

Uncommon ELDERS

A manual of biblical and best practices for spiritual care
and governance at Harvest

"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight" 1 Peter 5:2a

Uncommon Elders

“Appoint elders in every town.” That was the Apostle Paul’s message to Titus, his young pastoral protégé in Crete. The sobering qualifications that followed showed the seriousness with which eldership, governance, and shepherding the flock of God must be approached.

At Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie, the elders not only form the official board of directors in order to satisfy the legal and fiduciary demands of our provincial incorporation, they also bear the weight, in concert with the staff team, of the spiritual care for the congregation. In a very real sense, they wear two hats and must carefully navigate each in the performance of their duties. By-Law 1, sections 33-56 establish the specifics concerning the elders’ role. What is outlined here will be based on Scripture as well as best practices, and will complement and expand upon the by-law.

Uncommon Elders is an orientation guide, a training manual, as well as a less-structured policy and procedures for eldering in our church. It is based in some measure on curricula taught by our former and now defunct network, the Harvest Bible Fellowship, but has been added-to and adapted to our local situation and edited to respond to areas of failed governance that were experienced in our fellowship prior to its disbanding in 2017.

Eldering in the church is a remarkable privilege and should simply never be seen as a position of status or power. It is a trust from the Lord. As his designated local leaders, elders are charged with shepherding the flock of God and nourishing and protecting the very body of Christ. It is not a task to be taken lightly. The Apostle Paul said that, “if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Timothy 3:1). It is a good thing to aspire to be an elder. It is a better thing to work on being a man who could potentially be an elder whether or not he ever holds the office.

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1A. The Character of Elders

“Of all the properties which belong to honourable men, not one is so highly prized as that of character.” Henry Clay

Character comes first not just in order but in priority. Of the seven aspects of eldering that we’ll examine, this is of utmost importance. Too many men have been established as elders having superior competencies and thus standing out in the crowd but whose character lags. As Oswald Chambers notes, “An unguarded strength is actually a double weakness.”¹ It is character that provides the guard for our strengths. “Leaders” who fail to develop their character first will only bring heartache to the board, the staff, and the church, as well as bringing shame on the name of Christ.

The caution (almost a prohibition) in 1 Timothy 5:22 concerning the appointment of a “novice” as an elder punctuates the point. A new believer simply does not have the provenness nor maturity in the faith to carry the sometimes-staggering weight of eldering. A further warning comes in James 2:1 where we are told that, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” It is a common maxim, “Don’t let your gifts take you where your character cannot keep you.”

The three key passages that inform us with respect to the qualification and character of elders are found in *1 Timothy 3:1-7*, *Titus 1:5-9*, and *1 Peter 5:1-5*. In these passages, the Apostles Paul and Peter establish the ethical benchmark for how an elder is to live his life. And while we’ll use the word elder (Greek – presbuteros) almost exclusively in this manual, the references to bishop (episkipos) and pastor (poimen) all refer to the same office or role in the church.

The elder must be biblically qualified² in his...

1b. Personal Life

- 1c. Above reproach** – blameless in character; this is an overarching statement that heads the list intentionally; the elder keeps short accounts; resolves issues whenever possible;
- 2c. Sober-minded** – demonstrates patience, discernment, and wisdom while avoiding imprudent actions; balanced in spirit;
- 3c. Self-controlled (Disciplined)** – sensible and trustworthy; balanced in judgment and living;
- 4c. Respectable** – a life marked by dignity; possessing an outward reflection of an inner stability
- 5c. Hospitable** – concerned for and connected in their relationships with others, especially outsiders;
- 6c. A lover of good** – demonstrates visible actions from a heart given over to truth and the practice of what is right;
- 7c. Upright** – possessing a life that demonstrates consistency with the truth, moral dignity, and respectability;
- 8c. Holy** – pursuing righteousness based on their standing in Christ; striving always to be like him; sanctified and being sanctified or set apart increasingly for Christ;

¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, April 19 entry.

