

APPOINTMENT AND AFFIRMATION OF ELDERS IN AN ELDER-GOVERNED CHURCH

Introduction.

We see the function of elders in an elder-governed church as the continuation of what the apostles did in the first century. Therefore the process of appointment of elders and their ongoing affirmation is very important in the governance of any local church. The process should be bathed in prayer and should provide for the following:

1. Ensure that the persons being appointed have the necessary maturity qualifications, humility and wisdom. (See "Qualifications for Elders" as an attachment to this paper.) An underlying assumption in the passages dealing with these qualifications is that the people involved are people of influence. They influence others by their integrity and character.

The character qualities are designed as the goal of every Christian. Elders, however, should model these qualities in their relationships, this giving evidence of their spiritual maturity.

2. Elders must have time available to accomplish the task of being an elder. Usually between 10 and 15 hours a week is required.
3. Elders must have a demonstrated capacity to work together with others and sees the value of Teamwork.
4. The process should allow for time away from the duties of being an elder so that there can be time for personal renewal.
5. There should be an opportunity for resignation and reaffirmation.
6. The process should include a period of teaching that explains the Biblical instruction and affirms the importance of the process.
7. There should be a clearly defined statement as to the role of elders.
8. There should be a clearly defined understanding of how elders relate to the pastoral staff, other ministry leaders and the congregation.

These steps may be of help in going through the process.

1. The following decisions need to be made well in advance to starting any process of appointment of elders.

- a. Determine and document in advance how the process will work so that it can be explained to the congregation. There should be flexibility in the process.
- b. Determine the number of elders there should be. (5-9 elders is an optimum number) It is advisable to have an odd number of elders so that when voting is required there is not an impasse. (Hopefully this will not be necessary!)
- c. Determine the term for elders to serve. Is the term indefinite? How many years is one term? Can they serve for more than one term? Are they required to be off for a period of time before reappointment?

Lifetime appointment have certain dangers that can be minimized by such vehicles as:

- Required sabbaticals
- An internal policy which documents how elders retire.

Sometimes there are not enough qualified persons to establish terms limiting an elder's time of service, particularly in small churches or churches recently started.

However, in our judgement it is best to have terms on elders and a requirement that they not serve for a period of time for three main reasons:

- (i) It allows opportunity for new and younger elders to exercise their gift of leadership.
- (ii) It minimizes the risk of elders serving for so long that their personal significance is tied up in that role.
- (iii) It provides assurance that opportunity for personal spiritual renewal is available at the end of each term.

- d. Determine the role the elders play in the church governance function, particularly as it relates to pastoral staff. (See the paper entitled "Leadership, Elders and Pastors.") Will they be "policy makers" only? Will they be involved in pastoral care? What difference does having a pastor make in their roles?
2. If the church is new, by virtue of being planted by another church, the elders would likely be appointed by the planting church to ensure that there is effective leadership from the beginning. Sometimes an interim leadership group is established if it is not possible to identify elders immediately. A timeframe should be established that identifies when elders will be appointed.

The mother church should not think in terms of cloning herself, but rather empowering the new elders to work in the extension of God's kingdom using methods that are appropriate to the environment of the new church. It is probably unwise to plant a church without a qualified group of elders in place from the beginning.

3. Once the church has been started or has been operational for a period of time, the following steps are suggested that would ensure an orderly process.
 - a. One or two months before the appointment and/or affirmation process begins, the pastor or one of the elders should bring a series of messages on the subject of church leadership. Some suggested topics are as follows:
 - Biblical concepts of leadership (stressing "servant" leadership so emphasized in Scripture)
 - How elders are appointed at _____ Church
 - Required qualifications of elders. Ensure that the qualifications are written out in understandable language and adequately explained. (See the attached suggested definitions of the qualifications.)
 - Biblical support for an elder-governed church. (The safety of multiple leadership)
 - The leadership of Nehemiah, Moses, Paul, etc.
 - How leaders functioned in the Book of Acts
 - b. Ask the congregation to pray specifically about the process that the elders chosen will be God's people,
 - c. Distribute appointment or affirmation forms. (See sample attached in the enclosed "Sample Appointment Process") Determine in advance whether it should be anonymous or whether each person should sign the form when it is returned. Provide a convenient confidential place for returning the forms and make sure that there is a deadline for the returns.
 - d. As soon as the forms are received tabulate the results. Determine who will do the review and tabulation. Often two existing elders will perform the task. Sometimes a trusted person from outside the congregation can

perform that role. It is usually clear from the results who the congregation recognizes as elders.

