

***Lead Ministers  
&  
Eldership  
Boards***



***Operational Guidelines***

by Pastor Bill Vasilakis

**Part 1. ROLES AND AUTHORITY**

... The Role and Authority of Lead Ministers and Church Eldership Boards

**Part 2. RELATIONAL HEALTH**

... The Absolute Priority and Need For Relational Health Between Lead Ministers and their Church Eldership Boards

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# INTRODUCTION

**This paper aims to answer seven very important questions that need some definitive answers.**

1. What role and authority should a Lead Minister have in a local church?  
... What's his/her job description?
2. What role and authority should a collective Board of Elders have in a local church?  
... What's their collective job description?
3. Where do their roles and authority cross over? ... Where does one stop and the other start?
4. What are the spiritual and character requirements for Lead Ministers and Elders in a local church?
5. What's a tested and workable division of responsibilities for Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards?
6. What's the best and fairest system of accountability for Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards who belong to a denominational family like the CRC?
7. How can we create a preventative organisational framework that will be conducive to well ordered governmental practices and healthy relationships between Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards?

For over a forty years I have observed and been directly involved in trying to help local churches handle the fallout when Lead Ministers and their Eldership Boards fail to work together in love and unity. So often the breakdowns could have been prevented if both the Lead Ministers and Elders were crystal clear on their roles and had realistic expectations of each other in the outworking of their respective responsibilities. The most serious problems that our local churches face centre around these questions; and this document attempts to provide some Biblically grounded wisdom and practical help for our Lead Ministers and Eldership Teams as they walk through this potentially explosive minefield.

Bill Vasilakis

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# PART ONE – ROLES AND AUTHORITY

## ... THE ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF LEAD MINISTERS AND CHURCH ELDERSHIP BOARDS.

### 1. THE GENIUS OF THE PLURALITY OF LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

**The New Testament teaches that there is to be a plurality of Leadership in all Local Churches.** We see a picture of *Ministry Gifts* and *Elderships* working together in loving unity to advance the cause of Christ through local churches.

1.1 *The New Testament describes the functional role of Ministry Gifts and Elders but little else according to the following Scriptures.*

**Ministry Gifts.** Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31;  
1 Peter 4:10-11

**Elderships.** Acts 11:29-30; Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; Acts 20:28-35;  
Acts 21:17-19; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-7;  
1 Timothy 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17; James 5:14

The division between Ministry-Gifts and Elders according to some commentators appears a little arbitrary. For example there appears to be no distinction drawn between Pastors/Shepherds in Ephesians 4:11 and Elders/Shepherds in Acts 20:28-35 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Though there are some problems with the more traditional view, there seems to be a differentiation between people who are *specially gifted* to operate a specific ministry role in the church; with others whose character qualification seems to be the predominant issue if they are to be on the government Eldership body of a church. (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Some people like Peter and John operate as ministry-gifts (ie apostles) and can also be Elders in a governmental/leadership sense within a local church. (1 Peter 5:1-3; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1)

#### **‘THE ROLE OF ELDERS’**

*“The New Testament is clear that the church is to be led by a plurality of godly leaders under the oversight and watchcare of Elders. The Elders are given ultimate responsibility and authority to see that the church remains on a true course biblically, that its members are being appropriately shepherded, that the body is being fed through insightful and accurate biblical teaching, and that the life of the church is being well managed with the assistance of other competent*

*and godly leaders. They are to care about the spiritual and physical well-being of members, regularly praying for the sick. They are to guard the body against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting biblical truth or who are continuing in patterns of sinful behaviour. In doing so, they are to keep closing potential entrances for Satan so that the truth of Christ will remain credible to both the congregation and the community. Scripture indicates that the ultimate decision-making authority in the church rests with the Elders.*

*(1 Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9; James 5:14).*

*In response to the biblical pattern of leadership, members of the body are taught in Scripture to lovingly support their leaders and submit to their leadership.*

*(Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-33; Acts 21:17-19)"( 1.)*

- 1.2 *It is fairly clear that Ministry Gifts like Paul, Barnabas and Titus appointed Elders, but we can only assume that they also had the spiritual authority to terminate those appointments. (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5)*

We are simply not told how long the appointments were for and what procedures were in place to keep everyone (including Ministry Gifts and Elders) accountable. I need to note that the Greek Word "appoint" in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5, does have a fairly clear connotation that the membership of a congregation can be involved either in the actual selection, or in the confirmation of the appointment of elders. The Zondervan Study Bible note on Acts 14:23 sheds light on this unique word and the practice of the first church.

*"Appointed. The Greek for this word (used also in 2 Cor. 8:19) can mean (1) to stretch out the hand, (2) to appoint by show of hands or (3) to appoint or elect without regard to the method. In 6:6 the appointment of the Seven included selection by the church and presentation to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. Because these were new churches, at least partly pagan in background, Paul and Barnabas may have both selected and appointed the elders." (2.)*

## **SELECTION OF ELDERS/TERM OF ELDERS**

*“Scripture gives evidence of the first Elders being appointed by the founders of the church. By this example it is implied that the existing spiritual leadership of a church be intimately involved in the process of selecting Elders to ensure that the selection is based on spiritual rather than superficial qualifications. Beyond this, there are no specific guidelines given regarding the selection process. It would therefore appear that freedom is given to the individual churches to develop a process that will best serve its own special needs and situations (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5)”. (3.)*

### *CRC History & Practice*

The CRC’s Founder, Leo Harris, though strongly believing in the plurality of leadership concept as the New Testament’s way of operating, gives no practical guidelines on how to outwork this concept in any of his inspirational writings:

“VISION: - The Concept and Challenge of the CRC:”

“OPERATION OUTREACH: - The New Testament blueprint for Revival”

(CRC publications) (4.)

Dr Gilbert Bilezikian in his book “Christianity 101” (Zondervan 1993) has some thought-provoking ideas about Ministry and especially on church governance and the plurality of leadership concept of the New Testament Church. (Refer to Appendix 1) (5.)

## **2. HOW CAN WE OUTWORK THE NEW TESTAMENT LEADERSHIP GOVERNMENT PATTERN?**

2.1 I have reflected at length over the years on these issues and have framed a workable operating structure that *clearly defines the specific role and the respective powers* of the Lead Minister and his/her collective Eldership (Board, Oversight, etc.).

The following principles and guidelines are not just theoretical but have been outworked by our team at the Christian Family Centre on the anvil of nearly 40 years of practical experience. In all these years, we have never had a major division, rarely taken a vote on big issues; and have only had to ask one Elder out of the 26 who have served, or are still serving with us, to step aside; and this was with the unanimous endorsement of the entire Eldership Board.

2.2 A clearly defined division of responsibilities and duties should be in place to ensure that *power is never absolute*; and that all who are involved in church government should operate within a *highly responsible and fully accountable* framework.

2.3 The best examples of how this operates in government is **firstly** the Westminster Model of Responsible Government. The Leader (The Prime Minister) is fully responsible and accountable to his/her Parliamentary Party; the Parliamentary Party is fully responsible and accountable to the Parliament; and the Parliament is fully responsible and accountable to the people.

The **second** great model is the United States Federal Governmental System where power is widely diffused at National level between the President, Congress and Supreme Court; and at Regional level by State, County, City and Town government systems. Australia's government system is a mixture of both the British Westminster and the American Federal models. The British and American Government structure, have evolved over hundreds of years and are the safest in regards to the *avoidance of the accumulation of too much power in the hands of one person or one group of people*. They are also founded on Christian pre-suppositions and Christians have had a huge role in their creation and gradual modification over the centuries.

Nation States that are overseen by totally responsible and fully accountable government systems produce *liberal democratic societies* that are *relatively free, live in peace, have an impartial non-politicised judiciary and police force*; and ensure that the *majority respects and protects the rights of all minorities within the rule of law*. How blessed we are to live in a freedom-loving and socially-cohesive country like Australia.

I think these secular governmental models exemplify the *Plurality of Leaders concept* of the New Testament church as it relates to Ministry and Government. There are lessons we can learn from our secular governmental processes and procedures in matters where the New Testament is silent; as long as these do not contravene clearly-defined and widely-accepted Biblical principles and truths.

### 3. LEAD MINISTERS MUST REALLY LEAD THEIR ELDERSHIP BOARDS AND THEIR CHURCHES

#### 3.1 The Lead Minister

**Leaders should be able to grow as big as God has called and gifted them to become.** Those whom the risen Christ calls into leadership of his church (Ephesians 4:11-12) must be allowed to **flow** and **flourish** and be as **fruitful** as possible for God's glory.

They should be fully released to outwork at least the following four key tasks

- to 'cast the long-term strategic vision of the Church'
- to 'set the short-term spiritual directions and goals for the Church'
- to 'personify the core values and the ministry style of the Church'
- to 'be the main teacher/preacher of the Word.'