² The descriptions are taken from the *New American Commentary: I, II Timothy, Titus*; volume 34; B&H Publishing Group

9c. Not a drunkard – not addicted to alcohol or any substance or activity that would impair judgement;

10c. Not violent – not physically aggressive or impulsive toward others; actions demonstrate a consistency with a heart and mind that are self-controlled;

11c. Not quarrelsome (quick-tempered) – not verbally aggressive, given to fighting, argumentative, or oppositional, but able to control their tongue (James 3:1-12);

12c. Not a lover of money (greedy for gain) – not motivated or ruled by money and/or possessions; not poor stewards of what God has entrusted to them; not stingy but generous; balance in their understanding of money management;

13c. Not a new believer – have demonstrated spiritual maturity over time so as to avoid pride brought on by this leadership position; inherent in the word “elder” is the matter of age or maturity; in order to be proven as having the character of an elder, one must live enough life to prove it to be true; the young man has not had enough time in the crucible of life.

2b. Home Life

While we should not automatically preclude a man from serving if he is not married or has no children (see 1 Corinthians 7), there is little doubt that marriage and raising children to adulthood provide the conditions for maturity to take place. Family provides an effective proving ground of character and leadership ability. After all, “If someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” 1 Timothy 3:5.

In the case of married elders, it is critical to note that it is the man who occupies the office and not his wife. She is not an “elder’s wife,” as if it too were an office, but is instead, “the wife of an elder.” While it is important that she compliment his role, she does not have a role beyond supporting her husband’s ministry.

1c. As a son, the elder must be someone who honours his father and mother. The specific qualifications for the office do not mention this requirement, but the command to do so, part of the Decalogue and reiterated by Paul in Ephesians 6:2-3 puts the responsibility on all believers, not just children, to show respect for and bless parents. Again, the elder must be exemplary in this.

2c. As a husband, the elder must be pressed by the serious injunctions that the Apostle Paul lays out in Ephesians 5:25-33a and in 1 Peter 3:7 for all husbands. He must be an example of this to other men and, by default, carries the responsibility of mentoring young men in this (Titus 2:1-8). In both primary qualification passages, “the husband of one wife” appears (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:6), often interpreted as, “a one-woman man” or faithful in his current marriage. This would not preclude, therefore, an elder who had been previously divorced and remarried consistent with Biblical teaching on that matter (see Appendix J: Elder Statement on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage).

The wife of an elder must also be “qualified” in order for her husband to serve. In 1 Timothy 3:11, in a section devoted to the qualifications of deacons (servant-leaders), Paul inserts qualifications for “their wives” which may be a referent to both elder and deacon wives. These women, “Must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.”

3c. As a father, the elder must manage his household well. Management of a man's household is critical in any assessment of his suitability to lead the church. In part, this is why eldering requires maturity and time. It simply takes some years of being married and having kids to prove if a man is qualified. Of course, these are proverbial type of requirements. In saying this, we are not precluding a single man from serving as an elder.

Further, the question of an elder's children's salvation must also be addressed. While salvation is the Lord's doing (that is to say, the elder cannot bring about his own children's salvation), the elder and his wife have a significant role to play in leading their children to faith in Christ. Paul wrote to Titus regarding elders saying, "His children are [to be] believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination." While we would not immediately dismiss an elder candidate if one of his children had not yet professed faith in Christ, the overall pattern of an elder's family life would be assessed to determine if he is, "Keeping his children submissive" (1 Timothy 3:4).

3b. Ministry Life

1c. Worship Christ. Having been saved and baptized, the elder must model consistent patterns of worshipping with God's people in the regular gatherings of the church. He should be engaged in singing, praying, and the receiving of God's Word through the preaching and teaching.

2c. Walk with Christ. The elder must have consistent personal spiritual disciplines in the Word and prayer and also be engaged in the body life of the church, leading in the small group ministry of the church and learning the rudimentary principles of shepherding by actually guiding, caring for, and serving a group of God's people (Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Peter 5:1-3).

3c. Work for Christ. The elder must be setting an example of devoted service to Christ, with a proven track record of using the spiritual gifts given to him by the Holy Spirit to build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4: 1-16).

4c. Witness for Christ. The elder must be actively praying for those who do not yet know Christ and should be setting an example for the church in his commitment to invite the unsaved to "come and see" as well as demonstrating a willingness to "go and tell" the gospel to those who do not yet have Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:14-17).

