

The Role of Congregational Elder for Antioch Fort Collins

Vision and Desired Outcomes

Biblical Foundations

In the Old Testament, *elders* played an important role in the governance of Israel from its earliest years (Exodus 3:16; 12:21) and eventually, these respected leaders became a part of the oversight structure inspired by Jethro (Ex 18:3; Joshua 24:31).

In the New Testament, the book of Acts and the Epistles also affirm the role of *elder* within the Church as those who serve by: 1) monitoring the spiritual pulse of its people and praying accordingly; 2) guarding the Body's doctrine and standards; and 3) protecting its unity and purity in order to realize its primary mission: spreading the Good News of Jesus and expanding His kingdom. The following are additional descriptions of the ways that elders collectively serve and interact within the local church to bring glory to God:

- **Elders humbly commit to unity under God's authority.** The mandate of elders is to continually submit themselves to the authority of the Father and to one another. In so doing, their relationships with one another are marked by love, trust and affection. By striving for true unity, the elders seek to be able to have open, candid conversations about difficult issues and work toward consensus as they discern God's best (Eph 4:1-3, 32; 5:1-2).
- **Elders take a big picture view of the congregation's needs and leave operational oversight to others (Acts 6:1-7).** The elders focus on maintaining the movement's DNA boundaries (Eph 2:20-21), prayer for the Body and serve as a clearing house for the local church's vision and core strategies. As noted, however, their primary focus is not the operational execution of this vision, as that is best left to ministry leaders, including staff.
- **Elders encourage, challenge and shepherd.** The elder's role is also to offer guidance, counsel and accountability to ministry servants, including staff as needed and by design. Additionally, they prayerfully intercede on behalf of the congregation and visit those with special needs.

The Vision of Elders

Congregations attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:11-13)

Desired Outcomes

The fullness of Christ is marked by an environment where:

- **Jesus' message and method is the cornerstone to which the congregation is aligned**
- **Truth is spoken in love and authenticity**
- **The elders' collaborative oversight models wisdom, humility and Spirit power**
- **Unity of purpose and vision among the church's servants is self-evident to outsiders**
- **The elders' servant leadership exemplifies what it means to equip the saints**
- **Generosity accelerates as a result of a growing confidence in the church's leadership**
- **Stories of transformation within the church are a common reality**

Qualifications

Character Qualifications

The Bible doesn't offer a detailed list of traits for every role within the Body, but it is far from silent on the subject of elders. In multiple passages of Scripture, a portrait emerges as to the type of Christian who should be selected for this important role. Elders are to:

- **Be mature believers** *"He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil."* – *I Timothy 3:6*
- **Be committed to guiding their family** *"An elder must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?"* – *I Timothy 3:4-5*
- **Be able to receive Biblical instruction and teach others** *"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine."* – *Titus 1:9*

- **Be humble and submissive to God's will for their lives and the church** *"He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined."* – Titus 1:7
- **Have a good reputation inside and outside of the church** *"An overseer must be above reproach...He must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."* – I Timothy 3:2, 7 (NASB)
- **Be generous towards God's work with their time, talent and tithe** *"For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward"* Titus 1:7 (NASB)

Spiritual Gift Qualifications

The role of elder is very much like the equipping gifts of Ephesians 4:11 – apostleship, prophecy, evangelist, pastor and teacher – and each of these capacities are ideally represented within the elder team. Other essential giftings for this team include discernment, encouragement and wisdom.

Apostleship: The gift of Apostleship is the divine ability to start and oversee teams that launch new churches or ministry initiatives.

Traits: Adventurous, Culturally Sensitive, Cause Driven, Starters.
 Example: People who initiate and cast a vision for new churches.
 References: 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11-12; Rom. 1:5; Acts 13:2-3

Prophecy: The gift of Prophecy is the divine enablement to receive and communicate the message of God through a divinely appointed utterance, and to train and deploy related teams.

Traits: Discerning, Encouraging, Convincing, Compelling
 Example: Persons hear from God and help people.
 References: Acts 2:17; Acts 21:10-14; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 13:2, 14:3

Evangelism: The gift of Evangelism is the divine enablement to effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers so they respond in faith and move toward discipleship, and to train and deploy related teams.

