

Saint Paul Church of Sacramento
Kenneth R. Reece, Senior Pastor

Elder Board Task Force

ELDERSHIP RESEARCH REPORT



June 13, 2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the 2020 annual church Business Meeting, Senior Pastor Kenneth Reece expressed a desire to establish an Elder Board/Elder Council. If approved by our congregation, Elders would be designated Officers of Saint Paul and along with the Senior Pastor would share the responsibilities of spiritual oversight, church governance and discipline, and shepherding our congregation.

In January 2021, Leadership Conference, Pastor Reece led a Bible study on “Biblical Eldership.” The presentation covered the following topics:

- Definition of Elder
- Office of Elder
- Plurality of Elders
- Qualifications of Elders
- Functions of Elders
- Difference in Elder and Deacon
- Need for Elders for St. Paul
- Next Steps: Voting and Involvement of Women in Decision Making

In February 2022, the Elder Board Task Force was established under the direction of Executive Pastor Lamont Harris. The Task Force began meeting in March 2022. Deena Wilson serves as the team lead/facilitator, and current team members include: Deacon Michael Cubit, Minister Jerry Springer, Monique Jennings, Kayla Matthews, Rhonda Valdry. Former team member included the late Minister Francis Moore.

The Elder Board Task Force was organized to further explore the biblical concept of eldership with the aim of presenting its findings to our congregation who would have the opportunity to vote on the establishment of an Elder Board/Elder Council. If our congregation approves having an Elder Board/Elder Council, a secondary purpose of the Task Force would be to identify best practices for transitioning to an Elder Board/Elder Council to include the criteria for candidates, the appointment process, terms, and requisite training for selected elders.

The Elder Board Task Force’s efforts to date include:

- 1) Conducting additional research on the topic of eldership. The research included the Bible, several books, and Internet articles written by credible sources (see Reference section below).
- 2) Interviewing other churches that have Elder Boards/Elder Councils.

This report summarizes the Task Force’s findings and aims to provide useful information to assist our congregation as we prepare to vote on establishing an Elder Board/Elder Council. This report is intended to supplement, not repeat or replace Pastor Reece’s 2021 Bible study on *Biblical Eldership*.

In this report, the term Elder Board and Elder Council is used interchangeably with the same meaning.

II. THE NEED FOR CHURCH GOVERNANCE

1. Scripture clearly teaches that God is the God of order. For example, 1 Corinthians 14:33 states, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” 1 Corinthians 14:40 states “let all things be done decently and in order.” Titus 1:5 states “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”
2. God is very clear in His Word about how His Church is to be organized and managed. First, Christ is the head of the Church and its supreme authority ([Ephesians 1:22](#); [4:15](#); [Colossians 1:18](#)). Second, the local Church is to be autonomous, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations ([Titus 1:5](#)). Third, His Church is to be governed by spiritual leadership consisting of two main offices - elders and deacons ([Acts 14:23](#), [Titus 1:5](#); [Acts 6:1-15](#)).
3. The idea of the eldership originated with God, not with man. God recognized the need for leadership among His people and within His Church, in order to carry out His purposes here on earth.

III. WHAT IS AN ELDER

An elder is person who has been appointed by God to shepherd a local church, who meets the biblical qualifications of an elder ([1 Timothy 3:1-7](#), [Titus 1:5-9](#), [1 Peter 5:1-4](#)), who has been gifted to teach the Scriptures, who possesses godly character, and who has been gifted to lead the affairs and direction of a local church.

Practically speaking, an elder is a person who is valued for spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and maturity, and holds a position of responsibility and authority in the church. The word means maturity, development and stability, and is more than merely a person of many years.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *zāpēn* is translated “elder.” The early Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, used the Greek word *presbuteros* for “elder.” In the Gospels and Acts, “elder” (*presbuteros*) is the most common word for an official church leader ([Acts 11:30](#); [14:23](#); [15:2](#); [4:5-6](#); [20:17-18](#); [22:5](#)). In the epistles, elder (*presbuteros*) refers to “older man” and “older woman” who may or may not be official leaders in the church, depending on the context” ([1 Timothy 5:1-2](#), [5:17](#), [5:19](#); [Titus 1:5](#); [James 5:14](#), [1 Peter 5:1](#)).