5c. Giving to Christ. In addition, the elder's giving patterns should be consistent with what we see in 2 Cor 8-9: regular, proportionate to one's income, generous, sacrificial, cheerful, and willing. We know from Jesus that how a person manages his money and gives is the leading indicator of where his heart is. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). If an elder is not giving proportionate to his income, generously, cheerfully, willingly then his heart is not devoted to Christ and the church as it ought to be. He can only have one master, and his giving would indicate that it is not Christ. And—it seems ridiculous to have to point out that—an elder must have Christ as his master.

4b. Community Life

The elder must be "well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7). The overarching injunction that he must be "above reproach" also applies here as it extends into all of his relationships and connections. While there are always antagonists who cannot be reasoned with, generally speaking, there should be no one, not even unbelievers, who find reproach in him on the basis of these biblical qualifications. Thus, as an employee, employer, colleague, as a friend, as a member of the community, as a citizen, as a neighbour the elder must be seen as a virtuous (not perfect) individual, living his life with integrity.

5b. Other Notes

1c. Passion and Calling. There must be a noticeable passion for Christ and for the church in any man who presumes to serve as an elder. While we do not often use the language of “call” for non-vocational elders, as we do for vocational pastors, it is nevertheless a calling to serve in this role. The challenges that an elder will face require a level of commitment that must be found in the statement, “God put me here.” Otherwise, the temptation to flee when it gets hard or to act in an ungodly manner in response to hardship will overwhelm any man. All of this is rooted in the personal character of the man and the depth of his relationship with Christ. An elder whose personal character is not up to the weighty biblical qualifications will only cause heartache and discord in the church he presumes to lead.

2c. Scrutiny and Endurance. There is no doubt that an elder must have thick-skin (or develop it quickly) and have an enduring spirit. Rick Warren said, “Criticism is the cost of influence. As long as you don’t influence anybody, nobody is going to say a peep about you. But the greater your influence... the more critics you are going to have.”³ A respected long-serving elder at Harvest Chicago would often say, “Before I became an elder, I didn’t know anyone who didn’t like me. Now I know many.” Criticism comes with the office. And it isn’t that you or any other elder will intentionally set out to be provocative or controversial but that leadership is often about drawing lines and making decisions that some will disagree with. And that creates the conditions for criticism. While the lead pastor is the lightning rod for most of that on behalf of the elders since he is most visible and the spokesman for the board, all elders will face this. All the more reason for unity and strong relational chemistry among the elders.

The most helpful character tool when facing criticism is silence fuelled by self-control. “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). That is not to say that there may be some truth that needs to be heard embedded in the criticism. “Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored” (Proverbs 13:18). This is not always the case though. Some criticism is just that: criticism without merit or substance that flows from negativity and a contentious spirit in the critic. And in cases where this is causing division the elders must be direct and firm. Paul instructed Titus, “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned” (Titus 3:10-11). It can be a challenging task to discern legitimate, helpful criticism versus dissent that leads to upset and division in the church. Again, the plurality of elders helps as does humble dependence on the Holy Spirit’s guidance as does giving close attention to the character of the elders. In such conflicts, recalling the beatitudes can be helpful, “Blessed are meek...the merciful...the pure in heart...the peacemakers...the persecuted” (Matthew 5:3-11).

3c. The indispensability of humility: While Paul provides us with two helpful lists of character traits in his instructions to Timothy and Titus, Peter has a little more heart in what he says about the office in 1 Peter 5:1-5 where the primary concern is humility. If pride is at the root of our sin (Proverbs 16:18), then humility must be at the root of our holiness (godly character). And this is indispensable for the elder and will serve him well in the many, varied situations he will find himself in as he serves.

³ <https://christiantoday.com.au/news/rick-warren-criticism-hardest-to-swallow-is-claim-that-all-megachurches-are-the-same.html>

2A. The Convictions of Elders

In the context of Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie, the elder must have strong alignment with the distinctives that reflect our unique DNA among other churches with whom we share the essentials of the faith while differing on matters of secondary and even tertiary importance. In other words, these convictions make Harvest what it is and must be held firmly by an elder who presumes to lead the church.