- e. Two existing elders should visit with each person and his spouse who are recognized by the congregation. The purpose of the visit is to ascertain their willingness to serve the church in this way and to acquaint them of any ongoing matters in which they would be involved. It is important at this point to ensure there is the right chemistry between the potentially new elders and the existing elders. It is worth taking the time to ensure that all are on the same page.

Sometimes it is wise to visit those who have been recognized by the congregation but not to such a degree as to warrant appointment. It can be a time of affirmation as they see that their ministry is being appreciated by the church body.

- f. After the existing elders are satisfied that the potential elders would be welcomed additions to the team, an announcement should be made to the congregation and a time of prayer for the elders as they assume their responsibility years until the next affirmation.

4. Other considerations

a. **Pastoral staff:**

- Primary Pastoral Staff will be elders by virtue of their positions and would not be subject to the appointment and affirmation process noted above.
- Pastoral staff would not vote on matters relating to their remuneration or decisions from which they might benefit. They may be involved in preparatory work in such matters to assist the other elders.
- The performance of Pastoral staff would be reviewed annually by the other elders and the fact of that review or elements thereof may be communicated to the congregation. This, of course, is optional. It does, however, communicate to the congregation that the Pastoral Staff is accountable to the other elders and does not work in a vacuum.

b. Gift and personality analyses.

After each affirmation is completed it would be wise for the elders to work through a gift analysis program to determine the gifts and personalities that each brings to the table. Work through "Disc" or "Meyers-Briggs", etc and review results together.

c. Portfolios of responsibility.

Some elder's groups assign a ministry portfolio to each of the elders and he supervises that ministry and becomes the link between the Ministry Leader and the other elders. Regular reports by each elder with respect to that ministry would be a required as part of this responsibility.

d. Terminology

Some churches prefer to express the various roles in such a way as to convey the idea of a team. Examples: The elders' board could be called the "Leadership Team." The deacons could be called the "Operations Team." Each ministry could be handled by this "team" concept. Examples: "Finance Team; Women's Ministry Team; Children's Ministry Team; Etc.

Attached to this paper are two appendixes

1. A Sample appointment process.
2. A more detailed review of the qualifications for leadership.

SAMPLE APPOINTMENT PROCESS:**APPOINTMENT AND AFFIRMATION OF
LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY TEAMS*****Biblical Mandate***

The Scriptures teach that a team of leaders is to provide the overall spiritual care of each fellowship of believers. (Acts 14:23; 22:17-8; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5) They are responsible to Christ, the Head of the church. At _____ Church they are called the "Leadership Team" and this term is synonymous with the term "elders."

QUALIFICATIONS OF LEADERSHIP TEAM

Team members are people who influence others. A list of qualifications is found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 2 Tim. 2:24-26, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-5. They assume responsibility for the work initiated by the apostles in the first century. It is to be noted that the qualifications have to do more with character and maturity than they do with abilities or giftedness. This means that the variety of people on this team will result in a variety of gifts, some public and some more private in nature. They will, however, model the Christian faith.

The following list is not to be considered a complete checklist but rather a composite picture of spiritual maturity to which all Christians should aspire.

1. They must have a desire to do the work.
2. They should have a good relationship in their homes and with their families.
3. They should be persons of steady proven character, with a solid reputation both within the church fellowship and in the community.
4. They should be able to teach, not necessarily publicly, but should have a sound grasp of the Scriptures and should be able to explain the word of God to others.
5. They should not be new to the faith. Age is not the determining factor (Timothy was young) but spiritual maturity is what matters.
6. They should not be quarrelsome and self-willed, but rather marked by gentleness. They should be team players.
7. Possessions or money should not dominate their lives.
8. They should be free from addictive behavior.

FUNCTIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. Leadership

- a. Establish the goals and direction of the congregation.
- b. Determine the services and programs of the church.
- c. Empower leaders in areas of ministry and spiritual gift.
- d. Ensure that the vision of the church is clearly understood and embraced.
- e. Release the spiritual gifts within the body of Christians for the benefit of the body.
- f. The Leadership Team will appoint the Ministry Team leaders.
- g. Annually review the performance of the pastoral staff and briefly report to the congregation. (Note the Senior Pastor will review the performance of other staff and report back to the leadership team.)

2. Pastoral

- a. Pray for the congregation (James 5:14; Acts 6:4)
- b. Ensure a relevant ministry of the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9)
- c. Model Godliness and a mature Christian faith (1 Peter 5:3)
- d. Model a passionate spirituality and love for God.
- e. Care for those with special needs (Ezekiel 34:1-6; John 10:11)
- f. Protect the church from false teaching (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9)
- g. Equip the church for ministry roles (Ephesians 4:12)
- h. Work with the pastoral staff in pastoral care and support.
- i. Meet regularly with Ministry Team Leaders for pastoral care and support.

APPOINTMENT OF LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. The term "Leadership Team" is to be considered equivalent to the term "elders" as used in Scripture.
2. The raising up of spiritual leaders involves a blending of Divine activity and human response. We anticipate this process taking place at _____ Church.
3. When God raises up leaders there is always a corresponding recognition of them by others. Examples: Moses (Exodus 4:14-16; 14:31; 19:9); Joshua (Joshua 3:7; 4:14); Samuel (1 Sam. 3:19-20; 1 Chronicles 17:7; Psalms 18:43-45); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-2); Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2).
4. All leaders would confirm acceptance of the church's Statement of Faith and Core Values.

**PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTMENT OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM AT
_____ CHURCH**

1. Prior to the implementation of the appointment process messages will be preached from the pulpit, on the Function of the Leadership Team and the qualifications of its members.
2. After such ministry the Survey for Leadership Team Review will be handed out to the membership of _____ Church with an explanation as to its purpose and how the appointment of the Leadership Team takes place at _____ Church.
3. The Leadership Team consists of 5 to 9 members. The pastoral staff, included in that number, are members of the Leadership Team by virtue of their position. The surveys will be returned within three weeks from the date of distribution.
4. The existing Leadership Team, because of their knowledge of the people in the congregation, may suggest names to be considered. Any other member can nominate men or women as members of the Team.
5. The existing Leadership Team will review the forms and determine the other members to be appointed. Although the forms are not to be considered voting documents, they will certainly give indications as to the persons who have the confidence of the congregation.
6. Two existing members will meet with each person being considered, together with their spouse, to review the responsibility of serving and to determine if the Holy Spirit is leading the person to serve in this way.
7. Once the persons have agreed to serve an announcement will be made to the congregation proposing their names.
8. Any objections or questions will be discussed with the individuals concerned.
9. When the process is complete an announcement will be made to the congregation and a time of dedication and prayer will be held during the service to affirm and encourage the newly appointed Leadership Team.
10. Leadership Team members are appointed for a two-year term. They may serve for 3 two-year terms and then must take two years off before being eligible for reappointment.
11. A member must resign if the remaining members unanimously determine that his or her role should terminate.

The survey form allowing recommendations from the congregation will take a format similar to the following:

_____ CHURCH

SURVEY FOR LEADERSHIP TEAM REVIEW

We believe the Scriptures teach that a group of mature persons are to provide the overall spiritual care of each fellowship of believers. (Acts 14:23; 22:17-8; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5)

The following are presently serving as members of the Leadership Team. To affirm please enter an X where indicated:

_____	Affirmed _____
_____	Affirmed _____
_____	Affirmed _____

The existing Leadership Team would encourage you to consider the following persons:

_____	Affirmed _____
_____	Affirmed _____

After prayerful consideration and review of the qualifications please list below the persons you would consider for the Leadership Team at _____ Church, including the above recommendations and others you feel should be considered.

