure – and especially Area Leaders, Regional Leaders, and National Directors – are severely over-extended and carrying impossibly broad job descriptions. In the case of RLs and ALs, all are also functioning as volunteers. As a consequence, leaders within our system often feel disempowered and even unable to do the work necessary to successfully fulfill their roles.

6. We presently have very limited capacity for articulating the theology and practice of the Vineyard. In the absence of John Wimber, and in opposition to “denominationalism,” we have developed no clear, non-reactive mechanisms by which the ND and/or Vineyard USA national leaders can articulate the theology and practice of Vineyard USA and guide the movement in adhering to it.
7. Vineyard USA generally has no authority, either formal or consultative, written into the bylaws of a local church. Beyond the power of persuasion in relationship, all we have is the “nuclear option” of kicking a *church* out of the movement. And, of course, by the time a pastor gets to the point of significant misbehavior, a relational approach is often ineffective. This means we lose churches instead of disciplining our leaders.

These are just *some* of the challenges facing us, and, apart from significant cultural and structural change, we are not well placed to meet them. Over the years, we have not taken these challenges seriously enough, and we need urgently to raise our game. Area Leaders are stretched and often feel unsupported. Regional Leaders are volunteer leaders with very limited capacity, and are often unsure that the views their concerns are heard. Many National Leaders are volunteers or part time, lacking the capacity, relationship, and resources to address the vital issues that their work raises. The National Director has such an overloaded set of responsibilities that it is literally impossible to do all that the job entails.

Clearly, we can’t go on like this. God has called the Vineyard to exist, but at present we are not adequately honoring that calling by acting as a connected aligned national family of churches.

Because God has called us together, we need to create connected relationships that equip, encourage, and empower Vineyard pastors, leaders, churches, and affinity groups. We need to care for Vineyard pastors and Vineyard churches – equipping them for ministry, being attentive to their needs, and resourcing them for kingdom work. We need to clarify, articulate, and facilitate the vision, mission, and values common to all Vineyard USA churches, so we can accomplish together what no individual church could do on its own.

We need to become a strongly connected national family of healthy churches – each individual and interdependent. We need to be more connected, more transparent, and more accountable to each other. We need to create some capacity and ability to think through the key issues facing us, and we need to take seriously and put time, money and effort into those key roles we have always claimed are important to us.

3. How Have We Worked So Far?

One of the classic mistakes in a reorganization process is mistaking problems in an organization's *culture* for problems in an organization's *structure*. It can be tempting to pursue quick structural changes as solutions to the problems an organization faces, without pausing to do the slower work of understanding the organization's cultural dynamics. The irony of this, of course, is that it is almost always cultural dynamics within an organization that have caused problems to emerge in the first place.

In light of this, the ReOrg process has been oriented around three fundamental principles, intended to keep Vineyard USA cultural dynamics clearly in view:

1) **Transparency**

From the very beginning, the ReOrg process has been run in an intentionally clear and transparent manner. This has meant that Vineyard USA pastors have received regular updates on the status of the ReOrg process, concerning matters like when the ReOrg Team was having a major meeting, what topics were being discussed at that meeting, what areas were being addressed in the formulated proposals, and so on. In addition, all Vineyard USA pastors have had access since March 2020 to all the ET-ratified documents governing the ReOrg process, including both the proposed schedule for the process and the procedural document that details exactly how the Executive Team will make decisions in this process.

2) **Broad Consultation**

The ReOrg process has been extensively consultative. Beginning in March 2020, Vineyard USA pastors have been invited to speak into the ReOrg process at any point, using the ReOrg website and email address. In addition, the ReOrg team has solicited input from many Vineyard pastors who did not initially write to the team. To date, just under 100 Vineyard USA RLs, ALs, pastors, and leaders have been consulted as part of the ReOrg process, many of them on multiple occasions. The ReOrg Team has also spoken to numerous leaders from other movements, denominations, and organizations, seeking the widest counsel and best possible wisdom on the problems being tackled. All of this consultation is in service of the desire to develop a deep understanding of the past and present *culture* of Vineyard USA, alongside an analysis of our structures.

3) **Process, Not Perfection**

We have known from the outset that the ReOrg has no chance of arriving, first time around, at the perfect solution for all of the present and future challenges facing the Vineyard. In light of that, we have aimed to develop *process-oriented* solutions for Vineyard USA, rooted in commitments to *practical, Kingdom-oriented ways* of being. Rather than trying to fix everything at once, we have tried to demonstrate and equip our movement and its leadership teams with cultural norms that will serve us long term. Examples of these norms include operational transparency, missional clarity, accountable performance measurement, financial transparency, relational trust-building, and a radical commitment to clearing up messes and offenses. All of the proposals developed by the ReOrg Team centrally value these ways of being.