It must be said that we recognize that other Bible-believing, gospel-centred churches may differ with us on any of these convictions, but these will not necessarily hinder us from cooperative ministry with such churches and certainly will not keep us from speaking well of them. In matters of respected interpretations, we apply grace and cooperate for the advancement of the mission and the glory of God.

As for elders, while a member of the church may join without full alignment on all convictions, an elder must be fully convinced and submissive to the beliefs, statements, vision, values, and practices of the church.

1b. Elder-governed

We are governed by elders who are chosen by the existing elders to serve as overseers of the church in the biblical sense and as directors of the corporation in the legal sense. The church by-laws of incorporation lay out the specifics of our elder governance structure.

We are not denominationally or congregationally governed, though we recognize that having a consultative relationship with the congregation and mutually-influential relationships with our Acts 29 sister-churches and leaders is to the benefit of our church and pleasing to the Lord.

In the end though, we see the simplicity of elder governance as the pattern established in the New Testament and exemplified in the Apostle Paul's instruction to Titus to appoint elders in every city in Crete (Titus 1:5.)

2b. Non-charismatic but not anti-charismatic

We are not a charismatic church in the normal use of that phrase in that we do not see the open and common use of the so-called sign gifts in the regular worship services of our church. That said, we believe it is the prerogative of the Lord to give whatever gifts he sees fit to whomever, whenever he wishes. We are not, in that sense, cessationists.

In 1 Corinthians 14:14, Paul writes, "All things should be done decently and in order" in his instructions on the proper use of the sign gifts in the context of the public worship of the church. The bottom line is that the elders are responsible for order in the church. Thus, the private prayer language of tongues may be used by individuals in the church consistent with what is laid out in 1 Corinthians 14. Healing may be prayed for and granted by the Lord. Words of knowledge or wisdom or prophecies may be spoken (and tested) and received as the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit that they are. But all of it must be done, "decently and in order."

3b. Complementarian

We embrace a complementarian view of the Scriptures in that we believe that the office of pastor/elder/overseer must be held exclusively by men. In the created order, men and women are equal but not the same.

Women serve and lead in all other aspects of the ministry and are not limited in any other way. Women may teach in all contexts except those where adult males are present unless they are a

part of a panel discussion or dialogue with male pastoral leadership present. (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:35-36; 1 Timothy 2:11-15)

4b. Primary Identity Markers

Elders must embrace without reservation the Harvest identity:

1c. Our name

Accepting the name given to our church in 2001 at its founding with all of the history—both positive and negative—that comes with it. It is our heart to lean into our past, learn from it, and grow as a result.

2c. The Mission Statement

To glorify God by making more and better followers of Christ.

3c. The Four Pillars

Unapologetic preaching: *Proclaiming the authority of God’s Word without apology*

Unashamed Worship: *Lifting high the name of Jesus Christ in worship*

Unceasing Prayer: *Believing firmly in the power of prayer*

Unafraid Witness: *Sharing the good news of Jesus with boldness*

5b. Doctrinal Statement

While we eschew attempts to categorize our theology and put a name on it, we do nevertheless reflect some historic theological positions. We are indeed Reformed or Calvinistic in our theological understanding and not Armenian. That is to say, the tenets of the Reformation are essential to our understanding and application of the gospel (eg. the Five Solas). We are credobaptists. We are Trinitarian. We are premillennial (progressive dispensationalists) in our eschatological view.

While some matters of secondary importance are articulated in our doctrinal statement, the core doctrine that unites all true Christians and New Testament churches is what is of paramount importance: the inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth, the nature and being of God, salvation through Christ alone by faith alone, the necessity of conversion, and the imminent and visible return of Christ. Where there is agreement on this core of belief, we may freely cooperate and esteem other churches as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of the name on the sign or affiliation.

In addition to our own doctrinal statement (Appendix H), we affirm the Acts 29 doctrinal statement (Appendix M) as a member church in that network.

6b. Plurality of Elders

While the New Testament gives only the scantest amount of information concerning governance, one point seems especially clear: “appointed elders...” Paul instructed Titus to find a plurality of elders to lead each local church.