“Elders” is used synonymously with the word “Overseers” (*episkopos*), Bishop (*episcopē/episkopos*) and Pastor (*poimen*) in the Bible ([Acts 20:28](#); [Ephesians 4:11](#); [1 Timothy 3:1-2](#); [Titus 1:7](#); [1 Peter 2:25](#)). The term *elder* may refer to the dignity of the office, while the term *bishop/overseer* describes its authority and

duties([1 Peter 2:25](#), [5:1-4](#)). Elders are called to “shepherd” the church ([1 Peter 5:1-4](#)). In other words, Elders, Pastors and Overseers are all referring to the same group of leaders in the New Testament.

Concerning the word Pastor (*poimen*), it is found only once in the New Testament, in Ephesians 4:11: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.” The two terms “pastors” and “teachers” are referring to a single position, a pastor-teacher. The pastor-teacher is the spiritual shepherd of a particular local church.

IV. RELATED BIBLE PASSAGES ON ELDERSHIP

At Saint Paul Church, we believe that the Bible is from God and that the Bible is true. According to the Bible, we believe in the absolute authority, infallibility and sufficiency of the Bible. ([2 Timothy 3:14-17](#); [2 Peter 1:19](#); [Proverbs 30:5](#)).

Scripture teaches that God has established the local church as His primary means of furthering His Kingdom here on earth and that the Church has been given all things that pertain to life and godliness ([2 Peter 1:3](#)). Therefore, we look to God’s Word, the Bible, to inform us as to the role, responsibilities and qualifications of elders.

Refer to Attachment A, Key New Testament Verses on Eldership in the Church and Attachment B, Topical Overview of Elders in the Bible for a more comprehensive list of scripture on eldership.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

Rule and Oversight ([1 Timothy 5:17](#), [Acts 20:28](#), [1 Peter 5:1-5](#))

It is the responsibility of the elders to rule and oversee and govern the church. This means they are to lead and direct the congregation and bear responsibility for the administration of the operations of the church.

Care and Protection ([Acts 20:28-30](#), [1 Peter 5:1-3](#))

It is the responsibility of the elders to care for the congregation in a similar way that a loving shepherd would watch over his flock. Elders are responsible to protect the sheep from a number of adversaries and enemies that would seek to harm their life.

Prayer and Proclamation ([Acts 6:3-4](#))

It is the responsibility of the elders to be primarily devoted to the ministry of prayer and ministry of the Word. Elders should guard themselves from distractions and diversions that would deter them from being fervent in the ministry of prayer and the ministry of proclaiming the word of the gospel (“the Word” - logos: word of the gospel).

Instruction and Equipping ([Titus 1:9](#), [Ephesians 4:11-12](#))

It is the responsibility of the elders to instruct and equip the church for gospel ministry. Church members need to be taught, trained and prepared for the ministry God has called all believers to complete.

Authority and Accountability ([Hebrews 13:17](#))

It is the responsibility of the elders to practice authority over the congregation and help the church obey and submit to their leadership. As leaders in a position of authority, elders will be held accountable before Christ for how they lead the church.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

Biblical Qualifications:

According to [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#); [Titus 1:5-9](#); [1 Peter 5:1-4](#), we find that the qualifications for elders center around 1) character (spiritual, moral and social), 2) knowledge of and adherence to Scripture and sound theology, and 3) faithfulness to spouse and leadership in the home.