_____	_____
_____	_____

APPOINTMENT OF MINISTRY LEADERS

1. The Leadership Team appoints the Ministry Leaders who become the Ministry Team of the Church.
2. The terms and conditions of the appointment will be clearly defined in writing.
3. Ministry Team Leaders must be members of _____ Church.
4. Each Ministry Team Leader will meet quarterly with the Leadership Team for reporting on the particular ministry and for prayer and support.
5. Pastoral staff will work with the Ministry Team Leaders to ensure the effectiveness of their ministries.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS

The following expands the meaning of each of the qualifications. It is not to be a "pass or fail" listing. These are character qualities to which all Christians should aspire, but which are especially modeled by elders.

The size of the church, which determines the pool of leadership people within the congregation from which to draw, will often determine the level to which these qualifications are applied. The cultural setting, size and age will all have a bearing.

1. ABOVE REPROACH

They are persons who are marked by honesty and integrity in their approach to life, especially in dealing with people. They are trustworthy and are careful to be perceived as such. They earn respect by how they conduct themselves, but at the same time, they are not victims of the insatiable desire for the approval of others.

2. THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE

Each person is a committed spouse to his partner; he is not flirtatious. They are committed to meeting the needs of their marriage partners physically, emotionally and spiritually. They are partners together. Both members of the marriage enjoy each other's company and speak tenderly to each other. Each develops for the other an atmosphere of encouragement and acceptance by continual affirmation. They love each other deeply and express that love in every possible way. Their marriage exhibits the grace of God.

This quality does not exclude divorced, single or widowers, etc, but is designed to describe the quality of a person's relationship with his spouse.

3. TEMPERATE

A temperate person is one who is not carried away to extremes, but is marked by balance and stability. He is not swayed by adulation nor crushed by criticism. He is not volatile but even-tempered. He is not carried away by power and position. Such persons are easily regenerated and refueled for ministry.

4. PRUDENT

A prudent person's judgement enables him or her to discern the effects of extremes. The foundation of the decision making process in their lives is humility, a recognition of God's grace and a desire to be a good steward of what God has given. He is committed to his position as subordinate to God's authority and his prudence is seen in his continuing commitment to make God look good.

5. RESPECTABLE

A respectable person is one who lives so as to be respected by others. He has a well-ordered life which, when interfacing with others, attracts them rather than repels them. Such a person is perceived as being winsome and his or her life adorns the Gospel; it does not detract from it. Their ordered lives mirror God who is a God of order. A respectable person is a gentleperson whose presence in your life is a joy and a blessing.

6. HOSPITABLE

A hospitable person understands that what we enjoy in ownership is really a gift from God and that their role is to be a custodian and steward of these resources. They administer these resources given to them by God in such a way as to reflect the character of God. To use your home for the benefit of others is to show God's love and display a freedom from the accursed love of possessing. Such a person has come to terms with the difference between earthly possessions, which are temporary, and spiritual possessions, which are eternal.

7. ABLE TO TEACH

"Able to teach" is not a quality that has to do with spiritual giftedness since it is a mark of spiritual maturity and every man and woman can aspire to it. It means to have a teachable spirit, modeling God's truth in a humble and sensitive way. Such a person is not quarrelsome but is kind, patient and gentle, especially in correcting those who are in opposition. He is secure in Christ and is secure in himself and is in control of his personality. He loves God's word and lives by it and is eager to help others understand the freedom of its principles.

8. NOT ADDICTED TO WINE

This quality has to do with the inappropriate use more than a requirement to abstain from alcoholic beverages. A mature person has learned to control his body and his appetites so that he is not driven by any desires where an excess would be perceived as improper behavior. Any overindulgence which could corrupt and stumble others in their walk of faith will be avoided because the welfare of the body of Christ is of higher importance. He is careful to encourage rather than discourage people in his walk with God.

9. NOT SELF-WILLED

A person who is not self-willed is one who easily submits to legitimate authorities in his or her life and is a team player. He readily admits when wrong, gladly forgives and holds other people in high esteem. Such people are oriented towards others and not themselves. They practice an honest piety rather than a pretentious self-righteousness. They are secure in themselves and do not have to continually validate themselves ~~sin~~ in the eyes of others.

