

## Elders at Christ Fellowship

Christ Fellowship is governed by a team of elders. We believe this is in harmony with the New Testament teaching regarding church leadership, that the church be led by a plurality of qualified leaders (more than one person). The Bible instructs elders to oversee the church and care for the flock. They are the primary group who are accountable for the overall health and effectiveness of the church. Ultimately, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, so the essence of the elders' responsibility is to seek his direction in overseeing, guiding and caring for the church.

The qualifications for eldership are laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and we take these qualifications very seriously. All elders have served in our church for enough time for these character qualities to be observed and confirmed by many, and we have a thorough process for elder selection.

An “elder-led” church is different than some other forms of church government. We are not a pastor-led church, meaning that we are not led by one person, such as the senior pastor, but by a plurality of leaders. Our senior pastor is one of the elders and works with the rest of the team to lead the church. We are also not a congregationally-led church, which is why we do not have business meetings during which the congregation votes on directional issues. The elders seek input from a variety of people, especially our church's overall leadership team. The elders have the authority to make overall directional decisions for the church.

An elder team has some similarities with a typical organization's “board of directors,” but in many ways it is dissimilar. The role is a practical one but even more so a spiritual one. Our elders serve as shepherds of our church, who seek to love and care for the rest of the church body. They serve as an example to the church and also teach and mentor others in the faith. They understand that the true leader of the church is Jesus himself, the “head of the church.” Because of this, seeking his direction in prayer is a significant part of the elder function.

The advantages to being an elder-led church are many. Accountability is provided within the team format. Leadership is provided through men with a variety of gifts and decisions are made through the wisdom of multiple godly people. An elder-led church also escapes the political environment that can happen in a congregationally-ruled church, where churches are often split by voting blocks and church politics. Another advantage is that they are able to make decisions in a timely manner to ensure the ongoing health and effectiveness of the church.

Our elders typically meet twice a month for “agenda meetings,” and seasonally they meet weekly for study of the Word and prayer,” where often their wives join them to evaluate our church in light of the New Testament and to pray for the church.

For biblical teaching on eldership, please see the ***Biblical Passages on Elders*** section below. We recommend Gene Getz's book, *Elders and Leaders*, for an excellent biblical treatment of what it means to be an elder. We've provided answers to the ***Common Questions about Elders*** section below.

## Responsibilities of Christ Fellowship Elders

*provide overall direction and final authority*

### Personally model Christ-like living

- Elders model people helping people find and follow Christ
- Each elder ministers to each other in intentional spiritual friendships
- Elders model Christlikeness by growing and impacting for Christ as ones who know, trust, and obey God, giving generously, serving selflessly and reproducing regularly

### Pray and Study the Word of God

- Pray for Christ Fellowship and for those in need of healing
- Study the Word to grow personally and for the church's health

### Oversee health of the body

- Provide ultimate authority for the church
- Resolve difficult conflicts, sin issues; oversee restoration

### Give overall direction

- Set the overall direction of the church
- Have authority to change church by-laws
- Guard doctrine, mission, identity, culture; approve white papers
- Provide input into church communication
- Approve large decisions, new ventures, new campuses
- Establish church-wide policies
- Review church metrics and cultural marks
- Appoint new elders

### Care for the senior pastor

- Hold accountable and support as a friend and confidant
- Provide objective input towards church direction
- Conduct an annual review
- Provide accountability for broader kingdom ministry
- Set compensation; hire and fire

### Care for the staff

- Direct compensation for paid staff; set a salary grid
- Approve hires of direct reports to senior pastor
- Oversee fulfillment of staff reviews
- Provide oversight of office staff culture and working environment
- Provide input, recommendations and approval of staff benefits

### Carry out fiduciary responsibility

- Set and approve the budget oversee its implementation
- Approve large expenditures including capital projects
- Responsible for financial stewardship
- Meet annually with an external auditor to review operations
- Ordain pastors and approve housing allowances
- Approve proposed legal contracts
- Approve proposed designated giving and mission trips

## Common Questions about Elders

### ***Why is our church polity centered on multiple elders?***

Because we believe this is the biblical model. The term elder is always used in the plural. Each church in the New Testament is lead by more than one elder. It is dangerous to put too much authority in one person's hands. In his wisdom, God set up elder teams to watch over local churches.