- exhibit exemplary spiritual, moral and social character
- aspire to/desire the office of Elder although it is not a position to which one appoints oneself
- possess godly character- not self-willed, a lover of what is good, just, fair, holy, devout, and self-controlled
- live their life above reproach inside and outside the Church
- faithful husband to his wife, and must demonstrate good leadership within his family
- students of Scripture holding to sound theology, have a solid mature faith (not a recent convert) demonstrated by a life of devotion and obedience to God
- able to teach Biblical doctrine and refute error
- demonstrate a genuine concern for the people within our their local church

Local churches often set additional requirements including but not limited to:

- be in good standing with the local church
- agree and embrace the church's mission, vision, values and doctrinal statements
- financially support the local church with tithes and offerings
- maintain positive working relationships with others

The spiritual gifts needed to effectively perform the duties of an elder include:

- Leadership
- Encouragement
- Wisdom
- Mercy

Elders should have demonstrated the following characteristics/skills prior to consideration:

- Confidentiality
- Spiritual maturity

- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Excellent community skills
- Team player
- Problem solver

Individuals should not be considered for eldership based upon:

- Popularity
- Personality
- Business experience
- Wealth
- Education
- Prestige in the Community

VII. WHAT IS AN ELDER-LED CONGREGATION?

There are four main approaches or styles of church government: 1) Episcopal, 2) Presbyterian, 3) Congregational, and 4) Non-governmental. Each approach is complex and has many variations.

Historically, Saint Paul, as with most Baptist churches, follows a “congregational” model of church governance. This form of church governance is local-democratic. Congregational churches hold the belief that Christ is the head of the church. Each local church is self-governing and operates autonomously, answering directly to God. They typically have a single elder (usually called the “Pastor” or “Senior Pastor”) who is chosen by the congregation to be the spiritual leader of the church. The Pastor is responsible for setting the vision of the church and does most of the preaching and teaching. The pastor may have a pastoral staff and is often assisted by the deacons. In congregational churches the local assembly of believers has authority to make decisions pertaining to the church. This authority is exercised usually in the form of the majority vote of the congregation on critical issues pertaining to the local body.

Episcopalians and Presbyterians churches also hold the belief that Christ is the head of the church. However, they have a hierarchical structure. Episcopalians entrust the leadership of the church to bishops, who they view as the successors of the apostles. The Bishops are distinct from and superior to the officials at the level of the local church. Presbyterian Church government is hierarchical in that it has various levels of authority, including elders that are also above the local church.

Non-governmental churches minimize the need for formal church structure and stress the importance on being led by the Holy Spirit who influences and guides believers in a direct manner (and not so much through an organization). In these churches, preaching and teaching is not limited to the elders but freedom is given to allow the Holy Spirit to prompt others to share God’s Word.

An “Elder-Led” congregation is similar to a Congregational church. However, elder-led congregations appoint multiple elders, who serve as officers of the church and work alongside the Pastor/Sr. Pastor. Together they provide spiritual

oversight, and are responsible for preaching, teaching, shepherding and governing the local congregation. The input of the local church is sought, in the form of voting, on critical issues impacting the welfare of the church such as:

- 1) calling and termination of the Senior Pastor;
- 2) the church's annual budget;
- 3) financial loans;
- 4) the sale or purchase of property or the construction of buildings; and
- 4) revisions to the church's By-Laws.

VIII. PROS AND CONS OF AN ELDER-LED CHURCH

A. Pros

1. Provides significant leadership opportunities to qualified lay members.
2. Allows the Senior Pastor to spend the time needed in prayer and in the ministry of the Word for God's direction to lead our congregation. Also, taking on too much responsibility over an extended period of time can lead to ineffective leadership as well as personal burnout. Caring for the whole church is a burden God does not intend one man to bear alone. Even the most faithful, gifted pastor needs help from other godly men.
3. Strengthens overall church leadership and governance. No one person has all the gifts that are necessary to build up a congregation of the size of Saint Paul. Having a plurality of elders serves the church by bringing men with different gifts into the church's leadership who can complement the Senior Pastor's strengths. Also, having a group of elders serving together can assist one another in identifying blind spots in leadership.
4. Enhances problem solving and decision making. Rather than the Senior Pastor being the sole decision maker, the involvement of elders with different backgrounds, values, viewpoints, and abilities, resulting in a greater knowledge base that will result in quality decisions. There is more wisdom to be found in a multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14; 24:6).
5. Increases transparency. When transparency is an important part of a church's culture, members tend to become more at ease, more engaged and more committed to the church's vision.
6. Offers the Senior Pastor, church staff, and congregation with a level of accountability. Elders are a good set of ears and eyes in the congregation, and they can represent the members in a unique way.

