

Ordained "pastors" at Christ Fellowship

Ministers: All believers in Jesus Christ are called to be ministers. Each of us is a member of the Body of Christ with a role to play in ministering to each other and reaching out to the unchurched. As ministers we care for each other. We also believe that all followers of Jesus are "priests" in the sense that we each have direct access to God. And further, each of us, male and female, are sent by Jesus on mission. In that sense we are each missionaries, ones sent by Jesus to represent him in this world. Any believer can baptize another believer and can serve the Lord's Supper (Matt 28:18-20). We do not see a clergy-lay distinction, nor a male-female distinction as if certain believers have an elevated status above others as priests, pastors, ministers, or missionaries. However, it is appropriate to pay people who dedicate their time to vocational ministry.

The term "Pastor." In the Bible, the Greek noun translated "pastor" is only found in Ephesians 4. The Greek verb is found in Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5 and is usually translated "to shepherd." Spiritual leaders who "shepherd," care for and guide others, can biblically be referred to as pastors, which would include small group leaders. However, in modern English usage the word "pastor," is usually reserved for people who serve in a leadership role on a church staff.

Ordination: Ordination is not found in the Bible, but it is a common cultural practice. To ordain generally means to officially decree or enact something. In liturgical religious churches, it means to convey holy orders, install, or induct a person. At Christ Fellowship we believe that we essentially "ordain" a person who fits the above description of a pastor by giving them a role, position description and salary on the staff. In the United States tax code, ordained ministers who fit IRS guidelines are offered a housing allowance, which is a financial benefit. Our approach is to ordain people on the paid staff whose position falls under the IRS guidelines. Our practice is to have a person meet with the Elders for a sacred moment of consecration in which we ordain them by laying our hands on them and prayerfully ordaining them to serve as a pastor at Christ Fellowship.

Titles: On our staff we do not make a big deal about titles and resist the notion of relative status of one role over another. Rather, our approach is to give titles that are descriptive of the role, and as easy to understand as possible for the average person. If the title "Pastor" fits a particular role best, then we use that title regardless of a person's gender.