Dunwoody Community Church

Ministry Principles & Processes

Section I. Elders

Section I.a. – Qualifications for an Elder

Two primary passages lay out the qualifications for the role of Elder; 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These two primary passages are supported by several others highlighted below in this section.

It's About Relationship Over Rank

Being an Elder isn't about carrying a title. It's not about being in a position of power, influence or authority. It's about being the type of person who has healthy relationships with people. Someone who knows how to nurture and grow relationships. Someone who knows how to navigate the difficulty that comes with broken people living in community. Someone who seeks reconciliation and doesn't cause division in the community. And someone who is well respected by those outside the community of faith.

It starts at home, with one's spouse and children. Two things should be noted here. First, Paul's comment about being the husband of one wife, doesn't automatically exclude people who have been divorced, but emphasizes the faithfulness of a husband to his wife. Another way it could be read is – he must be a one-woman man. Additionally, these passages do not exclude a single, unmarried man from serving as an Elder.

Secondly, when Paul writes to Titus that an Elder must have children who believe, he's referring to young children who are still living dependently on their parents. It's possible for a son or daughter to have been raised in a Christian home and later stray from their faith once they leave home. However, Paul chooses a word that refers not to grown children, but young children still living under the rule of their parents.

Thirdly, in the same way a parent desires to protect their children from harmful outside influences, an Elder should have the same desire for a local congregation. Paul says to the Ephesian Elders in Acts 20 to beware of wolves (false teachers) that will come in and devour the sheep. An Elder should be grounded in the Word of God in order to be vigilant in calling out false teaching that may creep its way into a local church.

Lastly, an Elder must be a family member in order to properly minister to the family. Therefore to qualify for an Elder one must be an active member of the church.

It's About Care Over Control

In both 1st Timothy and Titus, Paul parallels the experience of a parent and child in describing how Elders should lead a church. This isn't to say that an Elder should treat the congregation as though they are children, but should have the same care and concern that a parent would have for their own children.

In 1st Timothy Paul says that Elders "should have children who obey." It's one thing to have children who obey their parents by any means necessary; fear, guilt and shame. But it's another to expect obedience in "a manner worthy of respect."

The parallel to the church context is, it's one thing to lead a church by way of fear, guilt and shame, it's another thing to lead a church in "a manner worthy of respect." Elders should be careful and respectful in their leadership.

Paul also says, "If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" Notice Paul's change of word from "manage" to "care." The Greek word for care is *epimeleomai*, which means an object of anxiety and concern.

Leadership in the local church doesn't come from the position of getting people to do what one says, because it's said. Rather, it comes from the posture of having one's heart break for the congregation the way a parent's heart breaks for their children.

It's About Character Over Competency

In both passages there are only two terms that describe what an Elder should do; manage and be able to teach. However, the majority of both lists are about an Elders character. Not to say that being competent in the areas of managing the complexity of a local church and teaching a flock aren't important – they are -- but being the type of person to whom God can entrust the care of his people is of primary importance.

It's About Maturity Over Mastery

In the current day, exercising leadership principles seem to be the thing that makes or breaks a leader, but again, Paul seems to emphasize maturity in Christ more than mastering the art of leading.

While Paul doesn't use the exact word for maturity in either of these passages, Paul uses it in many of his other letters. (2 Corinthians 2:6, Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 1:28). When talking about maturity, Paul often times does so in terms of being wise.

In both 1st Timothy and Titus Paul says that an Elder should be self-controlled, *sophrona*. When *sophrona* is broken down in the Greek it literally means to have a "saved mind/intellect." This elicits the image of someone being a sound thinker who can see

things clearly. When this is combined with all of the other imagery and character traits in these passages one should expect that an Elder is wise, discerning and safe.

These observations and conclusions are not exhaustive, but do capture the core of Paul's portrait of who an Elder should be. As we seek to translate this to our local context we believe that an Elder at DCC will be:

- Balanced in judgment,
- Caring in relationship,
- Mature in perspective,
- Responsible in stewardship,
- Effective in communicating,
- Taking life in stride,
- Being faithful in the work of their life.

Lastly, DCC requires that any Candidate for Elder shall have been an active member of the church for a minimum of five (5) years.

Section I.b. – Selecting & Appointing Elders

The process for selecting an Elder is the following:

When appropriate growth has occurred, the Elders and other members of the Congregation will be given the opportunity to recommend to the Elder Ministry any men whom they feel qualified to become Elders. The Congregation will submit names of candidates for Elder to the Elder Ministry with a written narrative as to why various candidates qualify for the role.