B. Cons

1. Creates a barrier between the Senior Pastor and the congregation.
2. Can result in slower decision making due to time needed for elders to meet and discuss issues.
3. Members may perceive the establishment of an Elder Board/Elder Council will dilute the democratic process because major decisions will be made by

the Elder Board. This will deny them their right and privilege to have a say so, as they are accustomed to, in major issues affecting the welfare of the church.

4. Increases the potential of power struggles between the Elder Board/Elder Council and the Senior Pastor.

IX. VIEWS ON WHO SERVES AS AN ELDER

This section provides a brief discussion on the composition of an Elder Board/Elder Council. Our aim is to briefly address questions that frequently come up regarding who should/can be an elder. This topic can and often does generate debate within local churches and Christendom based upon different interpretations of scripture. Clearly, this topic will require further discussion if our congregation approves transitioning to an Elder Board/Elder Council.

First and foremost, the New Testament illustrates the concept of plurality of and diversity within church leadership in a variety of ways. First is the example of the twelve apostles. Our Lord appointed “twelve” apostles, not one apostle with eleven advisers. They were from various cultures, classes, vocations and backgrounds. For example, one disciple (Mathew) was a tax collector – a traitor to the Jewish nation and in collusion with Rome; several others were working class uneducated fishermen (Peter, Andrew, John). Jesus trained and sent out all twelve to preach and heal ([Mark 6:7-13](#)). He never trained any apostle alone, nor did He appoint one apostle head of his church. He dedicated himself to training a team who would eventually work together as a church leadership body. Second, following his resurrection and ascension, Jesus chose Paul to be an apostle ([1 Corinthians 15:9](#)). Upon his conversion, he was highly educated and part of the Jewish religious elite ([Acts 9:1-19](#)). Third, Titus was Greek. He was converted to Christianity by Paul, whereupon he served as Paul's secretary and interpreter ([Galatians 2:3](#)). Last, we see diversity of calling/work of elders in 1 Timothy 5:17 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.”

Our research further revealed that many 21st century church consultants recommend churches are intentional about pursuing diversity when forming an Elder Board. Some hold the view that an Elder Council should reflect the congregation's demographics such as in ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity, vocational diversity, educational diversity and generational diversity. The primary benefit of having a diverse Elder Board is that it increases the likelihood of better outcomes, as church issues are addressed from multiple views, perspectives, and spiritual giftedness.

- **Senior Pastor** - the role and responsibilities of a Senior Pastor falls within the scope of responsibility of an elder. The Senior Pastor is called by God and the congregation to lead and provide direction for the elders and together with them, for the church. A Senior Pastor has both the time and training necessary for being on the Elder Board. He is immersed in the problems and opportunities and knows the people of the congregation very well. In addition, a Senior

Pastor's education, experience, and network of fellow pastors provide him with a unique wealth of information from which to draw.

- **Deacons** - Deacons and elders are two distinct offices in the church, and their responsibilities differ. The biblical qualifications of a deacon ([1 Timothy 3:8-12](#)) are similar to those of a bishop/elder/pastor. However, there is one substantial difference between the two sets of qualifications, that is the elder (pastor/bishop) must be "able to teach," whereas teaching is not mentioned as necessary for deacons. Also, it should be noted that Scripture gives all the authority to the elders, and to the deacons. In [Philippians 1:1](#) and [1 Timothy 3:9-12](#), we see that the deacons are not assigned any responsibility for church governance. Rather, they are to function in a support role to the elders and not as a means of accountability ([Acts 6:1-4](#)).

Since the role and responsibilities of elders and deacons are different, when a church recommends a deacon to serve on the Elder Board/Elder Council, typically the deacon will no longer serve in this capacity. Rather, he assumes the office and title of an elder. It is noted that elders often have first served as deacons before becoming an elder.

- **Church Staff** - Scripture does not address staff members serving as elders. The organizational structure of the first century church did not include paid staff as many churches have today. Each local church in the Bible was governed by elders.