4. What Has Been Decided, and Why?

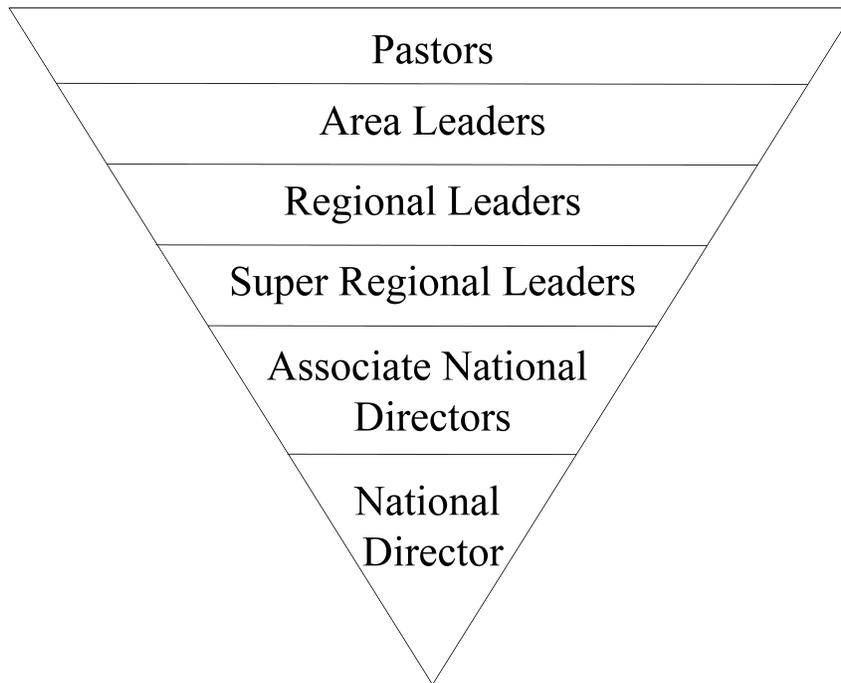
In order to address the organizational challenges facing Vineyard USA in a way that stays focused on aligning our organizational culture with our Kingdom values, the Vineyard USA Executive Team worked with the ReOrg Team throughout August and September to make some decisions about how Vineyard USA will operate in the future.

As per the ReOrg schedule, distributed to all Vineyard USA pastors in March 2020, these decisions are only the first round in a decision-making process that the Executive Team will be going through over the next several months. As such, what you see here is not the end of the ReOrg process, but rather an interim report describing the work that has been done so far. Indeed, while these decisions answer many questions, they also *raise* some others that will be addressed in the months to come. That said, we think that they make some very important strides in identifying and beginning to build some of the elements currently missing from the leadership culture and structure of our movement. We believe that, as these decisions are implemented, we will be far better equipped to grow into a strongly connected national family of healthy churches – both individual and interdependent.

As you read them through, keep in mind that the purpose of the Vineyard USA ReOrg process is to equip, encourage, and empower local church pastors for the work of ministry. To do this, it is necessary to refocus, resource, and reorganize Vineyard USA at every level, so we are intentionally structured as an interdependent community of churches to pursue the vocation God has given us for the next forty years.

- We are refocusing on what we need by investing in various part time and full time roles.
- We are resourcing and supporting our churches and our pastors by creating new roles with the necessary focus and capacity.
- We are reorganizing by strengthening our existing structure and introducing new roles to support it further.

Organizational Structure



Area Leaders

There is a wealth of experience, knowledge, and wisdom among our pastors that should be pooled and shared for the benefit of others facing similar challenges. Tapping into that experience, sharing our wisdom, and working more closely together recognizes that we are better together – that advancing the kingdom is a team sport. While we are called to think for ourselves, we are also called by God to be interdependent.

We need to be better at supporting pastors locally, especially in this moment when demands on them are becoming greater, whether they are full-time, part-time, or bivocational. To date, we have often not dedicated the necessary time for pastoral care, mutual encouragement, acting as sounding boards for one another, or flagging possible issues.

That will now change, as Area Leaders (ALs) work more closely alongside pastors, networking their knowledge and experience via regular meetings. For all pastors in a given area, the meetings will specifically focus on pastoral care, encouragement, and support. In light of our new skip-level reporting processes, they will also be occasions where pastors can feed back to the Regional and National Leadership Teams of Vineyard USA about the issues they see, help that they need, and advice that they have.

ALs will be asked to monitor the health of their area, and draw on their Regional Leader to encourage, assist, and counsel any pastor where required. In addition, ALs will be working with pastors to identify their successors, and be involved in the ordination of new pastors.

ALs will report to Regional Leaders, with a skip-level report to Super-Regional Leaders, to ensure their ideas and concerns are fully represented in the leadership structure.