### ***Do the elders oversee just Christ Fellowship – Eldorado, or is their scope inclusive of future campuses that are being discussed, such as Living Spring Fellowship?***

Today their scope includes all campuses of Christ Fellowship. In the future if we mutually decide for a campus to become an independent church they would develop their own elder team. It would also make sense in some campuses to have an on-site team providing leadership whether or not they are called “elders.”

### ***What are the qualifications for elders?***

They are the biblical qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. We use a [tool for evaluation](#) that briefly describes each trait. In addition we look for ones who have demonstrated that they are really on the Christ Fellowship team (Phil 2), owning the vision, modeling Christ-like behavior and demonstrating devotion by their serving and giving.

### ***What number of elders does there need to be on the elder Team?***

We do not have a set number, but do not want to have less than three or more than twelve for diverse enough wisdom and ease of decision making. So far in our history we have found about seven to be ideal.

### ***How are ones selected to be elders?***

See our Process below for the specific steps. The current elders appoint new elders, confirmed by circles of people who know them.

### ***Who makes up the Christ Fellowship Elder Team?***

Don Closson, Adam Ewing, Nick Ganter, Daniel Ramirez, Dave Lewis, Bruce Miller, Ron Ryan and Mark Wilson

### ***Why is the Senior Pastor one of the elders?***

Biblically the elders are to “pastor” (Ephesians 5; Acts 20, 1 Peter 5). It would be difficult for the senior pastor to provide leadership without being an elder. In churches where the senior pastor is not an elder we have seen dysfunction, confusion and division.

### ***Do staff members (i.e., other Pastors) serve on the Elder Team?***

Generally other staff members do not serve on the Elder Team. We have seen that dynamic undermine the leadership of the Senior Pastor who is the overall leader of the staff. It also creates an awkward situation for another staff member to be involved in the Senior Pastor's annual review and compensation.

***What is the difference between the roles of the pastors and staff, and elders?***

The pastors and other staff are generally, but not always, paid for their work; elders are not paid, so they each have a unique vantage point. Generally, the elders provide overall direction and the staff executes the ministry plans day to day.

***What responsibility and accountability exists among the elders?***

Elders have a responsibility and accountability first of all to Jesus Christ (Acts 20) who ultimately appointed them to serve the church for which he gave his own blood. Secondly they are accountable to each other. Thirdly, they are accountable to the church family. Additionally we have set up a safeguard for the unexpected. “In the case of irresolvable conflict among the elders and/or pastors of Christ Fellowship, two or more elders or pastors shall approach Chase Oaks Church to settle the conflict. The Chase Oaks Elders will serve as a mediator and all sides will agree to abide by the decision of the mediator.”

***What is the term of “office” for an elder at Christ Fellowship?***

We do not view eldership as an “office” but a role of service to the Lord. The elders at Christ Fellowship are not “elders for life,” but rather serve the Lord and the congregation at the pleasure of our Lord. An elder is not merely a church position, but rather a stewardship of service to Christ. As we do not have terms for those who serve with the children nor for pastors, so we do not for elders either.

***Are there age restrictions for elders?***

Elders need to be mature believers having a solid foundation in the faith, a proper standing among the body of Christ, and the community around them. We see thirty as a minimum age. Elders at Christ Fellowship that serve as part of the Elder Team have voluntarily set the age of 65 to be the point when one cycles off the regular team and then begins serving on a Senior Council which gives input to the current elders for the overall direction of the church. We have established an age-limit of 65 so that we continue to have younger thinking on our elder team. The Senior Council meets with the current elders quarterly for prayer and twice a year for discussion of matters before the church usually in January and June.

***How often does the Elder Team meet?***

Our elders typically meet twice a month for an “agenda meetings,” and seasonally we meet weekly for study of the Word and prayer,” where often our wives join us to evaluate our church in light of the New Testament and to pray for the church. Annually we take three days for an off-site planning retreat.