The benefits and protections of plurality:

- Mitigate against any one leader (including but not limited to the lead pastor) or group of leaders assuming control;
- Provides the foundation for consensus decision-making, which depends, in turn, on the Holy Spirit's leading;
- Leverages the wisdom and reflects the best practice of Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, and 24:6 regarding the safety of having, "a multitude of counselors";
- Provides a balance of shepherding styles, leading from in front, from the side, and from behind (see Tim Laniak, *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks*, Day 29);
- Fulfills legal requirements of the church's incorporation;
- Provides greater numbers of elders to lead, thus sharing the load.

7b. Ecclesiology and Association

The New Testament church functions best when it is formally and informally partnered with like-minded, gospel-centred churches. The benefits of association far outweigh any potential pitfalls.

Of importance to us is that we influence and are influenced by other churches and pastors on the basis of relationship not mandate. Thus, our preference for a flatter, network affiliation rather than a more structured, top-down denominational one.

We believe firmly in local church autonomy with broader church accountability. What one friend called, "limited autonomy." It is a heart to submit to and find support in church-to-church and pastor-to-pastor relationships.

8b. The Ordinances

The two biblically-prescribed ordinances for the local church are baptism and the Lord's Table. Overseeing these God-ordained ceremonies and protecting their proper practice is the responsibility of elders. That said, we do not see in the New Testament that these ordinances must be confined to the four walls of the church facility or exclusively practiced during the regular worship gatherings of the church. The Lord's Table may be observed in any gathering of believers and does not require an elder or pastor to preside over it. Similarly, baptism may be practiced by any leader of the church who has led an individual to life in Christ (see Appendix N, Baptism Protocol).

In addition, related to baptism, while we practice credo or believers-baptism by immersion, we will accept into membership non-immersed believers if their baptism (by sprinkling or pouring) was post-conversion. In rare cases of physical infirmity that would prevent immersion, we will practice credo-baptism by sprinkling or pouring. In each case, the critical factor is the timing (post-conversion) and not the mode.

9b. Uncommon Community

The first and greatest commandment, according to Jesus Christ, is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). The second is to love our neighbours as ourselves (Mark 12:31). In simple parlance, we want to **Love God** and **Love People**. It's on the wall in the west lobby and it is on our hearts as elders. To the extent that we model this for the congregation, we will see this Great Commandment as the primary identifier of our church...what we're known for. Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:15) and Paul reminded us as leaders, as he advised the young pastor Timothy, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12.)

3A. Competency of Elders

The specifics of the role will be covered in 7A. The Concern of Elders, whereas this section deals with the core competencies answering the question, what must an elder be able to do?

1b. Word-savvy

It should be understood that the elder must be a man of the Word. Paul told Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

An elder must be able to handle the Bible in counseling, in teaching, in conversations at the front of the worship centre and elsewhere, in board meetings, in interventions, in his home and workplace. He must have a deep love for the Word and be able to say with the prophet, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16).

In Sunday services, when the elder is being observed by others, he should be carrying his Bible, have it open during the preaching, and taking notes as an example to those around him. In a digital age where smartphones and tablets are ubiquitous, an elder who uses the available technology should do so with zeal and ability. Elders should be aware of the web content that is available with respect to the Bible as we increasingly serve digital natives in the church.

2b. Self-aware

We know that everyone has blind-spots, but we are often reticent to believe that we ourselves might have one or two. Blind spots are traits and habits that we have that others see and that we may not realize about ourselves. Often this relates to how we communicate in words and attitudes. While no one gets this perfectly, the elder should have a greater sense of self-awareness. Paul’s injunction regarding preparation for the Lord’s Table could serve as a plumb line for elders, “Let a person examine himself...” (1 Corinthians 11:28a). In doing so, an elder does well to trust himself to other elders and friends to speak into his lives to gently and graciously point out areas of weakness and concern (see Galatians 6:1-5.) After all, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6a.)

3b. Consensus-builder

Consensus decision-making is critical to our understanding of elder governance. Steven J. Cole writes, “Consensus leadership refers to the process in a local church by which the elders make decisions by seeking the mind of the Lord, not by ‘voting their own mind.’ The mind of the Lord will be revealed by an uncoerced unanimity among the elders, reached after thorough, biblically-based discussion and prayer.” He goes on to say that, “The key is corporate sensitivity to the Lord as He reveals His will to fellow elders. The Lord promises, ‘I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you.’ (Psalm 32:8-9.)”