#### **'THE ROLE OF THE LEAD PASTOR'**

*"Consistent with the New Testament concept of spiritual gifts, the Lead pastor, like any member of the body, is uniquely gifted and should seek to minister primarily within his gift area.*

*In addition to his pastoring role as an elder, the Lead pastor is primarily responsible **to be a teacher of the Word of God and to provide strategic leadership and vision to the body.** His goal is to help mature believers through insightful and accurate presentations of biblical truth, equipping them to be the true "ministers" in the body. He must strive to teach and lead by word and example, and he must stress both the understanding and the application of God's truth.*

*The Lead pastor should not be responsible to consistently minister in areas unrelated to his primary function and giftedness. To burden him with other roles (administration, counselling, visitation, etc.) is to rob him of **planning time, study time, and devotion to the Word.** This can lead to **watered down, inaccurate teaching or ineffective leadership,** both of which in turn weaken the body. As shepherds of the church, the Elders are responsible to appoint other leaders with complementary gifts to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that cannot be filled by the Lead pastor.*

*Teaching within the body should not be limited to the Lead pastor.*

*The New Testament emphasises the need for teaching Elders and/or the utilisation of other members who are gifted in this area, thereby providing a variety of input and role models.” (6.)*

It is imperative that all spiritual leaders (and particularly Lead Ministers and their Eldership Boards) be **constant learners**. This involves really learning the lessons that come from experience; and even more importantly, learning the lessons that come from **other people’s experiences**.

This is why ‘Great Books’ and ‘Timely In-Service Seminars’ and ‘Leadership Courses’ with a **practical orientation** are priceless.

All Lead Ministers and Elders need to be personally growing in their leadership capacity and skills by inculcating **new learning** from excellent Leaders/Authors. It’s also good practice for Eldership and Ministry Staff to work through some key books that will really be helpful in their important team roles.

Some recommended authors and their book titles:

- *Group Dynamics* by Donelson R. Forsyth  
(Brooks / Cole Publishing Company 1990)
- *Leaders – The Strategies For Taking Charge*  
by Warren Bennis & Burt Nanus (Harper & Rowe 1985)
- *On Becoming A Leader*  
by Warren Bennis (Perseus Books 1994)
- *Organising Genius*  
by Warren Bennis (Addison and Wesley Longman 1997)
- *How to win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie  
(Angus & Robertson 1989)
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey  
(The Business Library 1989)
- *First Things First* by Stephen Covey (Free Press January 17, 1996)
- *Principle Centered Leadership* by Stephen Covey ( Franklin Covey 2012)
- *Built to Last* by James Collins & Jerry Porras (Random House 1998)
- *How the Mighty Fall* by James Collins (Random House 2009)
- *From Good to Great* by James Collins (William Collins 2001)
- *More Than Numbers* by Yonggi Cho (Bridge Publishing 1983)

- *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren (Zondervan 1995)
- *Rediscovering Church* by Lynn & Bill Hybels (Zondervan 1993)
- *Your Church Has a Great Future* by Robert Schuller (Regal Books 1986)
- *Leadership by the Book*  
by Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges & Bill Hybels (Waterbrook Press 1999)
- *Gung Ho!* By Ken Blanchard (Harper Collins 1998)
- *The Practical Executive and Leadership* by Dayle M. Smith  
(NTC Business Books 1997)
- *How to change your Church without Killing it* by Gene Appel (Word 2000)
- *Natural Church Development* by Christian Schwarz  
(C & P Publishing 1998)
- *Lincoln on Leadership* by Donald T. Phillips (Warner Books 1992)
- *Martin Luther King on Leadership* by Donald T. Phillips  
(Warner Books 1999)
- *Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership* by James M. Strock  
(Warner Books 2001)
- *Courageous Leadership* By Bill Hybels (Zondervan 2002)
- *Axiom* by Bill Hybels (Zondervan 2012)
- *Next Generation* by Andy Stanley (Multnomah Books January 2006)
- *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership* by Steven B. Sample  
(Jossey-Bass April 2003)

We can so easily avoid coming to grief on so many issues if we are humble and teachable enough to be **life-long learners**. There is nothing new under the sun, so it's imperative that all spiritual leaders be exposed to other leaders who are **older, wiser and more experienced** than them.

### 3.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)

**The team must allow the leader to fully express his/her leadership gifts and to become as big as God wants him/her to be.**

Every team has to have a leader and therefore team members need to:

- sublimate their own personal leadership ambitions
- work under leaders and assist and support them in their leadership role
- cover the leaders' lacks and weaknesses and never expose their nakedness.

This does not preclude the team from openly sharing with the leader about his/her deficiencies, but it must be done in a constructive way that aims to help the Lead Minister become a more effective spiritual Leader.

... These evaluation meetings need to be pre-planned and at set times (ie, once per year) and should never be clandestine meetings of the Eldership Board without the knowledge and endorsement of the Lead Minister.

... All properly constituted meetings should be called and chaired by the Lead Minister or a chairman appointed from the Board by the Lead Minister and need to occur at a time and place when all members of the Eldership Team can generally be present. This responsibility can be delegated by the Lead Minister/Chairman or to any Board Member.

#### **4. LEADERS MUST WORK RESPONSIBLY THROUGH THEIR TEAMS**

##### **4.1 The Lead Minister**

**Leaders must learn to express their leadership through a team and avoid being a “one person” show.**

Therefore the leader must also allow the team members to grow as big as God wants them to grow in their personal ministry and leadership role within the church. Leaders should do all in their power to facilitate the full development of their team's talents and gifts and coordinate their individual ministries into a purposeful and united team.

This is the balance to the previous section (Point 3) and should flow like a *good marriage* where a husband is to be a *loving and responsible* spiritual leader of his wife; and must never have a superiority mentality but a genuine *servant attitude, emulating Jesus* (Ephesians 5:21-33; Philippians 2:1-11).

... Good and effective leaders who are *spiritually and emotionally secure* will be *loving and giving* towards their team; and will be fully committed to *influencing, facilitating and coordinating their many aptitudes for God's glory*.

... This is in marked contrast to *poor and ineffective leaders* who are *spiritually and emotionally insecure, immature and unloving*; and tend to only want to use their team to serve their own purpose. This is seen in their *dominating, over-controlling, and manipulative* leadership style. Any self-respecting team will react to this type of leader and unless there is real substantive change in the leader, there will be big trouble between the Leader and the team.

Plurality of Leadership is the way of our CRC Churches and every leader needs a team as much as every team needs a leader.

#### **4.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)**

**Teams only work well, however, when they sincerely and wholeheartedly submit to good leaders as defined in 3.2 and respect the God-given call upon the Lead Minister's life.**

If a team member cannot operate like this, they need to step aside at the most appropriate time, to ensure that unity and love prevail and the Church is protected.

Submission does not mean that team members should have an unhealthy and a slavish unthinking devotion to a leader's every opinion and whim. Loyalty to a leader can operate within an environment where rigorous discussion, debate and even disagreements can take place before a decision. It is more than permissible for team members to agree to disagree agreeably from time to time.

### **5. LEADERS AND ELDERSHIP BOARDS MUST BE FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TO EACH OTHER AND TO OUR CRC DENOMINATIONAL FAMILY**

#### **5.1 The Lead Minister**

**The CRC reaffirms the ministerial credentials of all its ministers on a yearly basis**, as we believe that the New Testament teaches that all ministry positions (Lead Minister, Associate Minister, Assistant Minister and Elder) can continue only on the basis of a **functioning and fruitful ministry**.

This is the only way a local Church can operate with real spiritual effectiveness and genuine integrity.

#### **5.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)**

**Teams should only over-rule the leader or terminate their leadership of the church if they wilfully violate clearly defined standards in the five crucial areas that our entire denominational family has agreed upon: -**

1. Morality – Wilfully violating our accepted sexual purity standards
2. Money – Wilfully violating our accepted financial purity standards
3. Ministry – Wilfully violating our accepted relational purity standards
4. Doctrine – Wilfully violating our accepted Biblical purity standards
5. The law – Wilfully violating our accepted civic/legal purity standards

(Please refer to our CRC National Guidelines (ie) “Discipline and Restoration of Ministers Document.”) (7.)

Leo Harris, like many spiritual leaders who exemplify great personal integrity, exhorted his fellow Lead Ministers and students that were being trained for ministry to watch out for the 3 G’s. ie ... the Girls, (or Guys) the Gold and the Glory. I believe it is the Glory or ‘Spiritual Pride’ that is the most dangerous and opens the door for the other two to entrap and destroy us. A leader’s fall can be traced to a gradual spiritual declension that is interlinked with complex webs of self-deception, long before they wilfully violate in any of the above five areas of entrapment. We must be willing to do all in our power to prevent this decline and this is where real accountability comes in.