Regional Leaders

Area leaders will remain volunteers, and thus should rightly expect a significant level of support. That is a primary role of Regional Leaders (RLs). In the past, we have expected Regional Leaders to provide oversight and support for Area Leaders and local church pastors, while they themselves are already stretched by their full-time “day job” at their own churches. While Regional Leadership has been a voluntary job, RLs will now be paid up to half-time. They will also have a dedicated budget. We expect that all this will result in far more direct support for ALs.

RLs will be respected pastors of dynamic churches within their region. They will work to create community in their region, holding regular Regional meetings and supporting the implementation of Vineyard USA national initiatives. They will create opportunities for training and equipping of pastors in the region, be available to counsel local church pastors, assist with on the ordination of new Vineyard pastors, and advise in the selection of succession pastors within their region. In doing this, they will maintain close contact with their Area Leaders.

RLs will oversee a redrawn regional map, initially consisting of eight regions, but retaining the possibility of extending that number as necessary over time. RLs will report to Super Regional Leaders, and skip-level report to an Associate National Director, to ensure their ideas and concerns are fully represented in the leadership structure.

Super Regional Leaders

There will be four Super Regional Leaders (SRLs) appointed over four geographic “super-regions” to equip, empower, and oversee Vineyard USA Regional Leadership. SRLs need to be wise, seasoned, and highly-respected, but not necessarily in the last phase of their ministry career.

SRLs will be full-time, and have a budget for travel, as they encourage, monitor, and challenge the regional leaders. They will facilitate Vineyard USA initiatives and participate in ordination, church adoption, and church planting in their super-region. Should the need arise, they will manage disciplinary procedures, in partnership with an independent external team responsible for inquiring into the facts of a given situation.

A key to this reorganization of regional leadership roles will be ensuring clear, transparent, and secure connection between every role from local church pastor to National Director. To that end, as you have seen, each role has both a direct report and a skip-level report to an easy flow of information into and out of the system.

(Please note that we do not particularly like the title “Super Regional Leader.” We are in search of a better one. If you have an idea for a title, send it along to reorg@vineyardusa.org. Thanks!)

National Director

One of the major conclusions of this ReOrg process has been the impossibility of the expectations – let alone the job description – placed on the National Director (ND). As such, we have aimed to relieve the pressures upon him/her, reserving time and energy for those key things only an ND can do.

Primary among those are:

1. Articulating and stewarding Vineyard USA's national culture.
2. Leading the Vineyard USA National Team.
3. Constantly holding up the vision of Vineyard USA and its timeless calling, and articulating the ongoing priorities of Vineyard USA's mission.
4. Achieving specific, benchmarked goals concerning gender, ethnic, and age diversity within Vineyard USA. This includes maintaining deep relationships, characterized by listening and empowerment, with the leaders of Vineyard USA Associations.¹
5. Maintaining deep relationships with Super-Regional Leaders.
6. Representing Vineyard USA in the context of Vineyard Global, and developing deep relationships with National Directors from other AVCs.
7. Representing Vineyard USA to the wider church and world.

Associate National Directors

To allow the National Director to focus his/her work, we are creating Associate National Directors (ANDs) to take on some of the remaining responsibilities. Each AND role is intended to focus squarely on one of four areas we consider essential:

1. Pastoral Health and Development

The job of the Pastoral Health and Development AND is to resource the pastoral health and development of pastors throughout the movement. This AND will work with SRLs, RLs, and the National Team to advance this priority – creating means by which each pastor can be resourced to take the next right step in this area. This AND, along with all the others, will maintain regular scheduled meetings with the leadership of each Association.

2. Church Health and Development

The job of the Church Health and Development AND is to resource church health and development throughout the movement. This AND will work with SRLs, RLs, and the National Team to advance the priority of church health, structural health and community discipleship – creating means by which each church can be resourced to take the next right step in this area.

¹ Associations are formally constituted groups of typically under-represented leaders who are empowered to sit at the table with the national leadership of Vineyard USA. We are borrowing this proven and effective model for attending to Kingdom-minded diversity from the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). The Executive Team has decided that the Association model is the best starting point for working toward significantly increased ethnic, gender, and age diversity within the leadership of Vineyard USA. The precise operational structures of Associations within Vineyard USA will be clarified by the Executive Team in Spring 2021, in consultation with our friends at the ECC.

This AND, along with all the others, will maintain regular scheduled meetings with the leadership of each Association.

3. Justice and Evangelism

The job of the Justice and Evangelism AND is to advance evangelism and diversity initiatives across the entire movement. This AND will work with SRLs, RLs, and the National Team to advance the public-facing Kingdom priorities of evangelism and justice – creating means by which each church can be resourced to take the next right step in this area. This AND, along with all the others, will maintain regular scheduled meetings with the leadership of each Association.