While critical-processing skills are always helpful in decision-making, being critical or playing “the devil’s advocate” is not necessarily helpful and does not guarantee better decisions. It is important that every elder be committed to the process of building a consensus rather than being contentious and oppositional simply because that it believed to, “make for better decisions,” a principle often taught by

leadership gurus in business and marketplace cultures. Instead, we see consensus-building as an act of God to align the hearts and minds of each elder. It is seeking God's will through respectful discussion, prayer, fasting, honour for one another, the seeking of wisdom, the searching of the Scriptures, and meaningful consultation with others. It requires grace, patience, and humility of the elder. Elders should not be surprised or repulsed by unanimity. "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Consensus does not necessarily mean an equal level of agreement with each decision, but it is an agreement to move forward. In other words, an elder might not be fully persuaded that it is the right decision, but he may not be so opposed that he holds up the decision. When consensus is not achieved and is held up by one elder who is "not there" on the decision, the other elders must respect his hesitancy and seek to discern the Lord's will concerning that hesitancy in time. It is obviously a weighty matter to be a lone voice against a decision, and it should be approached by both the majority in favour and the minority against with respect and patience. In the instance of a repeatedly contentious elder who opposes everything, hindering the work of the elders, disciplinary action may be required.

"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10).

4b. Peacemaker

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9.) Paul wrote, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18), and the preacher added, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14.) Clearly, peace is something that is near the heart of God, not only in the sense of our reconciliation with him but also in our horizontal relationships with each other. And yet, it seems that it is inevitable that contention will sometimes characterize church leadership. It is both sad and comforting that within weeks of the Day of Pentecost and the birth of the first church in Jerusalem, controversy erupted over the distribution of food to widows (Acts 6) and that a way of peace needed to be found. It won't always be possible in the moment. The Bible does not fully resolve the "sharp disagreement" that emerged between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). We know only that the subject of that disagreement, John Marks' suitability to be on the team, was somewhat resolved with Paul writing to Timothy, "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11.) Presumably, Barnabas had mentored into that place, but we see no final restoration of the Paul-Barnabas relationship. Paul, no doubt, took a step of peace and reconciliation with what he wrote in the letter to Timothy. Having a heart that is always open to peaceful restoration and reconciliation is critical for the elder to have.

5b. Change agent

With the culture around us changing at a steady pace (some would say alarmingly so), it is essential that the church promote and preach the solid ground that is Jesus Christ and the unchanging nature of our God. That said, as those charged with protecting the direction of the church, the elders must be able to "understand the times" (1 Chronicles 12:32) as the men of Issachar did and respond to cultural shifts. Churches that ossify, having leaders who refuse to change in the things that can and should change, will find themselves having less and less impact for the gospel. Elders must carefully guide change in the church, encouraging the staff team and other leaders in their efforts to constantly adapt to the prevailing culture without compromising the tenets of our faith. As protectors of the church's direction, the elders function as guardrails to the vision the staff proposes and executes on in

response to changes in ministry style, music, staffing options, and the like. Our partners at Acts 29 remind us that “missional innovation” is a key value that keeps the church fresh and vital in an ever-changing world.

6b. Prayer-warrior

It only stands to reason that an elder would want to be embodying the Four Pillars of our church in every way, devoted to unapologetic preaching, unashamed worship, unceasing prayer, and unafraid witness. The prayer pillar stands out because we believe that if we don't pray, nothing else matters. So, we believe firmly in the power of prayer and in the God who answers prayer. An elder must model this kind of passionate prayer in his own quiet times with the Lord and in the body life of the church

4A. Chemistry of Elders

From an earthly perspective, *as the elders go, so goes the church*. Not that they are more important than anyone else in terms of God's view of their function. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that every part of the body is "indispensable" to the life of the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-30), but if the appointed shepherds fail in their task, the sheep will be harmed, scattered, and lost. And so, the chemistry of the elders—that is, the ability to work together as a team—is critical to the health of the church. Therefore, every elder must...