Loving correction is in order for all who are in leadership positions (ie, Lead Ministers and Elders) if they stray from the *19 character qualities* that are outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 ... Please refer to sections 2 and 3 on pages 28-32. The level of personal scrutiny and accountability needs to be of the highest order for all who are given this level of responsibility and trust in Jesus’ church. The *Primary Qualities* we look for and the proposed *Character Check for Leaders* (refer Sections 3, 4 and 5, pages 29-35) need to be accepted as the minimum basis of Christian holiness and commitment for all church leaders. We have a solemn duty to watch our own lives carefully, and the lives of our fellow Elders, and to be courageous in confronting aspects of our lives that fail to measure up to this spiritual standard. This should be done on a person-to-person basis, and from time to time when we meet as a group to do a personal spiritual audit of our individual lives and our collective working as a team. It also needs to be said that accusations of inappropriate behaviour must be handled very wisely, lovingly and in a Biblically-mandated manner.

*1 Timothy 5:19-20 “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.”*

*Galatians 6:1-5, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load."*

## **6. APPOINTMENT AND DISMISSAL POWERS OF ALL CHURCH OFFICERS**

As this is an extremely sensitive matter and potentially the most destabilising and dangerous period in the life of a church, it must be handled with great care; and with some extra safeguards like outside consultation by people who are older, wiser and more experienced in Christian ministry. Please also refer to Section 11 on page 21. 'Controversy and Conflict'.

### **6.1 The Lead Minister**

**Leaders should be able to recommend changes to the team over time, particularly if a team is already in place when they commence ministry in a Church.** This needs to be outworked with great sensitivity and should normally take place at the yearly review period that usually precedes the Annual General Meeting of partnering members and supportive attendees.

This expectation must be clearly understood by both parties before a new Lead Minister is appointed. It is imperative that a prospective new leader and the existing Eldership Board really get to know each other and not rush the appointment process. They both need to appreciate *their particular histories, the unique culture of the new leader's previous church; and the vision and values and present climate of the new church the new Lead Minister is joining.*

### **6.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)**

**The concurrence by at least a 2/3 or 3/4 majority of the team needs to occur, which provides a check and a balance on the Lead Minister's appointments prerogative.** This will ensure that responsible and accountable decision making in this crucial area is always maintained.

An Eldership Board must consist of at least 3 people for a simple majority or a 2/3 majority decision to be possible. When an Eldership Board is enlarged it needs to be by two people at a time (ie. 5, 7, 9) as the odd number ensures

that a simple majority and 2/3 majority basis for decisions can be maintained. It is also recommended that small churches (ie. under 100 people) stick with a team of three. Churches that are between 100 – 300, a five person team. Churches of 300 plus that are growing can have a team of seven, but that should be the ceiling for most churches. Some really large churches of 500 plus have teams of up to eleven people but this is getting to the unwieldy stage. The ideal team, in a growing and healthy church that facilitates good decision making, is an Eldership Team of seven or nine members.

This provision ensures that the Elders/Oversight cannot be sacked en masse by a leader who develops a **'papal infallibility complex'**.

The Eldership Board should however be able to dismiss the Lead Minister if he/she has lost their confidence because of serious trouble as defined in point five (the five crucial areas. Pages 13 and 14).

This most serious of decisions should be made in consultation with our recognised State and National CRC Leadership Teams and be discussed fully with them, long before such drastic action is taken. This also prevents the Eldership Board from developing a **'college of cardinals infallibility complex'**.

It is absolutely imperative that all who exercise responsible authority (ie, Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards) should also be held accountable to guard against an abuse of that authority and power.

## 7. REVIEW OF ELDERS' FUNCTIONALITY

### 7.1 The Lead Minister

**The Scriptures give no fixed term for Elders and therefore no specific fixed term of office should be recommended.** Instead, it is recommended that every elder upon appointment should be asked for a *long term commitment, though this needs to be subject to an annual review by the Lead Minister, a fresh recommitment by each elder and a reaffirmation by the church membership at the Annual General Meeting.* It must be recognised that as a church grows, some elders who function well when say a congregation is around 70, may not have the capabilities to handle a church of 150 or 200 plus. It is important that new elders be brought onto the team at key strategic times to help facilitate the church's continual growth and development.

This annual review of the Elders functionality and continuing suitability, should be initiated by the Lead Minister as part of his/her leadership responsibility.

In the event of a team member whose vision, values, priorities and capacity is becoming incompatible with the rest of the team; and is affecting how the team operates; Lead Ministers and the other Elders need to be patient and wait for the time when changes to the composition of the team will be more readily accepted by the church (ie, at the yearly review period as the church heads up to its AGM).

If an elder refuses to step down from the team when the Lead Minister recommends this as part of his/her review, the matter must be decided upon by the Eldership Board.

The church must be fully aware of this process of *continual assessment* of all ministry roles and church officers, so that change of personnel is not viewed negatively but as a normal aspect of church life. Non-functioning and unfruitful leaders in all ministry areas of the church need to be wisely *challenged* and *lovingly re-deployed* in their church positions if they are not really fulfilling the spiritual duties required of them; and this also has to include both the Lead Minister and the Eldership Board.

## 7.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)

**They need to be educated that Eldership is not necessarily a life-time appointment!**

We must be mature in this area, *learn to disagree agreeably* and ensure that we are governed by the law of love in this very sensitive matter of replacing Elders.

This matter of educating and discipling Elders needs to be taken very seriously and it is recommended that *a training programme* be set up by the National and State Executives to acculturate all potential Elders about our CRC Values, Vision, Mission and Organisational Processes before they are appointed as Elders. This in-service training programme should be administered through our State Councils and our Recognised Regions either as *an individual correspondence course*, or through *set seminars* for groups of potential and existing Elders.

*Proactive and preventative measures* will save us a lot of time in the long term, as it will *pre-empt the many potentially divisive issues* that we are called upon to make judgements about. Most times the damage has already been done, and it is really difficult to retrieve a situation when disorder is the prevailing culture. James implores us to be wise and to close the door on the destructive works of satan, that flourish when selfish ambition and bitter envy take root in our interpersonal relationships, particularly amongst leadership.

*James 3:13-18 "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."*

Additionally, existing Elders should be encouraged by their Lead Minister to attend the special seminars run by their State Council.

## 8. FINANCE, PROPERTY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

### 8.1 The Lead Minister

Though the Lead Minister may be the chief initiator (ideas, visions, etc) he/she should only have one vote in *finance, property and legal matters*, as the entire Board is corporately responsible (according to the law) for the legal, business, property, financial affairs and debts of the Church.

### 8.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)

They along with the Lead Minister as a member of the Board of Elders should have absolute and total power in all financial decisions by at least a simple majority or even by a 2/3 majority.

It is also wise and proper if we believe in full accountability, that an appropriately qualified and very experienced *non-member* be appointed as the *financial auditor* of the Church. The auditor should be *duly empowered* by the Board to bring correction on any matter that is not fully aligned with the spirit and letter of the law, or with acceptable accounting practices.

This does not mean that we should limit the Lead Minister's faith and vision to think big or pursue innovative ideas and creative projects; but the full team have to *own these major finance and property decisions* with the utmost diligence.

It is also the responsibility of the team to keep fully abreast of *changes to the law* and how it relates to our local churches.

This encompasses Federal, State and Local government laws and regulations that can relate to such diverse areas as Occupational Health and Safety; Insurance/Professional Indemnity Concerns; Duty of Care matters as they relate to ministry to minors; Counselling ethics; Building Development Codes, etc.

## 9. SALARIES AND REMUNERATION MATTERS

### 9.1 The Lead Minister

Lead Ministers should not be involved in the process of setting their own salaries or of members of their family if they are on staff, though they can make suggestions regarding other staff members; (ie) bonuses, other encouragements, etc.

This ensures that no conflict of interest can be levelled at leaders, who with their Eldership Boards, determine the spending priorities of the church on a year to year basis.

## **9.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)**

**They should have absolute and total power in this area and preferably by a 2/3 majority.** If an elder has a family member as a salaried employee of the church, it is important for that elder to be excused from any discussions and decision about that family member's remuneration.

This responsibility can be delegated to a sub-committee of appropriate people as long as no salaried employee or a close family member of an employee be on the committee.

By keeping the church informed of this arrangement it greatly helps in *lifting the confidence* of the people in their spiritual leaders. This *totally transparent* and very clean approach, is also a very *positive witness* to the unchurched community. It really does demonstrate a standard that is higher than how the "world" generally operates. We aim to be not just 'within the law'; but to be 'beyond reproach or blameless' in this very sensitive matter.

## **10. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

### **10.1 The Lead Minister**

**The Lead Minister is often the initiator and proposer of constitutional changes but he/she has only one vote as the Chair of the Eldership Board.**

### **10.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)**

**The Board must be in total agreement and have the endorsement of the relevant State Executive of the CRC before presenting any proposed changes to the Church Membership.** The proposal is then presented to the members for their endorsement and decision by a 2/3 or 3/4 majority.

The power to change the constitution of a local church should not reside totally in the hands of an Eldership Board, if they are the only members according to their constitutional arrangements. Any proposed changes to the constitution need to be endorsed and ratified by the State or National Executive of the CRC. This ensures that Lead Ministers and the Eldership Boards are fully transparent

and accountable to their denominational family in this very important area when the governing document of the church is to be changed.