The Elder Ministry will meet and review nominations, select those whom they see are qualified per Section I.a. above, and will interview the candidates. This will involve:

1. Doctrinal Alignment Assessment. A list of fundamental doctrines the candidate would be asked to write about and speak to.
2. Direct interview with Spouse regarding their willingness to have their Spouse serve as an Elder.
3. Interview three Closes Friends or Associates. Review life and character of candidate with these people.
4. Assess Multiple "Defining Moments" in the candidate's life. Understanding what and how these defining moments have sculpted the character and way of the candidate.
5. Assess Time Commitments outside the Elder Ministry to understand the workable balance required to serve as an Elder.

After these interviews, the Elder Ministry will make a determination whether

to recommend affirmation by the Congregation.

Those names selected by the Elder Ministry will be placed before the Congregation for a period of at least three weeks for their prayerful consideration. Any member believing they have a reason that a candidate is not qualified will be asked to bring that matter to the attention of the Elder Ministry. This notification should be in writing and must be signed to warrant consideration. In such cases the member who presented the reason for disqualification will be asked to meet with the Elder Ministry to address the issue(s) raised.

A meeting of all Elders in the Elder Ministry will be called to make the final appointment determination of any new Elder candidates.

Upon a unanimous decision to appoint a candidate, the Elder Ministry will present the candidate to the Congregation.

The individual will be asked to give a testimony of their faith before the Congregation, to speak to why they are convicted of God's calling to the role, and to allow the Congregation to present pre-written questions to the individual for his oral response.

Upon conclusion the individual will be affirmed into ministry by the laying on of hands of both the Elders and Congregation.

Section I.c. – Elder Ministry Responsibilities

The Elders of the church appear in several New Testament passages. Looking through these scriptures, their duties appear to fall into four categories: Scripture and Doctrine, Prayer, Church Management, and "Shepherding". Some Scriptures are quoted more than once as they apply to multiple areas.

Note that a couple of the early passages in Acts only refer to the original twelve Apostles. As the Apostles call themselves Elders (1 Peter 5:1) and we so often see the Apostles and Elders acting together in church matters (Acts 15), it's reasonable to apply these passages to Elders as well. These passages only mention the original twelve Apostles because they happen so early in the church's history that there are no other Apostles or Elders yet. Almost all later passages speak of the Apostles and Elders together.

Scripture & Doctrine

Acts 6:4
[We] will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

Acts 15:5-6
Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.” The Apostles and Elders met to consider this question. … [v.30] So the [representatives of the Apostles and Elders] were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter [explaining their decision].

Acts 20:28-30
(Paul speaking to the Ephesian Elders)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. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Titus 1:9
[An Elder] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1 Timothy 5:17
The Elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

In each of these passages there is mention of Elders’ role as it relates to doctrine and correct teaching of the Scriptures. The Elders (with the Apostles) are to decide doctrinal issues and insure that sound doctrine is properly taught to the believers while false doctrine is refuted. In Acts 15 we actually see the Elders playing this role and deciding on a doctrinal issue.

Prayer

Acts 6:4
[We] will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

James 5:14
Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the Elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

In both these passages is observed the primacy of prayer in the life of the Elders. They are to devote themselves to it and the congregation is to avail themselves of the Elders’ duty to it. This is in accordance with statements by the Apostle Paul in almost every one of his letters that he is praying for the recipients.

Church Management

1 Timothy 3:4-5
[An Elder] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

1 Timothy 5:17
The Elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Acts 4:34-35
For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the Apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Acts 11:29-30
The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the Elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Each of the above passages speaks of the Elders "managing" the church in some way. Two are generic statements about the Elders' role in church management and two are specific to the area of finances.

Shepherding

Acts 20:28 (Paul speaking to the Ephesian Elders)
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.

1 Peter 5:1-3
To the Elders among you, I appeal as a fellow Elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

The word "shepherd" in both these passages simply means "to care for." Elders are to care for the "flock", i.e. the people in the church. In Paul's example, he goes on to talk about the Elders needing to watch over the teaching in the church lest false teachers lead people away from true discipleship.

But Peter does not give any specifics of WHAT "caring for" the body would look like. Rather he gives two examples of WHY Elders should serve:

* Elders serve out of a desire to serve, not out of compulsion
* Elders serve out of eagerness to serve, not a hope of turning service into personal gain and he gives one example of HOW Elders should serve
* Elders should serve by setting an example for the body, not by coercing them.

