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THE ROLE OF ELDERS

"The church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. The question of trust, which is so closely related to that of authority, is determined by faithfulness, with which a man serves Jesus Christ, never by extraordinary talent, which he possesses. Pastoral authority can only be attained by the servant of Jesus Christ who seeks no power of his own, who himself is a brother among brothers submitted to the authority of the Word."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"For this reason I left you in Crete that you might set in order what remains, and appoint Elders in every city as I directed you."

- Titus 1:5

*"From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the **Elders** of the church. When they arrived, he said to them, '...Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**. Be **shepherds** of the Church of God, which He bought with His own blood.'"*

- Acts 20:17,18a, 28

The New Testament is clear that the church is to be led by a plurality of godly leaders called Elders. The Elders have ultimate authority to see that the church remains on a biblical course. This includes the responsibility to see that the members are being appropriately shepherded, verify that the body is being fed through insightful and accurate biblical teaching, and ensure that the life of the church is being well governed. They are to care for the spiritual and physical well-being of the church members, regularly engaging together in prayer. They are to guard the body against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting biblical truth or who are continuing in a pattern of sinful behavior. In doing so, they are to keep closing potential entrances for satan, so that the truth of Christ will remain credible to both the congregation and the community (1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28-31, Titus 1:9, James 5:14).

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

Governance is accomplished exclusively through the following four ways:

1. Determining the mission, purposes and values of the church, and identifying results that further the same.
2. Functioning within the scope of defined Overseeing Elder responsibilities.
3. Relating appropriately to the staff.
4. Setting executive limitations for the Senior Pastor.

SECTION I VISION, PURPOSES AND VALUES

Who We Are

The *vision* of New Community Church is:

We exist to make disciples who live and love like Jesus: who know Him, grow up in Him and go out for Him.

The *purposes* of New Community Church are:

- To *communicate* God's Word (evangelism)
- To *incorporate* God's people (fellowship)
- To *educate* God's people (discipleship)
- To *demonstrate* God's love (ministry)
- To *celebrate* God's presence (worship)

The *values* held by New Community Church are:

- ***Biblical Truth is Our Foundation***
We believe that biblical teaching is the catalyst for transformation in individual lives and in the church.
- ***Small Communities is Our Organizing Principle***
We believe that life change is maximized in the context of a small group of people.
- ***Spiritual Formation is Our Calling***
We believe that our church must be constantly developing disciples of Jesus Christ, who glorify God by displaying the fruit of His Spirit.
- ***Diversity of Spiritual Giftedness is Our Strength***
We believe that every member of the Body of Christ is given spiritual gifts by God and that each individual is most fulfilled when expressing his or her unique giftedness in service to God and others.
- ***Culturally Relevant Evangelism is Our Method***
We believe that we have a biblical obligation to help our friends and neighbors understand the Gospel in culturally relevant ways.
- ***Excellence is Our Standard***
We believe that we should perform our ministries with excellence so that God is glorified in all we do and say.
- ***Authenticity is Our Watchword***
We believe that an atmosphere of authenticity, acceptance and truthfulness is an essential characteristic of a healthy church.
- ***Biblical Leadership is Our Imperative***
We believe that church leadership should be spiritually qualified, biblically accountable and servant-oriented.
- ***Youth Are Our Future***
We believe that children matter to God and they should therefore matter to us. The church is only one generation from extinction if it fails to reach the next generation. Therefore, we must give priority to children and student ministries.

SECTION II

OVERSEEING ELDER RESPONSIBILITIES

How we function as Elders

Leadership in the Christian church is shaped by the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 20:25-28

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Leaders in the church of Jesus Christ are servants. This drives how those called into positions of authority function under the authority of Jesus in His church.

We are helped in our understanding of how church leaders are to function by the language used to refer to them in the New Testament. There are principally three titles used: **Elder**, **Bishop/Overseer** (both translations of the same Greek word), and **Shepherd**. Each captures a slightly different hue to the color of biblical leadership.

From the biblical data on church leadership we discern three roles for those God calls out of His body. All three are found in the passage in Acts 20 quoted on page 2 above.