These constitutional changes should be fully compliant with our State and National CRC organisational procedures and expectations as expressed in our State and National Constitutions, our Model Local Church Constitution and other relevant CRC Policies and Guidelines.

## **11. CONTROVERSY AND CONFLICT**

### **11.1 The Lead Minister**

**Good and godly leaders will do all in their power to avoid a church split as it usually is a loss for all concerned** (ie the Leader, the Board, the Congregation and our credibility before the community).

The Lead Minister and the Board should establish a 'judicial body' (Advisory Council) – comprising *recognised leaders* within our CRC denominational family – to resolve intractable issues. The members of a church have to be protected against serious matters remaining unresolved, which can lead to the church becoming divided. In these circumstances, both Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards should be subject to the nominated Advisory Council.

### **11.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)**

**The Team is to be involved, along with the Lead Minister, in establishing or nominating this judicial body or Advisory Council.**

This selected group of Nationally-credentialed CRC Ministers, or a State Executive or the National Executive should have a credible track record of experience, stability and wisdom. A previously-endorsed group of CRC ministers that have relationship with the church, rather than an elected Executive that changes every 2 to 4 years, is quite acceptable. This can safeguard against an Eldership objecting to their involvement because they did not vote an Executive in, or because they may not have full confidence in the capacity of some members of that Executive body handling matters of a large and complex church that requires a lot of experience.

The Christian Family Centre endorses its Advisory Council at its first official Eldership Board gathering each year and sends copies of its Board minutes to them so they are fully cognoscente of the churches affairs at all times.

## 12. COLLEGIATE LEADERSHIP AND FAMILY ENTANGLEMENTS

### 12.1 The Lead Minister

**The premise behind all the principles and practical pointers that have been made so far in this paper, is that a local church should only ever have *one person as its Lead Minister*.** This person has to *willingly accept the full responsibility* of what leadership entails and be prepared to be *fully accountable* in the exercise of their leadership role to a designated Board of Elders.

- The concept of a *team-Lead leadership*, or *dual-Lead leadership* or *co-Lead leadership* (by a husband and wife team) where all have equal authority and the same rights; rather than having one Lead leader as *the first among equals within a team context*, is extremely difficult to outwork and is mostly an unworkable model. The collegiate leadership model is *inherently unstable*, leads to periods of great *insecurity and disorder*; particularly over the important question of *succession* should something untoward happen to one of the Lead Ministers.
- The various arguments for this type of leadership model pale into insignificance, when one considers that there are no long-term viable examples from *Biblical* and *Secular history*. There are also no credible, tried and tested present day examples within the church world-wide, the governmental systems of all our world's Nation States; non-government organisations; businesses; trade unions; community groups, etc.
- When it comes to the church, Scripture unequivocally teaches that Jesus uniquely calls and graces individuals to exercise a particular ministry within His kingdom. Everyone in a local church is called and gifted to flow in a personally fulfilling and fruitful ministry role. The definite role of the overall Overseer, Leader or Lead Minister of a local church developed within a generation of the Acts church. It needs to be stated that the role of Lead Minister, Lead Elder or Presiding Elder as the first among equals of a ruling Eldership Team is not clearly *prescribed* in the New Testament. It certainly

is *implied*, when we examine the pre-eminent leadership role that James, Timothy and Titus played in the church at Jerusalem, Ephesus and the island of Crete. (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:8; 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5).

There also is a pretty *clear pattern* of leaders or 'set apart individuals' who take the lead, but work through Elders who assist and support them to lead the people of God. Whether they were **Patriarchs, Generals, Judges, Prophets, Kings** or **Apostles** they related closely to a team as responsible and accountable leaders.

(Exodus 4:29; Joshua 7:6; 1 Samuel 15:30; Psalm 107:32; 1 Kings 8:1-3; 1 Chronicles 11:3; Acts 2:14; Acts 20:17-33; Acts 21:18; Revelation 5:6).

The pattern and procedures of the synagogue in New Testament times, certainly impacted how the first Jewish Christians organised themselves into congregations. The NIV Study note in Mark 5:22 sheds light on Mark's statement that Jairus was a local 'synagogue ruler'. *"Synagogue Rulers. A ruler of the synagogue was a layman whose responsibilities were administrative and included such things as looking after the building and supervising the worship. Though there were exceptions (see Acts 13:15), most synagogues had only one ruler. Sometimes the title was honorary, with no administrative responsibilities assigned."* (8.)

However, we also have to admit that a *plurality and equality* of leadership is also implied in Acts 10:17, 28; Philippians 1:1 and 1 Peter 5:1.

- A person who outworks the ministry role of the Lead Minister is not to be viewed as a superior or a more spiritual person than all the many ministry roles in the life of a church. However, we cannot minimise that Jesus raises up people with the 'gift of leadership' (Romans 12:8), and surely people with this gift are needed for the quite unique local church role of Lead Minister. I think Paul has this particular role in mind in Ephesians 4:11-16 when he says that it is the risen exalted Christ who *gives* "some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:11); and that their job description involves them being the equipping coaches "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:12.)

- In arguing the case for one clearly defined leader of each local church, it does not preclude the Lead Minister's spouse, children, or other family members also being called and gifted to minister within the same local church. It is just that they, like all others, cannot have the **same authority and say** as the Lead Minister who is to be fully accountable to the Eldership Board of the church. A spouse, or family member, or personal friend, can *influence*, like any member or leader in the church; but the *full responsibility rests upon the designated Lead Minister*, who has to give a *full account of his or her leadership to the recognised team*.

## 12.2 The Team (Board, Eldership, Oversight)

**Though I concede that there are some examples of dual leadership and co-equal team leadership that can work for a period of time, it rarely lasts beyond an *experimental period*.** In fact, when there is a change of personnel, it usually comes to an end. This is because the *unique personal and close relationship* of the duo, or the team in the initial set-up of a church, government, school, business, etc. simply *cannot be replicated*.

The one area that undermines the fully responsible and accountable model of leadership and good governance, is when one's spouse, children, other family members *are on the Eldership Board*. This should be avoided for the following reasons.

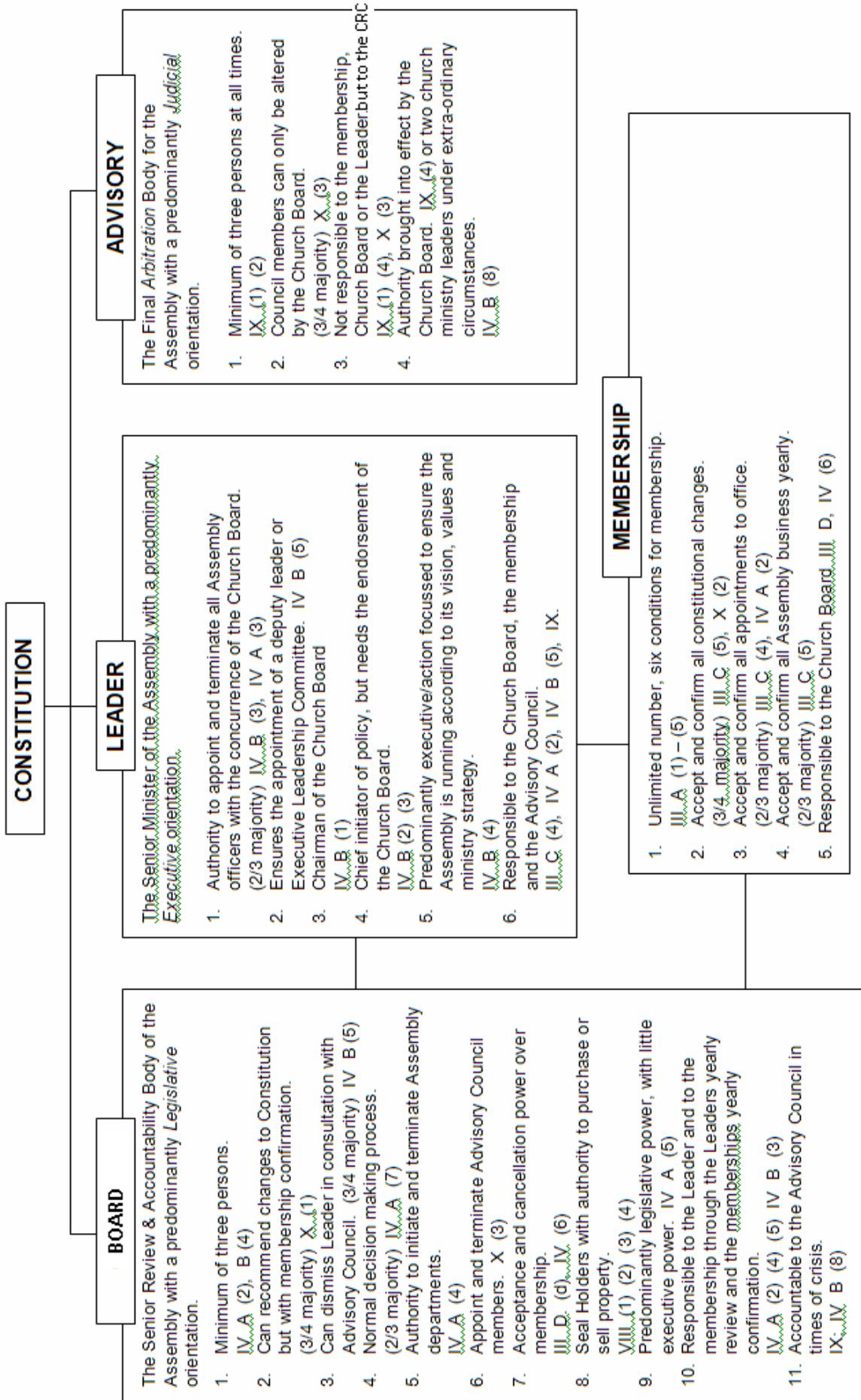
- It is difficult for a leader to be *totally free to lead* within the bounds of accountability to the team, if his or her family members are on the Board.
- It is also very hard for a team to be *totally objective and impartial*, when it comes to the very serious and sensitive matter of bringing the leader to account on some issue, *if a family member is on the Board*.

