

The Role of an Elder at CCC

As CCC prepares to move toward affirming 2-3 new elders, we wanted to share with you the basic tasks, giftings, and character qualities that will be necessary for both elders and their spouses (if married).

PRIMARY TASKS – Doctrine, Direction, and Discipline

Elders, which includes the Lead Pastor, have three primary tasks that are carried out in the context of mutual prayer, study, authentic biblical relationships, unity, and consensus building:

Doctrine – The CCC elders will be the guardians of the church’s doctrine for both the essentials of the Christian faith as well as non-essential (or secondary) issues of faith.

1. The essentials of the faith most often describe the behaviors and beliefs without which the Bible clearly states we are not authentically converted. For instance, the Deity of Christ, the Trinity, and justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, etc. (These are not requirements we must meet in order to save ourselves and earn God’s favor. Rather these are the essential beliefs and behaviors that will be manifest in the true Christian.)
2. The non-essentials of the faith most often describe the doctrines in the Bible that while very important, are not essential to salvation. For instance, whether or not someone believes in the baptism of infants or whether or not God still heals today. These are important issues; yet, what someone believes about these are not essential to salvation.

Christian tradition states this succinctly:

“In the essentials we must have unity; in the non-essentials we must have liberty; and in all things we must have charity.”¹

¹ This statement is often attributed to Augustine yet it (apparently) cannot be found in any Augustinian text. Upon further research the quotation has been found to be a common tenet quoted as authoritative in several Christian traditions, expressed in various ways, and attributed to various authors. A 17th century date is provided by Philip Schaff in *The History of the Christian Church* (Eerdmans Repr 1965, Vol. 7: 650-653), which traces the authorship to Rupertus Meldenius a relatively unknown theologian and author of a “remarkable” tract in which the sentence first occurs.

Direction – With input from the Staff, Ministry Leaders, Members, and Attenders the Elders will be responsible to prayerfully determine the vision of CCC and identify 3-5 yearly ministry objectives. The Elders will then delegate to the Lead Pastor the authority to oversee the staff and operations of the church, and then consistently hold the Lead Pastor accountable through monthly reports and regular (yearly) performance reviews. The Elders will also consistently evaluate the progress of the ministry objectives by employing both qualitative and quantitative metrics.

1. Qualitative Metrics include (but are not limited to) widespread genuine joy and excitement in the gospel, unity, maturity, zeal, faith, hope, love, increased boldness and zeal in evangelism with a winsome and contagious witness among a cross section of people, the aroma of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit, responsive obedience to the Word of God, the fruit of the Spirit, a humble willingness to follow the leadership, eagerness to do works of service, receptivity to non-Christians, seekers, and newcomers, etc.
2. Quantitative Metrics include (but are not limited to) tracking the numbers of conversions, baptisms, numbers of Bible studies, small groups, those enfolded into groups, weekend worship attendance, general giving, missions giving, benevolence giving, numbers of those serving inside and outside the church, numbers of new and consistent givers, involvement in ministries and outreaches, attendance and quality of training events, etc.

Discipline – Broadly speaking, there is a distinction between *formative discipline* (referring to instruction to develop the disciplines of the faith) and *corrective discipline* (referring to correcting sin). Corrective discipline refers to any act of correction, whether privately and informally warning a friend (which all Christians are called to engage in with gentleness and humility) or formally engaging a habitually sinning member in the corrective discipline process outlined in Matthew 18:15-19. The elders become involved when all the other relational resources of the church have been exhausted. When the formal process gets to the final stage, the word “excommunication” is frequently used. To excommunicate is to “ex-commune” someone. Among Protestants, excommunication does not refer to removing someone from salvation (which the church is incapable doing) it refers to removing someone from membership in the church and participation in the church’s ministries including the Lord’s Supper. This

effectively removes the spiritual connections and covering of the church with a holy hope for deep and heartfelt repentance.