1. **Elder** - The emphasis of this term is the wisdom that comes from age.
2. **Overseer** - The emphasis of the word alternately translated Bishop or Overseer is on the functions of oversight, authority and direction-setting.
3. **Shepherd** - Paul's comments that leaders provide shepherding to the flock entrusted to them makes clear that leaders in the church serve in a caring, nurturing, and feeding role.

Informed by these biblical categories, at New Community Church our Elders will at times serve as what we call Overseeing Elders. This body of 9-11 provides oversight of the church's affairs. All Elders at all times are expected to serve in the role as wise counselors both to the church and to individuals and as shepherds, providing care and nurture to people in the church who need such support.

The mission, purposes and values of New Community Church are clear and defined and so Overseeing Elders focus on defining ends or results which are aligned with the mission, purposes and values and delegate the determination of the means to those ends to the Senior Pastor.

SELECTION, SERVICE AND TERM OF ELDERS

Scripture gives evidence of the first Elders being appointed by the founders of the church. By this example it is implied that the existing spiritual leadership of a church should be intimately involved in the process of selecting Elders to ensure selection based on spiritual rather than superficial qualifications. Beyond this, there are no specific guidelines given regarding the selection process. It would therefore appear that freedom is given to the individual church to develop a process that will best serve its own special needs and situations (Acts 14:21, Titus 1:2).

At New Community Church, Elders serve for life. The exceptions to this are the following; An elder may resign, an elder may disqualify themselves and their role as elder may be revoked, or an elder may leave the church, thereby relinquishing their role as Elder at New Community Church.

There is one body of elders but not all elders serve in the role of "Overseeing Elders." A **Overseeing Elder** serves in a rotation as one of the 9 - 11 who meet regularly with the Senior Pastor and Senior Pastor Emeritus to govern the church. Those not serving as **Overseeing Elders** at any given time are simply known as **Elders**. There may be cases when an Elder asks to no longer serve as a **Overseeing Elder** due to time constraints, health issues and the like. In this case that elder will not be in the rotation to be an **Overseeing Elder**, but their place of wisdom and shepherding would still be acknowledged. There will be a minimum of 9 **Overseeing Elders** and a maximum of 11 at any given time. **Overseeing Elders** serve for three year terms then rotate off for a minimum of one year after which they are eligible to return as an **Overseeing Elder**. There is no limit to the total number of elders at New Community Church, as this is God's prerogative to determine.

An Elder is always welcome to attend the **Overseeing Elder** meeting and is expected to fulfill all the responsibilities of an Elder which include serving communion, offering to come alongside people to give godly counsel and prayer, and using their shepherding and teaching gifts in the body. They are also expected to be regular in their attendance of worship services and church events so that they can model the Christian life and the vision, mission and values of New Community Church. It is an elder's responsibility to notify the **Overseeing Elders** at any point when, for whatever reason, their attendance cannot be regular.

The process for reintegrating Elders back onto the **Overseeing Elder** body is done with the overall vision of gathering Elders who serve the church and its needs in any given season of the church's life. Under that vision, Elders may be reintegrated as follows:

Those Elders who have rotated off would be asked if they are ready and able to reengage as a **Overseeing Elder**. If they are willing, they would then be considered by the then body of **Overseeing Elders** who would then invite, at their discretion, those Elders whom are deemed most critical to the constituency of the **Overseeing Elder** body to reengage for another three-year period. It could be that with new Elders being integrated to the **Overseeing Elder** group that in some years none of the Elders who are at that time not serving on the **Overseeing Elder** body would be invited to reengage.

At the first meeting after May 31 of each calendar year, the Elders have three tasks to accomplish related to the make-up of the Overseeing Elder body. This first is to rotate off those elders who are at the end of their three-year term. The second is to invite back into the Overseeing Elder group Elders who have rotated off who are being called back into Overseeing Elder service. The third task is to identify those persons whom the Spirit of God may be raising up for the role of Elder. It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to seek the guidance of the Spirit and the wisdom of his peers to identify and screen prospective elders. At the Senior Pastor's recommendation, the Elders will formally nominate new Elders who have emerged in the congregation. At New Community Church we recognize that God reveals to the body those whom He has given who are fit for this role. The Overseeing Elders are simply affirming those they believe the Spirit has gifted for this calling. (If none has emerged in that year, none shall enter the process.) Recognizing the movement of God in the lives of those people who are thought to have been called into this role, the process of affirming elders follows this course:

- The congregation shall be provided with teaching regarding the biblical qualifications for Elders and their scriptural role.
- Those whom God is raising up, shall be so informed by the Senior Pastor, and they shall be urged to engage in self-appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the scriptural qualifications. Any person may withdraw their name at that point if they do not aspire to the position of Elder (1 Tim. 3:1), or if they do not believe they adequately meet the qualifications.
- The names of the prospective Elders shall be brought before the participating members of the church, who will be given thirty days to show cause why any one of the prospective Elders would not be qualified to serve. Consistent with Matthew 18:15 and Matthew 5:24, any member with such cause must first express his or her concern to the prospective Elder and, if the prospective Elder does not subsequently remove themselves from consideration, must then also express his or her concern to the Overseeing Elders for consideration.
- Barring any objection from the membership, the elders shall at the first meeting following August 31st affirm the new elder(s) and receive them into their fellowship.
- At the Annual Meeting the newly constituted Overseeing Elders will be presented to the members of the church for a time of dedication.

Having defined the mission, purposes and values of New Community Church, Overseeing Elders focus on defining ends or results which are aligned with the vision, mission and values and delegate the determination of means to those ends to the Senior Pastor.

CRITERIA FOR ELDER SERVICE

Elders shall meet the primary biblical qualifications outlined in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:

- Eldership is not a place to be working on basic spiritual growth; appointment is based on existing (though not perfect!) character qualities (1 Timothy 3:6).
- Elders should be:

<i>I Timothy 3:2/Titus 1:6</i>	Temperate
<i>I Timothy 3:2/Titus 1:7</i>	Self-controlled
<i>Titus 1:8</i>	Upright
<i>Titus 1:8</i>	Disciplined
<i>I Timothy 3:2/Titus 1:6</i>	Faithful in marriage
<i>I Timothy 3:4</i>	Family-oriented
<i>I Timothy 3:2/Titus 1:8</i>	Hospitable
<i>Titus 1:7</i>	Not overbearing
<i>I Timothy 3:3/Titus 1:7</i>	Not violent but gentle
<i>I Timothy 3:3</i>	Not quarrelsome
<i>I Timothy 3:2</i>	Above reproach
<i>I Timothy 3:2</i>	Respectable
<i>I Timothy 3:7</i>	Of good reputation
<i>Titus 1:6,7</i>	Blameless
<i>I Timothy 3:3</i>	Not a lover of money
<i>Titus 1:7</i>	Not pursuing dishonest gain
<i>I Timothy 3:3/Titus 1:7</i>	Not given to drunkenness
<i>Titus 1:8</i>	<i>A lover of what is good</i>

Elders should also show evidence of other practical criteria that qualify them for service:

- Manifest the fruit of the Spirit.
- Be oriented toward evangelism and discipleship.
- Model spiritual maturity.
- Have demonstrated leadership ability.
- Be a team player (have potential to develop a good working relationship with the existing Elders and pastoral staff).
- Possess needed time and inclination to meet with Elders as needed (1 Peter 5:2).
- Have an awareness of God's call (1 Timothy 3:1).
- Support New Community Church doctrine, philosophy and strategy of ministry.
- Be committed to our New Community Church Vision, Mission, Purposes, Values, Doctrinal Statement and Governance Model.
- Attend New Community Church services and functions with regularity.
- Give generously to New Community Church.
- Have a track record of using his or her spiritual gifts in service through New Community Church.

GOVERNING MANNER

The Overseeing Elders will approach their task in a manner that emphasizes strategic leadership more than administrative detail. In this spirit the Overseeing Elders will:

- Enforce upon itself whatever discipline is needed to govern with excellence. Discipline will apply to attendance, policy-making principles, respect of clarified roles, speaking with one voice, and self-policing of Overseeing Elder tendencies to stray from rigorous governance.
- Be accountable to New Community Church's membership for competent, conscientious and effective accomplishments of its obligations as a body. It will allow no officer, individual or committee of the Overseeing Elders to usurp this role or deter this discipline.
- Direct, control and inspire the organization through the careful deliberation and establishment of policies. Policies will be statements of values or perspectives which address:

- a) The results that demonstrate alignment between performance and our mission, purposes and values.
- b) The responsibilities of the Overseeing Elders.
- c) The manner in which Overseeing Elders and staff will relate to each other.
- d) The boundaries of prudence and ethics to be observed by the staff.