4. Theology and Affiliation

The job of the Theology and Affiliation AND is to develop and oversee processes regarding the articulation of Vineyard theological identity, as well as processes of theological resourcing and equipping for pastors and leaders within Vineyard USA. In addition, this AND will develop and oversee processes regarding pastoral and church affiliation to Vineyard USA, specifically regarding pastoral ordination. This AND, along with all the others, will maintain regular scheduled meetings with the leadership of each Association.

Senior Staff

In addition to the four ANDs, there will also be a full-time Director of Communications for Vineyard USA, along with a Controller responsible for financial accountability and missional benchmarks.

The National Board

The National Board will be responsible for overseeing the National Team, and specifically for the performance of the National Director. The National Board will:

- Give oversight, not manage operations
- Provide an essential system of “checks and balances” for national leadership priorities
- Represent the various demographics present within Vineyard USA

Regarding Church Planting and International Missions

Within this new structure, we intend to thoroughly integrate church planting and international missions into the National Team structure of Vineyard USA. Where it is possible and sensible, we intend to locate church planting and missions initiatives at the *regional* level. In order to achieve that goal, Vineyard Missions and Multiply Vineyard will be fully integrated into the new national and regional structures. Oversight of Vineyard Missions and Multiply Vineyard will become the responsibility of the Vineyard USA National Team, and their boards will dissolve as soon as is legally possible. Furthermore, given that this reorganization calls for a new budget, the finances of Vineyard Missions and Multiply Vineyard will become part of the responsibility of the National Team.

Some Takeaways

These changes are designed to connect us all, end to end, giving us a series of working teams with clear goals that are rooted in our mission, vision, identity, and priorities.

They are designed to give us all clarity and unanimity around what are and are not theological and missional essentials.

They are based on radical transparency. There will be accountability and performance measurement top to bottom, including feedback loops and skip-level reporting from local churches all the way to the National Director.

Please note that this is a work in progress. It is based on wide consultation, thoughtful analysis, and deeply considered decisions. But it is the beginning, rather than the end of a process. And it will need continual response, feedback, and discussion as we go forward, to identify what other decisions to make, how we fund these investments, and what other ways of working we will need. At the risk of being overly repetitive, if you are a Vineyard USA pastor, you are invited and encouraged to speak to the ReOrg Team about any aspect of their work at reorg@vineyardusa.org.

What is crystal clear is that times are changing, and we believe God is calling us to keep changing with them. John Wimber often exhorted us all in Vineyard USA to “take the best and go.” **We sincerely believe that these steps are among those necessary for us to better equip, encourage, and empower local church pastors for the work of ministry. We need to refocus, resource, and reorganize Vineyard USA at every level, so we are intentionally structured as an interdependent community of churches to pursue the vocation God has given us for the next forty years.**

5. What's Next?

As you have heard from us multiple times by now, the purpose of the Vineyard USA ReOrg process is to equip, encourage, and empower local church pastors for the work of ministry. To do this, it is necessary to refocus, resource, and reorganize Vineyard USA at every level, so we are intentionally structured as an interdependent community of churches to pursue the vocation God has given us for the next forty years.

You have seen in the above documents that the Executive Team has already made a series of significant decisions regarding the culture and structure of Vineyard USA's National Leadership and Regional Leadership, as well as regarding the integration of church planting and missions initiatives.

But, as we said earlier, this is only an interim report. The ReOrg is decidedly not over! In fact, much work remains to be done, both in putting finishing touches on the decisions that have been made, and in addressing additional new arenas in the life of Vineyard USA that require attention.

Over the next several months, the Executive Team will receive proposals from the ReOrg Team on at least the following matters:

- Finalization of job descriptions for all new roles.
- Finalization of hiring processes for all roles, except the National Director.
- Finalization of regional and super-regional maps.
- Proposals regarding categories of relationship between Vineyard USA and the Entities related to it. Entities are defined as any organization or association that desires formal or informal relationship to Vineyard USA.
- Proposals regarding the function of Associations within the new Vineyard USA structure.
- Proposals regarding the operation of the new Vineyard USA Board.
- Proposals regarding frameworks for pastoral and church affiliation to Vineyard USA, specifically regarding ordination and bylaws.
- Proposals regarding structures for fundraising for Vineyard USA.
- Proposals regarding church giving percentages.

As you can see, there is much consequential work still to be done! **Please continue to engage the process by sharing your thoughts with the ReOrg team at reorg@vineyardusa.org. We anticipate giving you another update like this in January 2021.**

Finally, on November 2, 2020, Vineyard USA will begin the process of selecting a new National Director. This process will be completed sometime in March 2021, when the new National Director will be presented to the movement for ratification. As the selection process for the new National Director narrows down in early 2021, we will begin the nomination and application processes for ANDs and SRLs.

Please continue to pray for this work, and for Vineyard USA. Our best days are ahead of us!