LEADING LEADERS

There is a difference between a *minister* and a *leader*. A *minister* builds people and a *leader* builds groups of people. Like wings on a bird every church needs both to fly straight. In a larger church the elders must be proven leaders capable of leading other leaders. For the most part, our “frontline” shepherds are our community group and bible study facilitators. A larger church needs leaders who have a “rancher” mentality in order to effectively “shepherd the shepherds.” The elders must be growing in their capacity to be ranchers to shepherd the other leaders in the church.

Are leaders born or developed? The answer is YES! Consider Jethro’s counsel to Moses in Exodus 18:21: *“Select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.”* Every person has a “leadership capacity.” Most people can be trained to be a “leader of ten.” We can think of this as a small group leader, whose primary responsibility is to regularly facilitate thoughtful dialogue, prayer, biblical community, and service. Beyond leaders of tens there are leaders of fifties, hundreds, and thousands. Every person will max out somewhere on that continuum. The larger the church the more essential it is that the Elders (and Management Team Staff) need to be effective and proven leaders of fifties, hundreds, and thousands. It is possible in a growing church that the needs and governance required could outgrow the leadership capacity of an elder (or a staff member). (This could be one of the drawbacks of the “elder for life” perspective.)

An Elder’s Spouse (If Married)

This is not directly addressed in Scripture but would come under the eldership qualification of managing a household well — with love and dignity (see 1 Timothy 3:4-5).

In addition to being a spiritually mature believer, an elder’s spouse must also be emotionally healthy and self-differentiated (as should Elders!). It’s been said that we cannot be spiritually mature without being emotionally healthy. Jesus would be 100% differentiated, the rest of us would land on a

scale ranging from low to higher. Emotionally healthy people with a high level of differentiation have their own beliefs, convictions, direction, goals, and values apart from the pressures around them. They can choose, before God, how they want to be without being controlled by the approval or disapproval of others. Intensity of feelings, high stress, or the anxiety of others around them does not overwhelm their capacity to think and act intelligently and with responsive wisdom. There are times of high stress and anxiety in an elder's home and marriage (again, if married). During crisis or anxious seasons, the elder has the opportunity to regularly process with the other elders while a spouse may feel the weight of the stress and anxiety (no matter how much or how little s/he knows about the situation) without the opportunity to process with others. If s/he is not differentiated, s/he may be given to "leaking" stress and anxiety in unhealthy ways. The stress and anxiety can lead to defensiveness, triangulation (i.e., unnecessarily involving a third party), or outright gossip.

Self-differentiation is an emotional health issue. Unfortunately, many churches have not done a good job of integrating emotional health into the discipleship process.

Time Commitment

Certainly, the time commitment will vary. Having said that, serving as an elder at CCC should take about 10-12 hours a month. We intend for our elders to have the time to serve in at least one other area of ministry. We realize that not every elder will have an equal amount of time per month to serve. However, every elder will need to determine during the vetting process if s/he has sufficient time to devote. Overall, the goal is to show that being an elder at CCC is a joyful endeavor! Whether or not a church believes in "elder for life" there does need to be required sabbaticals (TBD, usually somewhere between every 3-5 years).

Currently, the elder team at CCC is seeking to gather three times a month. The goal of all of these meetings is to balance effectiveness with efficiency.

1. A monthly board meeting to carry out the legal requirements of a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization by reviewing financial and attendance reports, holding the Lead Pastor accountable through engaging with his Ministry Objectives Report, providing counsel and input to the Lead Pastor when asked, and actively moving toward consensus and unity. The agenda for a board meeting is jointly

assembled by the Board Facilitator and Lead Pastor and sent out with monthly financial and attendance reports 3-5 days before the Board Meeting so that every member can come prepared to move quickly and efficiently through the agenda. A board meeting should last no more than two hours; however, it will most likely take an additional two hours to properly prepare for the board meeting.