Elders should strive for unity, not unanimity; it is expected that there will be healthy differences of opinion, but that these differences will be respected and will be aired in an atmosphere of love and respect. Therefore, we are committed to making decisions by building consensus. If the Overseeing Elders reach an impasse that threatens the integrity of the church, the counsel of outside advisors may be sought.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

With regard to the Overseeing Elder's role in governance, the Overseeing Elders shall have the following minimum responsibilities:

- Select new Elders in accordance with the previous section on "Selection of Elders"
- Act as legal trustees of the corporation
- Set salaries and approve benefits for the Senior Pastor.
- Approve the annual budget as submitted by the finance committee under the purview of the Senior Pastor.
- Insure protection of all assets
- Approve starting of new churches
- Discharge the Senior Pastor based on majority vote (excluding all pastoral representatives) for nonperformance or ethical violations
- Hire Senior Pastor when position is open
- Report to the congregation on an annual basis

OVERSEEING ELDER PROCESS

- Meetings with respect to governance
 - a. The Overseeing Elders shall meet not less than four times annually, not including the annual meeting of the congregation as defined by the by-laws.
 - b. Overseeing Elders meetings will be run in accordance with the agenda set by the Chairman. The agenda will be determined in advance. Any additions to the agenda will not be allowed at the meeting. All amendments to the agenda must be submitted to and approved by the Chairman in advance of the meeting. The Chairman may delegate the role of conducting the meeting to another person at his or her discretion.
- Election of Officers and their primary roles - Officers of the Overseeing Elders shall be elected or re-elected at the first meeting occurring October 1 or after every calendar year.
 - a. Chairman - provides leadership to and enforces guidelines for the Overseeing Elders; bears primary responsibility for the Overseeing Elder's adherence to this Manual
 - b. Secretary - recorder of the Overseeing Elder's minutes and determiner of quorum status which is at least 2/3rds of the then current Overseeing Elders.
 - c. Treasurer – official custodian of all assets and bears primary responsibility for ensuring proper reporting to governmental authorities and congregation; responsible for ensuring that a fiscal year audit of the financial records is performed by a certified public accountant, the results of which must be presented to the Overseeing Elders no later than ninety days following the end of the fiscal year
- Establishment of Committees
 - a. The Overseeing Elders, from time to time, may establish temporary committees to help carry out their responsibilities. The Chairman will be responsible for selecting Elders for service on approved temporary committees. Committees will be used sparingly, only when other methods have been deemed inadequate to deal effectively with specific issues, so as not to interfere with the wholeness of the Overseeing Elder's job.
 - b. Committees may not speak or act for the Overseeing Elders.
 - c. Committees are to help the Overseeing Elders do their job, not to help the staff do its job. Committees will assist the Overseeing Elders chiefly by preparing policy alternatives and implications for deliberation by the Overseeing Elders. Committees are not to be created by the Overseeing Elders to advise staff.

d. Affirmative action shall be required to keep a committee in existence six months after its initial creation and in no case shall a single committee serve without interruption for longer than one year.

- Revision of Overseeing Elder Manual

This Manual may be revised by unanimous vote of the Overseeing Elders.

- Elder Disqualification and Departure

An elder may resign, an elder may disqualify themselves and their role as elder may be revoked, or an elder may leave the church, thereby relinquishing their role as Elder at New Community Church. The conditions under which an Elder ceases to be an elder are few. An elder might resign because they no longer support the vision, mission and values of the church. In this case they should offer a statement in writing to the Overseeing Elders explaining why they no longer wish to serve as an Elder. If possible, they should bring the letter in person to their last Elder meeting so that they can be heard by the Overseeing Elders and in turn hear the collective wisdom of the Overseeing Elders on the decision to step down.