The image of being a shepherd gives considerable leeway for interpretation, especially as neither Paul nor Peter gives many specifics. But taking Jesus' words in John 10 about being the good shepherd as our model, shepherds need to know their flock and be willing to fight for it and even die for it. We can contrast this with Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 where God rebukes the "shepherds" of Israel for caring more for themselves and their comfort than the condition of the nation.

Peter's command that Elders should be examples to other believers also means that Elders should be modeling Christ-likeness in all areas of their lives. While no one but the Lord has ever lived a perfect life, Elders have a duty to live so that others can follow their example, just as the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 11:1) to follow his example as he follows Christ's example.

Section I.d – The Mandate of Unanimity Among Elders

A working definition of unanimity among Elders involves the following characteristics:

- Each Elder will come to the decisioning discussions fully informed of the decision being presented, prayerful in their seeking God's direction, and unencumbered by relationship inhibitors one with another.
- The Elders agree to the documented decision being made by signing the decision document.
- All executed decision documents will become a permanent part of the governing documentation of the church and will be filed accordingly.
- No passive-aggressive behavior, silent dissent, or post-decision critical gossip is exercised by any of the Elders once a decision has been agreed to and sealed by signature.

Specifically, unanimity in decision-making across the Elders is required for:

- Approval of Annual Ministry Plan
- Approval of Budget to support Annual Ministry Plan
- Any Change to Approved Annual Ministry Plan
- Selection of an Elder
- Appointment of Lead Elder
- Biblical Discipline of an Elder
- Removal of an Elder
- Approval of Elder Sabbatical
- Approving new candidates for Elder,

- Approving new candidates for Staff position (paid and unpaid).
- Biblical Discipline of a Deacon
- Removing Deacons
- Biblical Discipline of a Staff Member (paid and unpaid)
- Removing Paid Staff Members
- Any Changes to the Constitution
- Any Changes to Church Governance
- Any Published Stands & Views on Matters Pertaining to the Church's Ministry

Section 2.e. – Elder Ministry Service & Interaction Dynamics

All Elders will undergo an annual review with a joint group consisting of two Elders and two Voting Members. This is to encourage Elders in their effectiveness, influence, and shepherding ministry.

The Elders will serve for a term of four years unless they:

- Voluntarily resign for personal reasons of a non-divisive origin (ex. prolonged illness, retirement, relocation, etc.),
- Are removed from the ministry due to an uncorrected moral failure.

The four-year term is renewable upon unanimous agreement of the Elder Ministry after an Elder takes one year off between terms. The Elder Ministry will take into account the results of the annual review each Elder has undergone over the prior four years as determinative in the renewal decision. Should an Elder be asked to return to service he will again be presented to the Congregation.

The Elder will be asked to give a testimony of their first term of service before the Congregation, to speak to why they are convicted of God's calling to renew service, and to allow the Congregation to present pre-written questions to the individual for his oral response.

Any member or Elder who has reason to believe that any Elder should no longer serve as an Elder or should be disciplined is obligated to bring such matters to the Elder Ministry, in written form, must be signed, and must be supported by no less than two witnesses to whatever circumstance gives rise to the challenge of the Elder in question continuing in the role. This is in accordance with the scripture from 1 Timothy 5:19, which says: "Do not receive an accusation against an Elder except from two or three witnesses." The Elder Ministry must address all such issues. The individual concerned must be confronted with any charge and given full opportunity to answer such charge. After hearing both sides of the issue, the Elder Ministry must unanimously decide whether removal or discipline is necessary.

The Elder Ministry will appoint a Lead Elder to oversee the Elder Ministry gatherings by collaboratively building the agenda for each gathering, appointing responsibilities for

each point on the agenda, ensuring gathering protocol is maintained, and serving to offer summarizing wisdom and counsel on decisions of Ministry consequence.

The Lead Elder will serve for a twelve-month period at the end of which the Elder Ministry, upon acceptance by the current Lead Elder, may ask said Elder to continue in the role as Lead Elder for another twelve-month term. This would require unanimous agreement from all Elders. If the current Lead Elder is not a candidate for another term then the Elder Ministry will decide who best to serve as the replacement and will need to enter into unanimous agreement accordingly.

Section I.f. – Elders in a Paid Staff Position

As to the day-to-day, week-in-week-out operation of the church, the Elders who serve in a paid Staff position will facilitate.

Decisions regarding the order of services, platform participation, and activities all fall under the responsibility of these Elders.