2. A monthly “work” meeting to engage in extended prayer for the church, the staff, leaders, members, attenders, specific prayer needs, and for God to bless the church with salvations and discipleship opportunities. Additionally, in a work meeting the elders review any current or possible church discipline issues as well as continue to study and refine CCC’s doctrine. Position papers are often written for effective instruction and communication to the rest of the church (hot topics include women’s roles in leadership, sexuality, and defining marriage). These meetings can last 2-3 hours as well as some personal study.
3. A monthly “check-in” meeting to share and care for one another. Honest sharing about joys, challenges, struggles, marriage, kids, work, etc. and praying for each other individually as needed. We also encourage, at least once a quarter, for these meetings to include spouses for continued relationship building, sharing, and caring. This also helps the spouses to be able to engage with their own wisdom and discernment (where appropriate) as well as providing an outlet for any pent-up stress and anxiety. These meetings should last 1-2 hours. When the spouses are involved it should usually take place over a meal, with plenty of time to interact plus time to pray together.

We also recommend an elder’s retreat on a regular basis – at least yearly. This could just be for the elders, or for couples.

Addendum #1: What About Women Elders?

Think of a continuum with “Complementarian” on one end and “Egalitarian” on the other end. Every church will fall somewhere along that continuum. Here’s a concise definition for each:

1. **Complementarian** – The theological view that men and women are created equal in their value, being, and personhood through bearing the image of God, displaying physical and functional distinctives and are created to “complement” one another in biblically prescribed roles

and responsibilities in marriage, family life, and church leadership. Complementarians view women's roles in church ministry as distinctive from men, holding to the "mystery" of mutual submission, male headship, and sacrificial love conveyed in Ephesians 5:19-33. Practically, this is most often expressed through male pastors and elders.

2. **Egalitarian** – The theological belief that the creation account establishes the foundation for equal partnership of men and women in the home, church, and culture, which was broken in the Fall and reestablished in the New Covenant, acknowledging that in Scripture, both Jesus and Paul (specifically) elevated the role of women to "sonship"² (For example, see Roms 8:14: *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*). Additionally, Galatians 3:28 (*neither male nor female*) is viewed as a hinge-verse that forever shifts the historical role of women in the Church as well as in the culture.

Both Complementarianism and Egalitarianism have their own continuums: "Soft," "Strict," and "Hyper" (but that's for another time :). Historically, CCC has been more Egalitarian in its theological perspective. Another way to view it may be "Soft Complementarian," holding to a view of a male Lead Pastor while welcoming female Elders and Staff Pastors. (If a nominee tended toward a complementarian view it would not disqualify him or her because we view this as a secondary issue, not an essential issue.) Also, many healthy and vital churches have a provision in their governance model to add "gifted men and women" to their board. These men and women would not be considered elders, but their wisdom and discernment would be regularly utilized.

Addendum #2: Can Vocational Staff Be Elders?

² The preface of the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible does an excellent job of explaining why the word 'sons' is important, and how it applies equally to men and women in this context: "...the English word 'sons' (translating the Greek word [huioi or huios](#)) is retained in specific instances because the underlying Greek term usually includes a male meaning component and it was used as a legal term in the adoption and inheritance laws of first-century Rome. As used by the apostle Paul, this term refers to the status of all Christians, both men and women, who, having been adopted into God's family, now enjoy all the privileges, obligations, and inheritance rights of God's children."

This is an area that is not clearly defined in Scripture. Many vital churches have differing views on this question. When a church is in transition with the aim of calling a “Permanent Pastor” it is generally wise to not have any vocational staff as elders. When a new permanent pastor comes on the scene it can be awkward and confusing for the permanent pastor to be the supervisor of the staff member/s at work but be a co-equal in an elder’s meeting. In the governance model expressed above the Lead Pastor can bring one of his staff (often the Executive Pastor) to a Board Meeting as a non-voting member to give input as well as helping the Lead Pastor communicate plans and goals with the rest of the staff.