In the event that it becomes known that an Elder has either apostatized, ceased to live a life in line with the gospel, or begun to act in a way that is not supportive of the mission, vision and values of New Community Church, the elders are responsible to revoke the Elder title from that person. This shall only be done after the Overseeing Elders have prayerfully met with the person to seek restoration.

If an Elder becomes inactive and begins attending another church, they shall be removed from the Elder body in a timely way, being notified of this action by letter.

SECTION III

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OVERSEEING ELDERS AND STAFF

To facilitate optimum effectiveness, the Overseeing Elders of New Community Church recognize the Overseeing Elder's responsibility as being generally confined to establishing topmost policies, leaving implementation and subsidiary policy development to the Senior Pastor. All Overseeing Elder's authority delegated to staff is delegated through the Senior Pastor.

- The Senior Pastor is authorized to establish all further policies, make all decisions, take all actions and develop all activities, which are true to the Overseeing Elder's policies. The Overseeing Elders may, in extending its policies, "un-delegate" areas of the Senior Pastor's authority, but will respect the Senior Pastor's choices so long as the delegation continues. This does not

prevent the Overseeing Elders from obtaining information about activities in the delegated areas.

- Only the Overseeing Elders have authority over the Senior Pastor. An Overseeing Elder or committee may request information, but if such request requires an excessive amount of staff time it may be refused.
- The Senior Pastor may not perform, allow or cause to be performed any act which is unlawful. The Senior Pastor must adhere to commonly accepted business and professional ethical standards (or the "prudent person test"), and must at all times observe explicit Overseeing Elders constraints on executive authority (see Section IV on Executive Limitations).
- The Senior Pastor shall ensure that the CFO provide a detailed financial report to the Overseeing Elders at each regularly scheduled Overseeing Elder meeting and shall be prepared to offer further written and verbal reports on staff activities and ministry performance at each Overseeing Elders meeting. The Senior Pastor may be required to submit additional reports to the Overseeing Elders as requested formally by the entire Overseeing Elder body.

SECTION IV EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS

What the Overseeing Elders will not allow:

The executive limitations set by the New Community Church Overseeing Elders can be broken down into four main areas; Financial Condition Policy, Budgeting, Personnel, and the Protection of Assets.

FINANCIAL CONDITION POLICY

With respect to operating the church in a sound and prudent fiscal manner, the Senior Pastor may not jeopardize the long-term financial strength of the church. Accordingly, he or any church representative acting on his authority may not:

- Incur indebtedness other than trade payables incurred in the ordinary course of doing business.
- Purchase land or buildings.
- Use restricted contributions for any purpose other than that required by the contribution.
- Settle payroll and debts in other than a timely manner.
- Allow expenditures to deviate materially from the Board-approved budget.
- Use advances from the cash reserve fund or the building fund for operating expenses without prior written or verbal approval of the Overseeing Elders.

- Incur any expenditure in excess of 1% of the total annual operations budget without the prior written or verbal approval of the Overseeing Elders.

BUDGETING

With respect to annual budgeting and fiscal planning, the Senior Pastor may not jeopardize the fiscal integrity of the church. Accordingly, he may not cause or allow a budget process which:

- Contains too little detail to allow accurate analysis and projections of income and expense items.
- Allows expenses based on an unrealistic projection of freewill income for the following year.
- Does not reflect the stated objectives and priorities of the Overseeing Elders.

PERSONNEL

The Senior Pastor's authority, with respect to the treatment of paid and volunteer staff, is limited so as to assure that the rights of employees to fair, equitable and humane treatment are not impeded. The hiring or termination of any employee will only be undertaken after, a consultation with at least two Overseeing Elders. There will be a written record of this consultation and its outcome. The discharge of an employee shall be done in the presence of at least two elders and shall be documented.

PROTECTION OF ASSETS

The Senior Pastor and the Treasurer are responsible for the protection of all church assets. Accordingly, they may not:

- Allow one individual to have complete authority over a financial transaction. Two individuals appointed by the Overseeing Elders will sign all checks.
- Allow the freewill cash offering to be counted by the ushers without at least two people present.
- Allow any funds to be invested in an institution that is not fully protected by FSLIC or FDIC.
- Insure New Community Church's property for less than what is considered necessary for prudent risk management.
- Fail to obtain liability coverage adequate to ensure prudent risk management.