***How can a member of the church raise a question, area of concern, or provide a word of encouragement to the Elder Team?***

Each elder would welcome a conversation on any matter regarding the church. We seek the input of the church family. Elder contact information is publicly provided on the church website.

***Can church members participate in Elder Team meetings?***

Christ Fellowship elder meetings are open to the ideas and concerns of all actively participating members.

Members are welcome to bring matters before the elders directly, during scheduled meetings, or at special meetings called to discuss specific issues. Church member participation in an Elder Team meeting will be coordinated through the Senior Pastor's executive assistant.

***We've heard of the Timothy Team, who and what are they in relationship to the Elder Team?***

The purpose of the Timothy Team is to help develop emerging young leaders to be future elders, pastors or missionaries by exposing them to the working of our elder team for one year. They participate in all discussions, but have no voting authority. Typically the elders invite two men to work with us for a year.

***Do elders "vote" on decisions?***

Most of time our decisions are by informal consensus. At times, such when required legally, we will take a formal vote so that it can be included in the official minutes.

***What happens if the elders disagree on an issue?***

We usually wait. If one person or more disagrees with the majority strongly, we will take time to pray, aware that the Lord might be showing something to one person that the rest of us do not see. Sometimes one person will not come to agreement, but will encourage the rest to go ahead even though he cannot see it.

***Does Bruce have ultimate authority over the elders?***

Bruce remains under the authority of the elders even as he serves as one of the elders. He does not have veto power over the elders.

***Can a woman be an elder?***

Biblically elders are always masculine. While we believe that God has gifted women to serve, minister and shepherd, we believe that the Bible says men should be elders.

***Are the elder's meeting minutes available for a church member to read?***

Yes, any member can contact the senior pastor's assistant\* to get a copy of elder minutes. They are public information.

***How can someone with a problem, sickness or issue come to an elder's meeting?***

Simply contact the senior pastor's assistant\* and they can help you with when the meetings are and arrange your visit with the elders.

\*The senior pastor's assistant is Laurie Wright. Contact her at [lwright@cfhome.org](mailto:lwright@cfhome.org) or 972.547.7017.

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## Process to become an Elder at Christ Fellowship

### Prayerful identification by current elders

- Current elders pray through possible candidates for a considerable time.

- Elders personally spend time with a candidate during the prayer process before the person is aware he might be a candidate.
- Elders consider the giving and serving of elder candidates.

#### Decision to proceed with evaluation

- The elders empower the senior pastor to approach the candidate to ask if he would be willing to serve and explain the process of evaluation to him, and to his wife if he is married.
- Candidate prays about the decision of proceeding with the evaluation process. If married, husband and wife must be in agreement to go forward.

#### Confidential evaluation and meeting with elders

- Candidate fills out an evaluation on himself as does his wife based on the qualities listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- Elders and designated staff leadership team fill out evaluations; results provided to elders in advance of meeting with candidate.
- Candidate and wife meet with the elders to discuss potential future role as an elder at Christ Fellowship. After the candidate leaves the meeting, elders will decide whether to continue the process in a more public way (the process is confidential until this point).

#### Open Evaluations

- Candidate's Group fills out evaluations.
- Service team members who have worked with him fill out evaluations.
- Pastoral Staff who know him fill out evaluations.
- Contact is made with some in the business community to verify the candidate's reputation with those outside the church.

#### Presentation to Church Family

- Present the candidate to the church body for final approval in worship services. If anyone has an issue why the candidate should not be an elder they are to contact senior pastor personally.
- Present the new elder to the Church in worship services.

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## Evaluation of a Potential Christ Fellowship Elder

*“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect ... He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.” 1 Timothy 3:1-4, 6, 7*

*“An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He 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.” Titus 1:6-9*

### **An Opportunity to Evaluate Personally**

In the Evaluation Form are 20 characteristics of maturity taken from Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus (compiled in *The Measure of a Man* by Gene Getz), followed by a seven-point evaluation scale ranging from dissatisfied to satisfied. Read each question carefully and then circle the number that best represents where you are in your spiritual journey. Be as honest and objective as possible, but don’t be too hard on yourself. Give yourself credit where credit is due.