There are various internet articles written by church consultant outlining the advantages and disadvantages of staff serving as elders. They have mixed opinions. This topic will require further discussion and evaluation should our congregation vote to approve instituting an Elder Board/Elder Council.

From a governance perspective one consultant argued that the senior pastor is the only member of the staff that should be a standing member of the board even though other staff members may attend board meetings on a regular or periodic basis. He believes when other staff members are members of the board the church faces several risks. He maintains that the job of an Elder Board/Elder Council is to govern, set policy, provide direction, and oversight. On the other hand, the job of staff is to deal with the day to day ministry issues and to ensure that the policies, direction and ministry initiatives of the Elder Board/Elder Council are carried out. These are two very different responsibilities. One does not want board members doing management and one does not want staff members doing the job of the board. When staff members are regularly at board meetings it can confuse the responsibilities of board and staff or policy and management. He further stated that in larger churches where there are positions like executive pastors, it makes sense for these individuals to be regular "attenders" of the board since they must carry out the directional decisions of the board with staff. However, they should not be members of the board and the board should reserve the right to meet

without them. They are there by practice and invitation but not as members of the board.¹

Another consultant was of the opinion that a staff member who holds the title Pastor, and who has the longevity of experience in ministry, and who qualifies as an Elder can and should become a member of the board because of their knowledge and expertise.

- **Singles** - The following passages have been interpreted by some to restrict eldership only to a married person.
 - 1) 1 Timothy 3:2: “A bishop (elder) then must be blameless, *the husband of one wife*, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach”
 - 2) Titus 1:6-7: “. . . appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, *the husband of one wife*, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination...”

It is noted that the issue is not the elder’s marital status, but his moral and sexual purity. This qualification heads the lists, because it is in this area that leaders are most prone to fail. Some take the qualification for elders “the husband of one wife” as meaning that for a man to be an elder, he must be married. That is not the meaning of “husband of one wife.”

In the Greek, the phrase “husband of one wife” literally reads “one-woman man.” For a man to be considered for a position of church leadership, and he is married, he must be committed to his wife. This qualification is speaking of fidelity in marriage and sexual purity. It is not a requirement of marriage. If it were, a man would have to be married and also have children, because [Titus 1:6](#) states, “. . .having children not accused of dissipation and insubordination.” We should understand the qualification of “husband of one wife” as: If a man is married, he must be faithful to his wife. If a man has children, he must manage them well.

Also, it is noted that the Apostle Paul was single. If it were Paul’s intent to disallow single men from eldership, he would have disqualified himself ([1 Corinthians 7:8](#)). Lastly, it is not likely that Paul would restrict single men from church leadership positions as he believed “. . .an unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs - how he can please the Lord” ([1 Corinthians 7:32-33](#)). In the first nine verses of this chapter, Paul establishes that both marriage and singleness are good and right before the Lord.

- **Young Adults** - There are differing views. Those who hold the view that young adults should not be considered for eldership point to 1 Timothy 3:6 which states, “he (overseer/elder) must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.” In this passage, however, Paul’s is advising Timothy that he not appoint a new convert to be an elder because he’s going to, perhaps, get puffed up with pride before he’s been

¹<https://leadingfromthesandbox.blogspot.com/2008/07/should-church-staff-serve-on.html>

a Christian very long. Rather, it is better that some time (the length of time is not specified) must elapse since a person's conversion before appointing as an elder.

Those who believe scripture allows young adults to be considered for eldership point to Timothy, the leader of the church at Ephesus. Timothy was a young man and, in fact, was believed to be younger than some of those to whom he is ministering. It appears his youth was causing a little bit of trouble in the church, evidently, because in 1 Timothy he is giving an account for it and must be careful that he doesn't bring reproach upon himself ([1 Timothy 4:12](#); [5:1-2](#)).

Elder is not a term that signifies a particular physical age ([1 Timothy 4:11-16](#)), rather it conveys a certain spiritual maturity. What's important is that an elder must have the ability to verbally communicate sound Christian doctrine to the church, recognize and refute false doctrine that endangers the church, and lead the church in Biblical teaching on various platforms. These qualifications require deep Biblical understanding and the ability to convey that understanding to the congregation with clarity and fruitfulness and are not based upon age. In brief, an elder should be sufficiently mature for spiritual leadership, with that maturity being discerned relative to the congregation, and in the context of the life of the church.