Paid Staff Elders are accountable to the Elder Ministry for their decisions and, upon occasion, may be challenged by the Elder Ministry regarding decisions that could have been better made or activities that could have been better executed.

Paid Staff Elders are empowered to spend within the limits of the approved budget as written and when planned. Any deviation from the plan-bounded spending must receive Elder Ministry approval prior to any contemplated spend change.

Paid Staff Elders may present primary leaders for designated ministries to the Elder Ministry for discussion and approval prior to assigning or placing such.

As ministry leaders seek to recruit volunteers for ministry support the Paid Staff Elders will oversee them in their selection of volunteers.

All ministry endeavors will be in alignment with the approved annual ministry plan. (see DCC Constitution Article V. Section 1. Ministry & Business of DCC)

The Paid Staff Elders are, in reality, employees of the church and as such are accountable for their assigned responsibilities, quality, and execution of plans as agreed upon with the Elder Ministry.

The Paid Staff Elders will undergo an annual ministry review with the Elder Ministry as a check & balance to both staying on plan, compliance with documented responsibilities, and ministry effectiveness as Paid Staff Elders.

The Elder Ministry will appoint two from among them to facilitate the Paid Staff Elders annual ministry reviews. This will be conducted as two Elder Ministry Elders with one Paid Staff Elder.

The results of the review will be documented for improvement, professional growth, and compensation award data and will become a part of each Paid Staff Elder's employment file.

Section II – Deacon Ministry

The ministry of Deacons is recognized as essential to biblical church governance. The early church first appointed Deacons to serve in an administration role (Acts 6:1-5). DCC recognizes this same role in the overall governance administration of the church's affairs.

In 1 Timothy 3:8-13 we read:
"Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to too much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

Accordingly, either men or women may serve as Deacons and the qualifications for the role of Deacon at DCC are:

- Filled with the Holy Spirit
- Filled with Wisdom
- Respected
- Sincere
- Not Intemperate
- Not Self-Serving
- Bound to the Truths of the Gospel
- Clear Conscience
- If married, Faithful to their Spouse
- Trustworthy
- Not Malicious in Word or Deed
- Manage their Household Affairs Well
- Organized
- Proven & Effective Decision-Making Abilities
- Collaborative in Working with other Deacons, Pastors, Elders, and Congregants

Lastly, DCC requires that any Candidate for Deacon shall have been an active member of the church for a minimum of two (2) years.

The process for selecting and appointing Deacons is:

- The Elder Ministry will announce to the Congregation the need for a Deacon(s) and will ensure the Congregation is aware of the qualifications for candidacy.
- The Elder Ministry will appoint a Deacon Selection Committee from among the Congregation to administer the candidacy, vetting, and selection process.
- The Congregation will submit names of men and women candidates for Deacon to the Deacon Selection Committee with a written narrative as to why various candidates qualify for the role.
- The Deacon Selection Committee will perform the candidate vetting process as follows:
    - Doctrinal Alignment Assessment. A list of fundamental doctrines the candidate would be asked to write about or speak to indicating their commitment to the fundamental truths of the Gospel.
    - If married, a direct interview with Spouse regarding their willingness to have their Spouse serve as a Deacon.
    - Interview three Closes Friends or Associates. Review life and character of candidate with these people.
    - Assess Multiple "Defining Moments" in the candidates Life. Understanding what and how these defining moments have sculpted the character and way of the candidate.
    - Assess Time Commitments outside the Deacon Ministry to understand the workable balance required.
- After this vetting process, the Deacon Selection Committee will make a determination whether to recommend the candidate(s) to the Congregation.
- Those names selected by the Deacon Selection Committee will be placed before the Congregation for a period of at least three Sundays for their prayerful consideration. Any member believing that they have a reason that a nominee is not qualified will be asked to bring that matter to the attention of the Deacon Selection Committee. This notification should be in writing and must be signed to warrant consideration.
- The Deacon Selection Committee will ask the Elder Ministry to call a Membership Meeting to make the final submission of Candidates to the Voting Membership for vote via a majority.
- Once candidates are chosen for service the Elder Ministry will publically bless and commission them for service.
- All Deacons will serve for a term of four years unless they:
    - Voluntarily resign for personal reasons of a non-divisive origin (ex. prolonged illness, retirement, relocation, etc.),
    - Are removed from the ministry due to an uncorrected moral failure.

The four-year term is renewable upon a majority vote of the membership of the Congregation.