- There is no conflict of interest if a spouse, child or other family member is fully involved in *some ministry role* within the church; but it becomes a most serious conflict of interest when they are also members of the accountability Board of the church.
- A spouse or family member can be recognised as an assistant Pastor, be on salaried staff, counsel, preach, teach, etc. They *should not be prejudiced* if God has called and gifted them to flow in a ministry role within the same church; even though there will be some *special adjustments* that will need to be in place if this occurs. However *to avoid messy family entanglements* and the *danger of nepotism*, the Board of Elders who are the ultimate human authority in the church *should not be connected* to the Leader's personal family.
- In the *start-up phase* of a church - when it is a designated outreach and under the authority and supervision of a mother church or a State Executive - it may be necessary, if there are no appropriate candidates, for a spouse or family member to be on the *interim leadership team*. If it is necessary for a family member to be on the initial team, the mother church or State Executive that mentor them, should take a *direct supervisory role* in the really sensitive matters like salaries, disputes, etc. This is not the ideal, and it should only occur in the rarest of circumstances; and the family member should step down from the interim leadership team as soon as an appropriately qualified person becomes available to serve on the team.
- An important sign that a new church is ready to be recognised as an *autonomous interdependent local church* within the CRC is when it has at least two other spiritually mature members who are suitable to join with the Lead Minister to become the initial Eldership Board.

- If a spouse or family member is on the Eldership Team for a longer period than the start up phase of a church, there must be enough *non-family members* on the Team to be able to out-vote and over-rule the Lead Minister and his/her family members. For full accountability to be preserved, family members must be excluded from Board discussions and decisions that have to do with remuneration matters, or if the Lead Minister is to be corrected, disciplined or dismissed from office.

To conclude the first half of this document I have included a flow chart from the Christian Family Centre as a good example of what we mean by a fully responsible and fully accountable government structure. (9.)

**SEATON – CHRISTIAN FAMILY CENTRE CONSTITUTION**  
**FLOW CHART OUTLINING THE AUTHORITY STRUCTURE, LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY BETWEEN ALL THE RELEVANT DECISION MAKING BODIES OF THE CHURCH**



# PART TWO – RELATIONAL HEALTH

## ... THE ABSOLUTE PRIORITY AND NEED FOR RELATIONAL HEALTH BETWEEN LEAD MINISTERS AND THEIR CHURCH ELDERSHIP BOARDS

### 1. A GOOD AND VERY SOUND RELATIONSHIP MUST EXIST BEFORE THE LEAD MINISTER RECOMMENDS SOMEONE FOR APPOINTMENT.

If it is not there prior to their appointment, it will most likely disintegrate once they are appointed; and that spells big trouble for the Lead Minister and the church. They must be “well known to” and “keenly observed by” the Lead Minister over several years and never just several months.

### 2. NEVER COMPROMISE 1 TIM. 3:1-7 AND TITUS 1:6-9, WHERE PAUL TELLS US WHAT SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS POTENTIAL CANDIDATES SHOULD BE DISPLAYING BEFORE THEY ARE RECOGNISED AND APPOINTED AS ELDERS.

The only spiritual gifts/natural aptitudes/abilities/competencies that seem to get a mention are “apt to teach” and the “ability to govern / manage”; and all the rest have to do with sound Christian character traits. The most important personal life arenas mentioned that are readily observable involve our **family** and **work** life.

- ... Their marriage/family needs to be in good order
- ... They also need to have a good reputation in the world
  - (ie) employment record & community/civic relationships

Potential Elders should be thoroughly tested by being placed in various ministry, leadership and administrative-related roles and positions prior to considering them for Eldership. The Lead Minister and existing Elders need to watch them very closely over several years as they outwork the various ministry tasks assigned to them. The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to “test” potential leaders before appointing them to office. If this principle applies to a church position with less responsibility than that of Elders (ie Deacons), we must be doubly sure when it comes to the appointment of new elders. 1 Timothy 3:10 *“They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.”* Paul reiterates this by reminding Timothy not to be *“hasty in the laying on of hands”*

(1 Timothy 5:22). The NIV study notes says that “Paul is speaking of the ordination of an elder, which should not be performed until the candidate has time to prove himself.”<sup>(10.)</sup>

Their personal suitability as a potential elder also needs to be rigorously assessed by having them sit in as a *trainee elder* for at least a 12 month period. **Character** is of first importance but **competency** is also a significant factor, particularly if the Eldership Board need the skills of new members to enhance their functionality as a team. This trainee period will also determine whether the potential new elder will fit in to the team, or has the right **chemistry** and really appreciates and understands the **culture** of the church and its Eldership Board. During this time they need to have completed any CRC *in-service training* provided by the State for all aspiring new elders.

Lead Ministers who are pressured to appoint people who have attitudinal and behavioural problems, or who are not totally loyal are making a serious mistake. Such appointments are never satisfactory, and will harm the Lead Minister, the Board and the Church.

### 3. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

- The NIV Study Bible lists down 24 specific qualifications that apply to Elders and Deacons.

Self-controlled	Elder	1 Ti. 3:2; Tit. 1:8
Hospitable	Elder	1 Ti. 3:2; Tit. 1:8
Able to teach	Elder	1 Ti. 3:2; 5:17; Tit. 1:9
Not violent but gentle	Elder	1 Ti. 3:3; Tit. 1:7
Not quarrelsome	Elder	1 Ti. 3:3
Not a lover of money	Elder	1 Tit. 3:3
Not a recent convert	Elder	1 Tit. 3:6
Has a good reputation with others	Elder	1 Ti. 3:7

Not overbearing	Elder	Tit. 1:7
Not quick-tempered	Elder	Tit. 1:7
Lover of what is good	Elder	Tit. 1:8
Upright, holy	Elder	Tit. 1:8
Disciplined	Elder	Tit. 1:8
Above reproach (Blameless)	Elder/Deacon	1 Ti. 3:2; Tit. 1:6; 1 Ti. 3:9
Husband of one wife	Elder/Deacon	1 Ti. 3:2; Tit. 1:6; 1 Ti. 3:12
Temperate	Elder/Deacon	1 Ti. 3:2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Ti. 3:8
Respectable	Elder/Deacon	1 Ti. 3:2; 1 Ti. 3:8
Not given to drunkenness	Elder/Deacon	1 Ti. 3:3; Tit. 1:7; 1 Ti. 3:8
Manages his own family well	Elder/deacon	1 Ti. 3:4; 1 Ti. 3:12
Sees that his children obey him	Elder/deacon	1 Ti. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6; 1 Ti. 3:12
Does not pursue dishonest gain	Elder/Deacon	Tit. 1:7; 1 Ti. 3:8
Holds to the truth	Elder/deacon	Tit. 1:9; 1 Ti. 3:9
Sincere	Deacon	1 Ti. 3:8
Tested	Deacon	1 Ti. 3:10 (11.)

- Willow Creek Community Church lists 19 qualifications (based only upon, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) and they are stated in a clear and contemporary manner.