1b. Invest in fellow elders

Relationships that are as important as those between elders, responsible for the protection and care of the church of Christ, are relationships worth investing in. Investment in one another means time and attention outside of elder meetings, the giving of gifts, encouraging notes, texts, emails, conversations, and the like. It means taking an interest in each other's marriage, family, work, and leisure. It involves setting aside regular time to pray for and with your fellow elders.

2b. Keep short accounts with fellow elders

When conflict occurs (and it will occur) among elders, there must be a concerted effort to reconcile immediately. The Evil One should be given no quarter to bring about division among the elders. Elders should be quick to seek forgiveness and to grant forgiveness of one another.

3b. Be open to critique from fellow elders

The proverb provides this general principle, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). The need for sharpening is there because men become dull. No man—even elders—are perfect. All need the insight from others to reveal unseen issues in their lives. Paul Tripp, in his book *Lead*, writes,

Biblical Christianity is thoroughly and foundationally relational. No one can live outside the essential ministries of the body of Christ and remain spiritually healthy. No one is so spiritually mature that he is free from the need for the comfort, warnings, encouragement, rebuke, instruction, and insights of others. Everyone needs partners in struggles. Everyone needs to be helped to see what they cannot see about themselves on their own. This includes leaders. It's not enough to just do leadership activities together, because there is not a moment in time when every leader is free from the need of Gospel community. Every leader, to be spiritually healthy, needs spiritual help—every one.

4b. Respect fellow elders

Insofar as elders are "worthy of double honour" (1 Timothy 5:17), that honouring of one another ought to begin at the table, among the elders themselves. Respect in how conversations are conducted, in careful listening, in tonality, and in how elders speak of one another to others are essential elements in showing respect. When the church sees elders who respect and honour one another, they will follow suit.

5b. Defend fellow elders

By definition, when a man assumes the office of elder, he invites scrutiny and criticism. Some, of course, may be true and require addressing by his fellow elders. Some, though, can be spurious; criticism borne out of the simple fact that he is an elder and not because of anything he did or did not do or say.

When the Apostle Paul told Timothy to not entertain an accusation against an elder (1 Timothy 5:19), he was telling this young lead pastor to give an elder the benefit of the doubt with respect to a single

accusation that may be spoken against him concerning his manner of leading. If, however, he hears the same accusation from a second or third person, then he is to act upon the information. This does not apply in cases of illegal activity, sexual matters, financial impropriety, and the like. In such cases, even one accusation must warrant an investigation. It must be said without equivocation that victims will be believed (even if there is just one), accusations will be investigated and, if proven to be true, will be acted upon.

At all such times, the elders must keep in mind Proverbs 15:1 which reminds us that, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” It would be easy to default into a strong defense of a fellow elder or pastor at such times, and to deny the charges, but contention breeds more contention and elders must be measured and reasonable, listening carefully to what an accuser brings, and being both gracious and firm about the truth (John 1:14).

The essence of 1 Timothy 5:19 is not to prohibit a legitimate concern about an elder, but to stop the gathering of accusers to form a power group against the elder. Paul’s counsel is to prohibit 2-3 people from colluding together, and not 2-3 people independent of each other reporting the same thing.

Again, how this plays out against the backdrop of the #metoo movement and legitimate concerns about clergy and church abuse (in the areas of sexual matters, financial, and the misuse of power) is a matter for ongoing discussion. We recognize that, in general, the church has not handled these things well. All the more reason for elders to emphasize the all-encompassing quality of living a life that is, “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2a; Titus 1:6a). Provisions and policies must be in place to protect both the congregant from abuse and the elder from unfounded accusations.

6b. Follow the Chair

While the lead pastor serves as the “first among equals” in the plurality of elders, the chairman holds an equally unique role among the elders as he bears the responsibility to:

- 1c. Call meetings of the board;
- 2c. Form the meeting agendas with the lead pastor;
- 3c. Serve as the representative of the board in employment matters with the lead pastor;
- 4c. Ensure the smooth running of meetings;
- 5c. Ensure that all board members have spoken to a matter, if necessary;
- 6c. Reserve comment on matters before the board until the other elders have spoken to it;
- 7c. Speak on behalf of the board to the church at times when that is deemed preferable to the lead pastor speaking.