10. NOT QUICK TEMPERED

The man who is not quick tempered understands the wisdom of James 1:29 - "The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God" A quick tempered person is easily threatened (hence insecure), is quick to retaliate, and often uses anger to intimidate and control others. Such people are prone to hold a grudge and maintain a bitter spirit (a first cousin to anger). A mature person has learned to release to God feelings that cause anger, chooses not to be offended when wronged, and never seeks revenge.

11. NOT PUGNACIOUS

Physical violence will never mark a mature Christian. To be pugnacious is to exercise an uncontrolled personal vindictiveness. It can take the form of physical attacks or even verbal or emotional abuse. A mature Christians deals wisely with offences that might otherwise result in abusing the offender. Such a person is in control of his own spirit.

12. UNCONTENTIOUS

A contentious person destroys unity. To be uncontentious includes the notion of not being quarrelsome and being more interested in achieving consensus than forcing one's own way. Such a person is not threatened by competition; he is willing to bend and compromise when necessary. Such people lead with a servant's heart and do not resort to an authoritarian style of leadership.

13. GENTLE

A gentle person is mild-mannered, characterized by meekness, forbearance and a servant's heart. He acts and speaks gently so that people are actually relaxed in their presence. Such people are not authoritarian. A gentle person does not retaliate when wronged. He has such a high view of other people that he would never abuse or take advantage of others. It is one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit; it is a winsome quality that keeps a person solution-oriented rather than problem-oriented.

14. FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY

A person who is "free from the love of money" has his priorities straight. He seeks first God's kingdom and he see things as gifts from God. He would not be devastated by the loss of things. He holds everything with a loose grasp and lives by heavenly values. Such people have learned the meaning of contentment for, like Paul, they know how to be content in every circumstance. Their happiness is not the result of material possessions. People who are free like this have been able to successful deflect the allure of money. They have achieved a balance between excessive frugality and excessive spending. They do not see money as a status symbol. They do not find their security in money. They do not measure other people by material things or by external measurements; like God, they look at the heart. They are not lazy but diligent workers realizing that even their employment is a gift from God.

15. ONE WHO MANAGES HIS HOUSEHOLD WELL.

This qualification suggests that the components of the family - husband, wife and children, have a mutual respect and love for each other. Their home is an expression of *God's* love. The text assumes that the children are still at home and therefore should not be applied to children who have launched out on their own. There may be times when the road is rocky because each child has a will to choose the parent's values or not, but how these times are managed is evidence of spiritual maturity. The person who has a well managed home will have created an environment of peace. It will be a place where life's lessons are learned and the big decisions are made in the context of love. A child's experience with his or her parents will determine their view of *God*. Therefore such a home will reflect the character of *God*.

The qualification is not meant to suggest that an elder must have a family in order to qualify. It simply refers to how his household is managed under *God*.

16. LOVE WHAT IS GOOD.

Those who love what is good love *God* passionately because *God* is good. They also love the beauty of what *God* has made and what *God* has done. They enjoy His creation and they are in awe of His plan of salvation. Those who "love what is good" beautify their environment and are committed to making beautiful the inner person. They focus their every day on what is good.

17. JUST

A person who is "just" is always in line with fairness. Not only is he fair in his dealings with people, but is also concerned that the other person perceives him as fair. Such a person will be concerned about giving a "fair day's work for a fair day's pay." There will be a concern that each transaction in life will be fair to all concerned. A person who is fair is also respected and capable of making wise judgements and is regarded as mature by the community.

18. DEVOUT

A person who is "devout" is one who goes through life with an awareness of the presence of *God*. His life is marked by a love for *God* that embraces every other activity in life. He lives sensitive to sin and avoids unholy behavior, while at the same time he enjoys being "salt and light" in the world. He knows that it

is possible to "be in the world" without being "part of it." He walks through this world as though it were the temple of God.

19. NOT A NEW CONVERT

A new Christian has likely not yet learned the full effect of pride or any of the other sins of the heart and how to cope with them. Pride includes a thirst for attention and recognition and a new convert may be more susceptible to this, especially in a position of leadership. A mature Christian has proved himself morally and ethically through lifestyle and the handling of relationships. Learning Biblical principles and heavenly wisdom takes time. Some will do it more quickly than others.