1. **Above reproach** – *Elders must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free of patterns of sin.*
2. **Husband of one wife** – *Elders, if married, must be devoted spouses.*
3. **Temperate** – *Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.*
4. **Prudent** – *Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgement, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.*
5. **Respectable** – *Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and honourable behaviour.*
6. **Hospitable** – *Elders must be unselfish with their personal resources. They must be willing to share blessings with others.*

7. **Able to teach** – *Elders must be able to communicate truth and sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way.*
8. **Not addicted to wine** – *Elders must be free from addictions and willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.*
9. **Not pugnacious or quick tempered** – *Elders must be gentle, patient, and able to exercise self-control in difficult situations.*
10. **Uncontentious** – *Elders must not be given to quarrelling or selfish argumentation.*
11. **Free from the love of money** – *Elders must not be stingy, greedy, out for sordid gain, or preoccupied with amassing material things.*
12. **Manage own household** – *Elders must have a well-ordered household and a healthy family life.*
13. **Not a new convert** – *Elders must not be new believers. They must have been Christians for long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of their spirituality.*
14. **Good reputation with outsiders** – *Elders must be well-respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.*
15. **Not self-willed** – *Elders must not be stubborn, prone to force opinions on other, or abuse authority. They must be servants.*
16. **Loving what is good** – *Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.*
17. **Just** – *Elders must desire to be fair and impartial. Their judgements must be based on scriptural principles.*
18. **Devout** – *Elders must be devoted Christ followers seeking to be conformed to His image. They must be committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their own walk.*
19. **Holding fast the faithful Word** – *Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. (14.)*

#### **4. SOME CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT VALUES AND ATTITUDES TO LOOK FOR:**

##### **1. Humble/Submissive – Towards God**

- *James 4:6, 10 “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”  
“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”*
- *1 Peter 5:6 “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

## **2. Teachable – Towards God’s Word**

- *2 Timothy 2:15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*
- *2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

## **3. Eagerly Desirous – Towards God’s Service**

- *1 Timothy 3:1 “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.”*
- *1 Corinthians 14:1 “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.”*

## **4. Loving Loyalty – Towards God’s Church**

- *Proverbs 3:3-4 “Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.”*
- *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 13:17-18 “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. Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way.”*

## 5. Integrity – Towards God’s World

- *1 Timothy 3:7 "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 4:12 "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."*
- *Proverbs 11:3 "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."*

## 6. Surrendered – Towards Jesus Christ and the cause of Jesus’ Kingdom

- *Matthew 6:9-10 "Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*
- *Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*
- *Matthew 28:19, 20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

## 5. CHARACTER CHECK FOR LEADERS

The following very incisive questions for leaders are a good character check for all aspiring spiritual leaders, and in particular those men and women who desire to be Lead Ministers and Elders.

The standard of holiness required for Lead Ministers and Elders has to be extremely high as they have to be top role models of **Love, Humility, Purity, Discipline** and **Integrity**.

### LOVE

- In your recent encounters with strangers or people you know, have you been consistently kind and compassionate?
- Is there any person against whom you are harbouring bitterness, resentment or jealousy?
- Are there groups of people whom you find yourself stereotyping or discounting?
- Do you have a complaining spirit, especially when others do not meet your expectations?
- Do you carry hidden anger against anyone?

- Do you speak unkindly concerning people when they are not present?
- Have you recently extended yourself toward the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, or the elderly?
- Are you intentionally building at least one friendship with a non-churched person?
- Are you a genuinely joyful person to be around these days?
- Do you intentionally create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation for those who follow your leadership?
- Do you use people for the achievement of your mission?

## **HUMILITY**

- Do you put on a pretence of being something you are not?
- Are your conversations often self-serving or self-promotional?
- Are you controlling, often insisting on having your own way?
- Do you have a stubborn, critical, or unteachable spirit?
- Can you receive constructive criticism, without becoming overly defensive?
- Are you overly concerned with your title, your image, and your status in the organisation?
- If you are ruthlessly honest, do you consider yourself to be better than most other people, especially those you lead?
- Are you concerned about receiving credit for your ideas, your contribution, and your leadership role?
- Are you quick to genuinely celebrate the success of others, even when they accomplish “more” than you?
- Have you intentionally been performing any secret acts of service in recent days?
- Are you in any setting where you are a follower instead of a leader?

## **PURITY AND SELF-DISCIPLINE**

- Have you allowed anything to gain mastery over you – food, television, pleasure, alcohol, drugs, sports, the Internet, etc?
- Do you listen to unwholesome radio or music, watch unwholesome television or movies, or indulge in any pornography?
- Do you allow impure thoughts about sex to stay in you mind?

- Are you engaging in any flirtatious activity or feasting on escapist thoughts with anyone who is not your spouse?
- Are you getting enough rest and practising regular Sunday worship?
- Is your life marked by too much noise or busyness, and are you always in a hurry?
- Do you neglect or give little time to personal prayer and solitude?

## INTEGRITY

- Have you recently lied, exaggerated, or embellished the truth?
- Have you followed through on your promises – is your word to others completely reliable?
- Do you do your work “with all your heart,” or is it easy for you to coast along on your gifts and reputation?
- Do you have a thankful heart toward God, frequently acknowledging His goodness and blessings?
- Are you honouring God with your finances, both in your personal life and in your leadership capacity?
- Is there any area of your life you are hiding from others to protect your image or position?
- Are you seeking to live the kind of life you urge (or teach) others to live?
- Are you opening up your life in an accountable way to at least one other person (besides your spouse) who will speak truth to you?
- Are you obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit as best you can discern them?
- Are you as fully devoted to God as you can be? <sup>(15)</sup>

## 6. SOME DEVELOPMENTAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR:

Key words: *Availability, Ability, Reliability, Responsibility, Accountability, Flexibility (or Adaptability) and Authority.*

Only available, **competent** people with appropriate **capabilities and competencies** who show top Christian **character** by being *reliable, responsible, accountable* and *flexible* in their personal and ministry lives, should be given *authority* in the church. Lead Ministers who give authority to unreliable, irresponsible, unaccountable and inflexible people, who may have great abilities,

but cannot pass the 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 prescriptive character test for an Elder, are making the biggest ministry mistake possible.

## **7. THE NEED TO PERSONALLY PASTOR THE ELDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Lead Ministers should:

... Be involved in the spiritual lives of their Elders and Elders' families.

... Always be available to help them in times of need.

... Not just be task-orientated or agenda-driven with them.

... Make Eldership Board meetings their small relational group as well.

(ie) pray over personal needs, have open sharing times and allow caring to take place for up to 30 minutes each time a meeting is held.

... Do not delegate this to anyone else. - it must be seen as the Lead Minister's responsibility to facilitate.

This does not mean that Lead Ministers and their Elders live in each other's pockets.

... Never "play favourites" as this will only create envy in some team members, as it is crucial that all team members are loved equally.

## **8. THE NEED TO BE "UP-FRONT" REGARDING THE EXPECTATIONS THAT LEAD MINISTERS HAVE FOR THEIR ELDERS**

... How many *committee meetings* will there be each year (ie, weekly, fortnightly, monthly or bi-monthly) and what level of pre-committee work will be expected of them.

... How much *work is required* of them individually and as a team? Work out beforehand the *number of hours per week* and remember that they also have full-time jobs in most cases.

... What about weekly *Church attendance*? Does this involve 1, 2 or 3 services per week and what about *some other small group involvement*, etc?

... Provide a *role description* for the entire team and as appropriate, for individual team members as well.

## **9. THE ELDERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TOWARD THEIR LEAD MINISTER**

### **9.1 Allow the Lead Minister to lead**

... His/Her responsibilities are to:

- Lead and chair the Eldership Board and Ministry Staff meetings and be ex-officio on all church committees. Another Elder can chair the

meetings, but the Lead Minister must be free to lead under God's direction.

- Cast the strategic vision for the church.
  - Develop the ministry style of the church.
  - Set the spiritual direction and faith goals/targets over set periods of time (ie, 1 year – 3 years, etc.).
  - Ensure all ministries are aligned to the accepted Values and Vision of the Church.
  - Minister the Word and oversee the other main Public Teachers.
  - Ensure ministry development. (ie) Identifying, Investing in and Entrusting people for Ministry and Leadership roles in the church.
- ... There can only be one Lead leader of the church, therefore the Elders must sublimate their own ambition in this area and be prepared to work under the Lead Minister so as to enhance his/her leadership of the church.

Some Elders, however, are potential Lead Ministers in training; and they need help to know when it is time to move out and become a Lead Minister in their own right.

## **9.2 Free the Lead Minister to lead effectively**

- ... Take as much off his/her shoulders that is not indispensable to their main roles. (ie) Pastoral, Counselling and Administration duties; but the elders must have his/her permission for this to work smoothly.
- ... Always be looking out for ways to release their time so they can concentrate energy *on spiritual leadership concerns, prayer, study and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6)*.
- ... Be there when you are needed by them.

## **9.3 Provide care and support for the Lead Ministers and their families**

- ... Appreciate the unique stresses on them of constant leadership and the relentless nature of weekly preaching/teaching.
- ... Relate lovingly to their spouse and children.
- ... Ensure that their financial and material needs are looked after.

Paul is very clear about how we should treat our leaders, particularly those who excel in leadership, preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 *"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, 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."*

Therefore, reasonable and equitable salary packages are the order of the day.

(Please refer to our "CRC Salary Guidelines"). (16.)

- ... Be considerate of other needs and associated expenses. eg. conferences, study trips, books and magazines.
- ... Don't be shocked by the humanity of the Lead Minister and his/her family and always keep confidences particularly during the hard times.