Women - Although we find biblical examples of women serving in the church and being commended for their work ([Romans 16:1-7](#), [Acts 16:13-15](#); [Acts 18:24-26](#)) there is no biblical example of women serving as elders.

Historically, keeping with the biblical example of leadership, church leadership was always fulfilled by men. For example, we find in the New Testament, Jesus chose twelve men to mentor and to serve as his apostles in establishing His Church. His apostles would later choose another man (Mathias) to replace Judas who betrayed Jesus and hung himself for doing so ([Acts 1:26](#)).

Following His ascension into heaven, Jesus would choose Saul to become His apostle ([Acts 9:3-6](#)). Paul would later appoint Timothy to oversee the church at Ephesus and Titus over the Corinthian church. In the Old Testament, we find that God always chose men to lead His people. Examples include the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel were men; Israel's twelve judges, with the exception of one (Deborah), were all men ([Judges 4:4](#)); and the priests and major prophets were all men.

In recent years, however, the role of women in the church has become a controversial topic that is inciting strong debate and has divided some churches. With the advancements of women in education, the workplace, government, particularly in Western society, during the past few decades, we find Christian women increasingly desiring to express their love and devotion to God by applying their spiritual gifts, knowledge, and talents in the body of Christ, including in non-traditional women roles in the church.

Presently, there are two divergent views (complementarian and egalitarian) and approaches to the question of the role of women in the church. Although the

words “complementarian” and “egalitarian” are not found in the Bible, they are theological views on the relationship between men and women, especially in marriage and in ministry.

Complementarians hold the theological belief that although men and women are created in the image of God, both for dominion, and equal in their being and personhood, God has assigned specific gender roles and responsibilities thus they are created to complement each other via different roles in life, in the home and in the church. When embraced, it will lead to the best possible spiritual well being for believers and the church. This belief asserts submission and dependence, that a woman’s role in relation to home, church and society is to be in submission to her husband (or to male leadership) and dependent upon him/them. Women have their own sphere and freedom to exercise their spiritual gifts; but it is ultimately under the leadership of the male, who takes the lead in the home and in the church, that their gifts are expressed. This view is based on an hierarchical understanding of the relationship of God to Christ to man to woman, stemming from Paul’s argument in

From the complementarian perspective, women are permitted to teach other women and children but not hold positions of authority over men such as an Elder or Pastor.

Biblical basis: [Genesis 1:26-28](#); [Genesis 2](#); [Ephesians 5:23-24](#); [1 Timothy 2:11-14](#); [1 Corinthians 11:3](#); [Titus 2:3-5](#)

Egalitarianism holds the theological belief that that male and female are equally created in God's image, equally created for dominion, equally responsible for sin, equally redeemed by Christ, and equally gifted by God's Spirit for service and held responsible for using their God-given gifts. Based on their understanding of scripture, they believe there are no gender restrictions on what roles men and women can fulfill in the church, that roles should be ability-based not gender-based; that the teachings and attitudes of Jesus and the New Testament abolished gender-specific roles as well as roles related to class and race. They point out that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts without regards to a person’s gender. They further assert that in Christ there is a new creation, that the results of the Fall are reversed in Christ, the false and sinful basis of male/female hierarchy has been abolished, so there is no legitimate distinction, in God’s kingdom, between male and female. Full male/female equality is restored, dignity is given back to women and servant attitudes are called for in men and women alike. Lastly, it asserts “mutual submission” of all people to each other in relationships and human institutions as a form of respect without necessarily requiring a hierarchy in authority.

Biblical basis: [Genesis 1:26-28](#); [Gen. 2:22-24](#); [Galatians 3:28](#); [Romans 12:6-8](#)

For a more thorough discussion of the Complementarian and Egalitarian views on the role of women in the church, including their scriptural basis, please see article, *Summaries of Egalitarian & Complementarian Positions*, written by The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, available at Saint Paul’s website: www.saintpaulsac.org

There are many notable proponents and denominations that adhere to both sides. In general, denominations that tend to lean complementarian include Baptists, Roman Catholic, some Lutheran, some Mennonite, some Presbyterian, and Reformed.