### **An Opportunity to Evaluate Another Person**

Evaluate the person according to your personal knowledge of them. If you do not have any insight into a specific quality just leave it blank. Be as honest and objective as possible, neither softening answers nor operating for a perfectionist standard. Feel free to write comments if you have them.

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## **Senior Council of former Christ Fellowship Elders**

- Participation as a Senior Council member will allow these elders who have reached the 65 age limit to have membership as long as they don’t move outside of the area, actively participate in council activities on behalf of Christ Fellowship, and regularly join in church meetings and services.
- While those on the Senior Council will not attend all the elder meetings, members will continue to receive the Elder Team meeting minutes following each scheduled meeting.
- On an ongoing basis, members of the Council will be invited to provide input to the Elder Team on church issues via email to the Elder Team.
- The Council members will be invited to attend the opening half hour of the last elders’ meeting of each quarter, to join the opening period of prayer, and to share any observations or areas of need to which they have become aware.
- The Senior Council members will be invited to attend an annual pre-retreat dinner, during the week prior to the elders’ retreat, to provide input directly to the elders concerning church matters.
- Additionally, prior to July, the Senior Council members will be invited to an informal meeting for prayer and discussion with the current elders. A dinner will follow this time with wives of the existing Elder Team and Senior Council members invited to attend. The timing of this meeting and dinner will coincide with Bruce’s summer time of reflection, which all elders and Senior Council members are encouraged to participate in individually on behalf of the church.

- Senior Council members will receive briefing papers on issues (as they are produced) prior to major directional announcements given to the church leadership and congregation. These briefing papers will be sent to them ahead of general circulation directly from the Senior Pastor.
  - Finally, the Senior Council will be personally consulted from time to time for input into various church matters to assist the Elder Team and in support of overall church communication prior to leadership and congregation communication decision points.
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## Timothy Program

**Purpose:** to help develop emerging young leaders to be future elders, pastors or missionaries by exposing them to the working of our elder team for one year.

**Target:** young men who have potential for significant future leadership.

### Qualifications

- not a new convert
- basic discipleship in place, established as a believer
- giving to the church
- serving in the church bearing leadership responsibilities
- in a LifeGroup
- endorsed, sponsored by a current elder
- been in Christ Fellowship for at least 12 months
- potential for future eldership or similar leadership
- moving toward qualifications of an elder, no large gaps
- not a Christ Fellowship elder candidate in the next 3 years.
- be a person of high confidentiality
- if married, have full support of spouse
- able to fully participate for most of the year

### Plan

- meet with the elders in all regular meetings for 12 months
- occasionally excuse self for sensitive issues such as personnel matters
- meet with our elder life group for 12 months
- attend elder retreat (2-3 days)
- meet one on one with each elder twice to talk personally about the role of an elder and gain their input for personal growth (1 per month) at your initiation.
- read Gene Getz' book, *Elders & Leaders*, and study all New Testament passages on leadership; discuss these with the elders in a special summer meeting.

- write a pre-experience report on what you hope to gain; write a report at the end on what God has taught you in 12 months and giving input on how to improve the Timothy experience; share each with the elders.

### **Schedule**

- Start in July or January.
- No more than two at a time, or so elders and “Timothys” are at most 10.

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## Biblical Passages on Elders

### **Acts 11:30**

This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

### **Acts 14:23**

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

### **Acts 15:22 (16:4)**

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

### **Acts 21:17-19**

When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

### **Acts 20:17-32**

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace. “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not

hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 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. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

### **1 Timothy 3:1-7**

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.

### **1 Timothy 4:14**

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

### **1 Timothy 5:17-20**

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.” Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

### **Titus 1:5-9**

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He 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.

### **James 5:14**

Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

**1 Peter 5:1-4**

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

**Hebrews 13:7**

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

**Hebrews 13:17**

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.