# IN CONCLUSION

This Guideline is prefaced and grounded upon my strongly-held conviction that the CRC needs to become far more **'Interdependent'** at both a ministerial level and also at the local church level. This was what God placed in the heart of our founder. Leo Harris writes *"Finally, God has given us the concept of revival in and through local churches. We have seen that the New Testament pattern for the Christian church is the establishment of local self-governing churches under a Scripturally-qualified oversight. But the New Testament envisages these local Christian churches, while being autonomous, as functioning in the unity and love of the Spirit of God. In other words, our concept is not of **independent** local churches, but of self-governing, **inter-dependent** local churches, and there is a vast difference between the two. We do not glory in our independence, but we strive to live up to the claims of inter-dependence, for we are all members of one body in Christ."* (17.)

We reject the extremes of both the **'Independent'** and the **'Dependent'** Model's and by the grace of God we are outworking the 'Autonomous Interdependent Model' as the closest to the New Testament pattern.

I believe that pursuing an **'Autonomous Interdependent Model'** is not only Biblical but in the best interests of our movement and its future viability. It will naturally result in a much stronger cohesiveness amongst us as a family of Ministers and Churches and bring greater glory to Jesus.

Yours sincerely

Pastor Bill Vasilakis  
National Chairman

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 1. Church Leaders Handbook

By Peter Braoudakis (Willow Creek Association 1997)

*Quote (1) – page 6; Quote (3) – page 7; Quote (6) – page 9-10;*

*Quote 14 – pages 31-32*

## 2. NIV Study Bible (Zondervan 1985)

*Quote (2) – page 6; Quote (8) – page 23; Quote (10) – page 29; Quote (11) – pages 29-30*

## 3. Vision – The Concept and Challenge of the CRC Operation Outreach – The New Testament Blueprint

*Note (4) – page 7; - Note (17) – page 40*

## 4. Christianity 101

By Dr Gilbert Bilezikian (Zondervan 1993)

*Quote (5) – page 7; and Appendix 1*

## 5. CRC Churches International Ministers Manual

*Note (7) – page 13; - Note (16) – page 39*

## 6. Christian Family Centre Constitution

*Quote (9) – page 26-27*

## 7. Leadership Development Manual (Willow Creek Association 2001)

*Quote (15) – pages 34-36*

## 8. Editorial Comments

By Barry Chant and Ian Miller

# CHRISTIANITY 101

by Dr Gilbert Bilezikian (Zondervan 1993)

## Chapter 7 – The Doctrine of the Church – Pages 194 – 202

### THE MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

Although God has entrusted the church with many responsibilities to fulfil on this earth, we must remember that above all else, the church exists for God's sake. God made the church primarily because he loves it. It is his special creation within all of creation. God's love for the church is reason enough for it to be. A good man takes a bride because he loves her and wants to serve her and enhance her life. Whatever she may do in service to him is the result of their union rather than the purpose for it. In a similar manner, Christ loved the church as his bride and gave himself up for her to make her beautiful and exalted (Eph. 5:25-27). In return for Christ's servant love, the church submits herself to him in all things as his servant (v.24). In this section, we will survey some aspects of the servant *ministry* of the church as it unites believers in community, in worship, and in outreach.

#### 1. *Oneness in Community*

In the previous section we explored the church as God's community of oneness. He delights in oneness among humans and desires to be part of it. When two or three are gathered in Christ's name, he promises to be present in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20). He lives among them by his Spirit (Eph. 2:22). However, such oneness does not just happen. It is generated and nurtured by the sharing of authentic faith, with the pursuit of clearly defined objectives, by conformity to patterns of behaviour consistent with the teaching of Scripture, and by methods of communal organisation that encourage participation. Each of these will now be considered in sequence.

##### a. **A shared faith**

The apostle Paul testifies that the church has "one faith" (Eph. 4:5) and is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (2:20). It is important to define what this foundation consists of. The Christian faith is founded on Scripture. But the Bible is a huge book, and people often understand its contents differently. What some stress as the foremost parts of the Bible

other Christians ignore completely, and some draw ideas from Bible texts that others interpret in an opposite manner. Therefore every church needs to formulate clearly its understanding of the Christian faith in a document commonly called a “creed,” a “statement of faith,” or a “confession of faith.”

Obviously, such a document cannot be exhaustive. It cannot be made to say all that could be said. It should normally cover the main areas of the Christian faith, such as those suggested by the outline of this book: Revelation, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, human beings, redemption, the church, and the endtimes. But in doing so, two dangers must be avoided. One is to draw a statement so vague that it requires virtually no faith commitment to subscribe to it. Some groups adopt such broad formulations that Christians, Moslems, and Hindus can all endorse them. In this case the church risks losing its Christian distinctiveness.

The opposite pitfall is to draw a statement of faith so detailed on minor points of doctrine that it becomes divisive. In this case, a church tends to become cultic and separatist. The long history of church tradition supplies us with a number of great faith documents, such as the Apostles’ Creed (so called!), the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds, and certain denominational confessions, that can serve as models for the formulation of balanced statements that emphasise the essential tenets of the faith with integrity and fairness. Such a statement can provide guidance for the preaching and teaching ministries of the local church. At the same time, it provides a common basis for the commitment of new believers to church membership.

**b. A shared purpose**

A clear statement of faith also enables a congregation to draw from it a definition of its mission. A church that does not know precisely what it is supposed to accomplish will either do nothing or will spread itself too thin by trying to do everything. Each congregation needs to draw a clear and concise strategy statement for what it believes God calls it to accomplish within the particular location where it is planted. Since needs and opportunities vary from place to place, the approaches must be defined accordingly.

Obviously, such a statement of purpose should include the elements of communal life, shared worship, and corporate outreach as vital areas of a church's life. But such goals will not likely be attained if it does not adopt specific methods for attaining them. Therefore, the statement of purpose should also suggest carefully designed strategies to work out those objectives. A church takes too great a risk in leaving the fulfilment of its mission to the happenstance of improvisation. The challenges facing churches in modern society require them to follow carefully considered plans so that they can focus their efforts on what needs to be accomplished without being distracted by the many worthy causes that clamor for their involvement when those are not central to their purpose. As Jesus commissioned the disciples for a short-term outreach effort, he told them to be as wise as serpents within their generation (Matt. 10:16). The command still applies today. Such strategising does not preclude reliance on the Holy Spirit; rather, wise planning enhances and multiplies the effectiveness of the Spirit.

**c. A shared lifestyle**

One of the most consistent themes of Scripture is that in order to be authentic, faith in God is to be lived out in this world. Faith has implications for how we think, talk, act, and relate to others. Without faith, the values that determine behaviour are borrowed from a world ignorant of divine guidance. With the commitment of faith comes commitment to a new life informed by God's Word. The Bible rejects some behaviours as being incompatible with God's will, and it requires in their place other forms of conduct derived from God's will. In the chapter on salvation, this change from one lifestyle to another was defined as the result of the restoration of God's image in human life through the process of sanctification (see pages 165-66).

In order to provide clear guidance in those areas to its people, it is appropriate for a church to draw up a statement of responsibilities outlining its expectations for its members as well as the means of enforcement. The absence of such a statement sends the message that anything goes. When this happens, the line between the church and society becomes blurred, and the church fails to impact society because it is not modelling a Christian lifestyle. On the other hand, a statement of conduct may be so restrictive that it appears cultic and controlling. Some churches seem to be so intent on

protecting their members from worldly influences that, through detailed sets of rules and regulations, they segregate them from society so much that they have no channels left for ministry to the world.

For this reason, it is advisable for churches to refrain from placing legalistic prohibitions and expectations on their members that go beyond the clear teaching of Scripture. For instance, the Scriptures clearly forbid drunkenness but permit the drinking of wine for a variety of reasons (John 2:1-11; Eph. 5:18; 1 Tim. 5:23). Churches that require total abstinence as a condition for membership should realise that Jesus himself would be rejected as a member, since he once changed 120 gallons of water into wine for people who had already drunk enough to be unable to discern its high quality. In view of the enormous social problems caused by alcoholic addiction in contemporary society, churches may legitimately advise abstinence rather than require it as if it were a biblical command. More important, however, is that churches exercise strict discipline in areas clearly defined by Scripture. Note that the same biblical text that prohibits drunkenness also requires the excommunication of people who love money (the “greedy”) and who badmouth other people (the “revilers”; see 1 Cor. 5:11-13).

This raises the issue of church discipline. Having a statement of conduct is useless if it cannot be enforced. The New Testament places on the congregation the responsibility to watch over its members both to correct offending members and to protect the body in case of misbehaviour. It ordains a graded approach of confrontation so that opportunity for repentance is offered at every stage of the process (Matt. 18:15-18). Should the process lead to excommunication, its purpose is not the permanent exclusion of the offenders, but their eventual restoration to the body (2 Thess. 3:14-15). Thus, through this watchcare Christians can maintain good conduct in the world so that unbelievers may see how honourably they live and may themselves be brought to God (1 Pet. 2:10).

#### **d. A shared authority**

As just noted, concern for the purity of the church and for the welfare of its members requires the exercise of oversight. Some may stray away from the faith or err in their behaviour and, as a result, may need to be rebuked or even disciplined. A progressive and dynamic church ministry requires decisions to be made in regard to policies, personnel, and planning. So the question arises as to who should exercise leadership in those areas. Historically, churches have come up with three basic forms of governance.