Denominations that tend to lean egalitarian include Assembly of God, Nazarene, Episcopalian, some Evangelical Lutheran, Free Methodist, Friends, some Mennonite, some Presbyterian, United Methodist, and Wesleyan.

Historically, at Saint Paul, the leadership office of Senior Pastor, Deacon, and Trustee are assigned to men. Women are afforded the opportunity to express their spiritual gifts in service as teachers (including co-ed classes), ministry servant leaders, and committee chairpersons. Our Senior Pastor recognizes the value women bring to ministry and has acknowledged that women are vital to church life.

X. IF APPROVED BY OUR CONGREGATION , WHAT MIGHT AN ELDER-LED CHURCH LOOK LIKE AT SAINT PAUL?

Saint Paul Church seeks to be led by the Holy Spirit in all its decisions. The Senior Pastor, the Elder Board/Elder Council, and the Congregation all have a role in leadership.

A. Responsibility of the Senior Pastor

1. Provide Biblical preaching and teaching
2. Provide Biblical vision for the Church
3. Provide general care and ministry for the congregation, either personally or through Deacons, staff and other ministries of the Church as he appoints
4. Define and communicate the Church's purpose
5. Oversee and coordinate the day-to-day ministry of the congregation and administration of the church
6. Serve on and provide direction and support to the Elder Board/Elder Council
7. Appoint Church Officers and ministry leaders
8. Staff the church as he deems necessary to help administrate church affairs

B. Responsibility of Elders

Refer to Section VI above, including but not limited to the following:

1. Provide Church governance, including set and/or review church policies and exercise church discipline
2. Provide Senior Pastor accountability and establish Senior Pastor's Compensation
3. Approve Church's budget following development by the Finance Committee and Budget Committee for presentation to the Congregation
4. Approve church loans (financial indebtedness on the part of the church)
5. Approve the sale or purchase of property and the construction of buildings

C. Responsibility of the Congregation (Voting)

To create transparency and accountability, the congregation's input and involvement will be sought through the voting process for major church decisions, such as:

1. Calling and termination of the Senior Pastor
2. Approve church loans (financial indebtedness on the part of the church)
3. Approve the sale or purchase of property or the construction of buildings
4. Approve revisions to Church By-Laws

D. Appointment of Elders (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:2; 3:12-13)

1. The Senior Pastor will be responsible for the initial appointment of Elders that meet the biblical qualifications of the role, demonstrate a solid mature faith and knowledge of the Word, in good standing with Saint Paul and the community, and show giftedness in caring for and in spiritually nurturing others in the church. Following the initial appointment of Elders, the Elder Board will have a lead role in identifying and selecting new elders.
2. The Elder Board/Elder Council will be comprised of men.

E. Number of Elders

The actual number of Elders to be appointed has not yet been determined. This will require further discussion and research. The New Testament always appeals to a plurality of Elders in the church (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:17; James 5:14). Consideration will be given to appointing men with diverse backgrounds such as age, education, knowledge, experience, etc.)

F. Term of Elders

The actual term of Elders has not yet been determined. This will require further discussion and research.

G. Removal from Eldership

Elders may be removed from office should the following occur:

1. Death.
2. The Elder requests to step down. This can be for any reason but may include poor health, family matters (or other responsibilities) requiring more attention, personal struggles, etc.
3. The Elder no longer meets the qualifications of an Elder and/or no longer can perform the duties.
4. The term of an Elder expires (if term limits are established).

H. Training of Elders

Training plays a critical role in the success and effectiveness of an Elder Board/Elder Council. Existing training programs available through Christian organizations and other churches will be explored. Additionally, an Elder Board/Elder Council Handbook that incorporates best practices will be developed to serve as a guide to the Elder Board. There will be ongoing training that is developed internally and/or available externally through conferences and other Christian leadership programs.