Traits: Respected, Influential, Spiritual
 Example: Persons who are anointed in sharing their life in Christ with love, relevance and power.
 References: Eph. 4:11; Acts 8:26-40; Luke 19:1-10

Shepherding: The gift of Shepherding is the divine enablement to nurture, care for, and guide people toward ongoing spiritual maturity, and to train and deploy related teams.

Traits: Influencing, Nurturing, Guiding

Example: Persons who enjoy caring for groups of believers and building their faith.

References: Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-4; John 10:1-18

Teaching: The gift of Teaching is the divine enablement to understand and clearly explain the message and method of God in a way that accelerates faithfulness as well as the coaching of related apprentices and teams.

Traits: Disciplined, Authoritative, Articulate, Perceptive

Example: Persons who communicate the Bible clearly resulting in changed hearts.

References: Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Acts 18:24-28; 2 Tim. 2:2

Discernment: The gift of Discernment is the divine ability to discern between the world, the flesh and the devil in people and places in order to pray for someone or respond in practical ministry.

Traits: Intuitive, Insightful, Perceptive, Truthful

Example: Persons who are able to understand what is not readily visible and pinpoint spiritual reality.

References: Mt 16:23; 1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 5:1-4; Matt. 16:21-23

Encouragement: The gift of Encouragement is the divine enablement to present truth so as to strength, comfort, or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith.

Traits: Positive, Motivating, Affirming, Reassuring

Example: Persons who provide affirmation and are “cheerleaders” within a ministry or relationship.

References: Rom. 12:8; Acts 11:22-24; Acts 15:30-32

Wisdom: The gift of Wisdom is the divine enablement to speak God’s wisdom for a specific situation; seeing and saying what God sees and what God is saying.

Traits: Insightful, Wise, Experienced

Example: Persons who are able to provide wise counsel that is rooted in God (James 1:5) and from life experience.

References: Mt 22:18-22; 1 Cor. 12:8; James 3:13-18; 1 Cor. 2:3-14; Jer. 9:23-24

Life Qualifications

As with any leadership role, serving as an elder demands that a person have completed a number of developmental steps before being eligible. What follows are general guidelines that are used in the screening process:

- **A disciple of Jesus for 10+ years**
- **An active participant in an Antioch church for 5+ years**
- **The completion of an affirmed Antioch training school**
- **An active worshipper and servant in the church for 3+ years**
- **A track record of faithful giving within the church**
- **A reputation for investing in the lives of others**
- **A proven track record of maintaining confidentiality**
- **Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, including managing conflict**
- **A reputation for being a team player**

Primary Contributions

As introduced above, the role of elder is multi-faceted and what follows are the kinds of contributions that these servants can expect to make over time:

Provide Spiritual Oversight

- Articulate with clarity to those within and beyond the church regarding the congregation's vision, mission, values, beliefs and philosophy;
- Confront false teaching and behavior contradictory to biblical truth and implement appropriate church discipline;
- Implement and monitor alignment to congregational boundaries;

Shepherd the Flock

- Model community by being an active participant or leader of a Life Group;
- Participate (as needed) in the biblical process of conflict resolution outlined by Jesus in Matthew 18;
- Direct people into appropriate processes for guidance, assistance, and problem resolution;
- Respond to inquiries from the church body, staff, or public;

Manage the Church

- Participate in the process of stewarding financial and physical resources;
- Encourage the pastor, his or her staff, and ministry servants;
- Participate in an annual review of the pastor alongside of the Zone Pastors for offering feedback to BOA and evaluation of anointed fit;
- Give initial approval for all church planting applicants;
- Give final approval for all staff hiring and firing (local to international);
- Form and empower short-term teams to accomplish essential objectives

Pray for the Sick

- In special circumstances, visit participating members who are sick (at home or in the hospital) for private counsel

Time Commitment for Elders

The following represents a general overview of the time commitment for this role:

- Elders' meeting—one session per month (~ 2-3hrs);
- Elders' retreat—one weekend per year;
- Two to four hours (on average) per month for review of Elder board e-mails, draft policies, meeting preparation, special assignments and team conference calls;
- If serious issues arise that require immediate attention by the elder board, additional hours may be required outside of regular elders' meetings; (This happens infrequently, but is a possibility.)
- Annual review of each Elder offering feedback and evaluation for anointed fit.