One model places the authority for the conduct of the affairs of the church community in one person who decides from the top down what is good for the group. In this case, the leader stands at the uppermost point of a pyramid of authority and sees to it that his or her decisions are carried out at every level of execution down the chain of command. This form of administration is comparable to the hierarchic organisation of the military or of management in traditionally structured corporations.

The model at the opposite end of the spectrum puts the responsibility for making decisions in the hands of the congregational as a whole. In this case, the “leaders” of the group are appointed by it and have only an advisory function. They bring the business of the church to the community, and the group as a whole makes the decisions that affect its life and ministry.

A third model looks like a compromise between the two described above. It might be pictured as a sawed-off pyramid. The congregation appoints a group of representative leaders who act on its behalf while remaining accountable to it. The leadership is represented by the top of the truncated pyramid. It forms a part of the congregation it serves, and the plurality of leadership provides checks and balances that the one-man leadership model does not have. This group of leaders – who may be called elders, deacons, the session, or the vestry, depending on the church’s denomination – has the authority to manage the affairs of the church. But because they are elected to their position of responsibility by the people of the church, they remain answerable to the community for the administration of its affairs.

The diversity of views on this subject may cause us to wonder what exactly is the teaching of the New Testament on church governance. In order to find out, we must first consider the teaching of Jesus on this subject. He anticipated the establishment of the community of faith and gave instructions for its functioning.

Jesus absolutely forbade one individual to hold authority over others in Christian communities. The disciples were upset at the fact that he was not structuring their own group with one of them in charge and the others under him. That was the only model of group organisation they knew. So, behind his back, they apparently decided to elect their own leader as the one “greatest” among them (Mark 9:33-35). Upon learning this, Jesus rebuked them and told them that anyone who wants to be the top man in a Christian community should instead make himself servant to all. A servant does not exercise authority over others but places himself or herself under the authority of the group.

This one strong lesson should have been enough to put the point across to the disciples. But they were so used to the principle of people being under the authority of strong individual leaders that they could not grasp the radical nature of Jesus’ teaching. Thus, two of them approached Jesus privately and asked him to make them number one and number two in his community (Mark 10:35-45). They had completely missed the point. Again, Jesus explained to the two disciples that in order to become leaders according to his definition of leadership, they had to share in his own ministry of self-sacrifice, humiliation, and suffering instead of seeking positions of authority.

On hearing this, the other ten disciples became angry at James and John for their attempt to supplant them. Once more, Jesus gathered the disciples and gave them a strong teaching on how to structure Christian communities. He gave them the illustration of the imperial political system under which they were all living. They were ruled by one person (the Roman emperor), who exercised authority all the way down the pyramid of society. Jesus had no objection to that form of government for non-Christian communities. He said it was acceptable for the world to structure its communities in this manner but

not for Christians. The only person who rules Christian communities is the Lord himself (Matt. 23:8-11). Under him, we are all equals.

Jesus emphatically rejected the top-down authority model by declaring, "It shall not be so among you" (Mark 10:43 RSV). He also added that the very people who desire to run the show should instead become servants and slaves to the community. Single leaders tell other people what to do; servants and slaves ask others what they can do for them. The servant attitude is the antidote Jesus prescribed for the poison of single-person leadership structures. And to emphasise this point, Jesus cited as his reason the precedent he had himself set by giving up his position of supreme authority to become a servant among humans (Mark 10:45). With this teaching, Jesus grasped in his mighty hands the worldly concept of community as a pyramid of power and turned it upside down on its head. For true oneness to happen in Christian communities, those who aspire to lead from the top must instead serve at the bottom. Thus the strength of the strong can balance and support the efforts of the weak.

Jesus knew that without supervision and therefore without the exercise of authority the work of the church cannot go on. Decisions must be made and responsibilities must be carried out. The call to servanthood does not absolve the church from making decisions and seeing to it that they are put into effect. However, in Christian communities the slogan "Somebody's got to be in charge", does not apply because the whole body is mobilised by the Spirit to be in charge. Out in the world, one person may make the decisions for the whole group. But in the church, it is the group that decides for itself. In Christian communities, authority is not vested in one dominant individual but in the body as a whole or in a representative plurality of leaders.

Jesus illustrated this principle with one of the most critical decisions a group may be called to make: that of ruling on who may or may not be part of the community (Matt. 18:15-20). In the community of oneness, such matters ultimately come to the body, not just to one individual (v.17). And the decisions made by the group are binding because they have an eternal relevance (v.18) since Christ is present in the group, providing guidance to it (v.20). When Jesus placed the base of authority in the congregation rather

than in once person, he was not being anti-authority. In fact, he was giving greater strength to the authority principle since decisions are more binding when they are made by many people than when they issue from a single individual. Jesus denied any one person the right to control the community, for that power belongs to him alone and he shares it only with the body of which he is the only Lord.

As a result of this teaching by the Lord, there is no church mentioned or described in the New Testament that was governed by a single leader, and there is no discussion of a practice called ordination whereby selected persons are designated as “ministers” or “priests” – except for the formal recognition of spiritual gifts among believers (1 Tim. 4;14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6). The New Testament recognises all believers as “ministers” and “priests” (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6). Because these churches were at different stages of development, because they had attained different levels of maturity, because they were located in different social environments, and because they all had different corporate personalities, their particular methods of self-governance were not the same. But in every case, leadership was a shared responsibility.

When the apostle Paul dealt with the congregations of Corinth, Galatia, and Colosse, he did not appeal to a leader or even to a group of leaders to resolve their problems. He set his case before the whole church and asked for congregational resolutions. Some churches had designated groups of representative members, called elders (or bishops) and deacons, to provide leadership to the congregation on its own behalf. This was true for the church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 3) and in Philippi (Phil. 1:1). But even in these cases, a careful study of the required qualifications for such leaders and of the very scant information provided in Scripture about their job descriptions indicates that the mode of their administration was designed after the pattern of the sawed-off pyramid. Moreover, the New Testament shows that this pattern of church governance is best illustrated by turning the shortened pyramid upside-down on its small base, with the leaders caring for the people from the bottom as their servants, not lording it over them but being examples to the flock and empowering them for ministry (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

In the church, as in most human organisations, there is a need for strong leaders who are farsighted, proactive, and intentional in promoting the purposes of the group. But their leadership gifts should never be misused as a pretext for the exercise of personal dominance (1 Pet. 5:3). The scriptural mandate for leaders is to use their gifts to enable, empower, and facilitate the development of leadership skills among other members of the group, within each one's area of competence. Moreover, the Scripture requires that individual leadership be exercised within the context of a leadership team (plurality of elders) so that decisions will be made consensually on the basis of broad participation. The members of a church's leadership team (whether called elders, deacons, session, or vestry) are the real pastors of the church. Together they are accountable to keep watch over the souls of their charges (Heb. 13:17 NRSV). In this perspective, the appointive pastor or "Lead" pastor should act as one of the regular members of the leadership team and, preferably, not as its chairperson. Christ alone is the Chief Shepherd of the church (1 Pet. 5:4).

In our day, much emphasis is given to church structure, with a tendency to make it rigidly uniform for different churches on the basis of the one pattern derived from 1 Timothy 3. However, we must remember that this pattern reflected the governance mode of only one church in New Testament times and that other churches had other forms of governance. Accordingly, each church should decide under the Spirit's guidance what form of governance will work best for it, rather than model itself after some other church. In fact, the changing needs of any church in process of development may call for the consideration of different forms of governance at each significant stage of its growth. Both the availability of leadership and the size and maturity of the congregation will affect the choice of structure. Contemporary churches must be as adaptable and as flexible in this regard as New Testament churches were under the guidance of the Spirit during the first century. We must realise that institutionalised misreadings of Scripture that define Christian community as hierarchy instead of oneness eventually result in the disablement of community.

One of the obvious advantages of churches with consensual and adaptable forms of governance is the openness they offer for the use of the spiritual

gifts invested by God in each member of the congregation. Within rigid structures, the leaders at the top monopolise access to ministry. But where the Spirit of the Lord is allowed to be active, there we find freedom and opportunity (2 Cor. 3:17). Each individual may become involved in service on the basis of his or her spiritual gift(s), knowing that every gift is important for the work of the kingdom. Some gifts we regard as being authority-intensive, such as that of apostles (church-planting pioneers), prophets (preachers), evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Scripture describes those very gifts as service ministries provided by God to facilitate the work of the congregation and to enable it to carry on the ministry of the church (Eph. 4:11-12). The congregation does not exist to enable the clergy to do ministry. The New Testament teaches precisely the opposite; the clergy exist in order to enable the congregation to do ministry (v.12). According to the inverted-truncated pyramid model, they are at the base of the structure empowering the congregation above it to do the church's work of ministry by facilitating the use of all the spiritual gifts made available by God to the congregation. The authority of ministry belongs to all of God's people, not to the spiritual elite above them.