I. Update of Church By-Laws and Realignment of Roles and Responsibilities

The Church By-Laws will need to be reviewed and updated. A new section will be added to address the role and responsibilities of the Elder Board/Elder Council and multiple sections will be revised such as to realign duties of the Senior Pastor, Deacons, Trustees, Staff, and Congregation.

XI. CONCLUSION

Approximately two years Senior Pastor Kenneth Reece introduced the idea of establishing an Elder Board/Elder Council at Saint Paul. Clearly there is a biblical basis for eldership and for Saint Paul becoming an elder-led church, where biblically qualified men are appointed to share the responsibilities of providing spiritual oversight, shepherding the church body, and administering church governance along with the Senior Pastor. This form of church leadership and governance is ordained by God and was the pattern for the first century church.

This report provides an overview of the biblical basis of eldership, the qualifications and responsibilities of elders, and who can serve as an elder. It also lists several benefits of an elder-led church, such as providing lay members with the opportunity to serve in major leadership of the church; strengthening our leadership, shepherding and governance ability; improving our problem solving and decision-making capability, and increasing our transparency and accountability. If Saint Paul approves transitioning to an Elder-led church, to facilitate the transition,

thoughtful planning is necessary. It will be important to design a system that promotes inclusiveness, diversity, and transparency and that has an evaluation component to ascertain whether the desired objectives for an Elder Board/Elder Council are being achieved.

Lastly, as we go through the process of learning about biblical eldership and preparing to vote on this important issue, let us be ever mindful of the power of prayer. Let each of us be committed to going boldly to the throne of God for wisdom in this matter and to being ever committed to walking in love and unity that the Lord, our God, might be glorified in this process.

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KEY NEW TESTAMENT VERSES ON ELDERS IN THE CHURCH

Titus 1:5-9

⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ 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.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ 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 5:17-22

¹⁷ The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." ¹⁹ Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. ²⁰ But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning. ²¹ I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

James 5:13-14

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 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.

1 Peter 5:1-5

¹ 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: ² 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; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. ⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Acts 10:17-38

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of

severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. ²² And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace. ²⁵ Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. ³² 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. ³³ I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

Acts 11:30

³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 14:23

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 15:2

² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

Acts 15:4

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Acts 15:6

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question.

Acts 20:17

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

Acts 20:28

²⁸ 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.

Hebrews 13:7

⁷ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

TOPICAL OVERVIEW OF ELDERS IN THE BIBLE**ELDERS IN ISRAEL****A. Functions of Elders in Mosaic period:**

Rule the people	Judges 2:7
Represent the nation	Exodus 3:16, 18
Share in national guilt	Joshua 7:6
Assist in government	Numbers 11:16-25

B. Functions of Elders in later periods:

Choose a king	2 Samuel 3:17-21
Ratify a covenant	2 Samuel 5:3
Assist at a dedication	1 Kings 8:1-3
Counsel kings	1 Kings 12:6-8, 13
Legislate reforms	Ezra 10:8-14
Try civil cases	Matthew 6:3-68

ELDERS IN NEW TESTAMENT**A. Qualifications of Elders stated by:**

Paul	Titus 1:5-14
Peter	1 Peter 5:1-4

B. Duties of Elders:

Administer relief	Acts 11:29, 30
Correct error	Acts 15:4, 6, 23
Rule well	1 Timothy 5:17
Minister to the sick	James 5:14-15

C. Honors bestowed on Elders:

Ordination	Acts 14:19, 23
Obedience	Hebrews 13:7, 17
Due respect	1 Timothy 5:1, 19

BISHOP**A. Qualifications of Bishop, given by:**

Paul	1 Timothy 3:1-7
Peter	1 Peter 5:1-4

B. Duties of Bishop:

Oversee the church	Acts 20:17, 28-31
Feed God's flock	1 Peter 5:2
Guard men's souls	Hebrews 13:17
Teach	1 Timothy 5:17

C. Office of Bishop:

Same as elder	Acts 20:17, 28
Several in a church	Philippians 1:1
Follows ordination	Titus 1:5,7
Held by Christ	1 Peter 2:25