5A. Capacity of Elders

The elder must have enough margin in his life to assume this office and carry out the duties that come with it. It is not an exaggeration to say, with Paul, that “the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28) is real and is shared (not necessarily equally) among the elders. Thus, the elders should feel the weight of giving oversight to the church. It requires time, energy, mental, and heart space. It is costly to serve as an elder. Thus, with respect to his capacity, an elder commit **to the following eleven priorities;**

1b. Fulfill a 3-year term. By-law 1 outlines term-limits for elders. All elders sign-on for a 3-year term and generally will serve a second term after which they will rotate off for a year. This provision speaks to two issues: one, that the church is protected from long-serving elders who may lose their edge, and two, the elder is protected by only having to make a commitment for a reasonable amount of time. But there is a third element that must be mentioned. Namely that an elder is being asked to do all he can to keep that three-year commitment given that the pool of qualified men is limited and the process to select elders is lengthy. That said, if an elder is facing extenuating personal circumstances or the board deems an elder to no longer be contributing as he ought to be, then a term could be interrupted to allow or compel an elder to step off or be granted leave subject to the circumstances. In such cases, the hope is that it would be “consensus on; consensus off.” That is to say, by agreement of the full board.

2b. Attend worship weekly. It should go without saying that an elder, in order to shepherd the flock, must be with the flock. It is expected that an elder would not miss more than 8 Sundays in a year (15%).

3b. Be “in the room” doing hands-on ministry. While with the church on Sundays, an elder understands that he is there to “work” and serve the people. Thus, he attends church differently than members or attendees who are not elders. In this way he functions more like a member of the staff who is on the job when the church gathers. The primary ministry is that of presence (being available to pray with and counsel members and attendees), and may also involve teaching classes, conducting interviews, helping in Guest Central, or holding meetings of various kinds. Because of this, it is important that elders:

1c. Not be gathering together to chat amongst themselves while performing their Sunday ministry. As shepherds, the time must be spent caring for and interacting with our flock. If an elder-to-elder meeting is absolutely necessary during our Sunday gatherings, it should be done in a private space away from members of the congregation.

2c. Be present in every worship service. In light of the reality that we are engaged in spiritual warfare, this acts as a protection for the preaching pastor and the church as a whole. It is also an encouragement for the lead/preaching pastor to see an elder in the room while he expounds the Word.

3c. Meet with the preaching pastor for prayer prior to the first service of the morning. This happens in the Ready Room.

4c. Be up front or in the prayer room post-service, making themselves available to pray with people who have concerns and needs.

4b. Be on-time for meetings. The established meeting time for regular elder meetings is late afternoon to early evening. The hope is to have elders who are attentive. The meeting starts with a meal and time to catch up with one another. Small adjustments to this schedule can be made (eg. moving the time from a 4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. start time) to accommodate work schedules. The intent, though, is that every elder is in place by the start of the meeting to tangibly build relationship with one another.

5b. Prepare ahead of time for meetings. In addition to minutes and an agenda, it is common for board members to have additional reading sent via email prior to the meeting as preparatory work for various

agenda items. Failure to properly prepare will result in delays on important agenda items. Elders must take on the responsibility of coming to the meetings ready for agenda items to be discussed and decided upon.

6b. Attend the AGM and AMM. Elders must be prepared to attend and participate in, as needed, the annual general meeting at which they serve as voting members of the corporation (see By-law 1), and at the annual members meeting where important matters of Church business are presented to and discussed with the non-voting members of the church.

7b. Participate in churchwide prayer meeting. Our third pillar is “believing in the power of prayer,” and the elder must tangibly demonstrate his commitment to prayer by attending in-person prayer meetings if at all possible. Modelling a commitment to prayer is at the heart of what it means to be in the elder role as seen in Acts 6:4 where the Apostles appointed servants to care for the practical needs of the church in order to remain focussed on “the ministry of the Word and prayer.”

8b. Be here for all major events. There are several important events in the life of a church that require elder presence in an up-front or among-the-crowd way. Elders should prioritize being at, for example, church anniversary services and events, commissioning of new elders, ordination of a pastor, etc.

9b. Engage in small group ministry. Because small groups lie at the heart of how we “do church,” and because we use the small group ministry as a key component of our discipleship model, and because small groups are the proving ground for finding new elder candidates, elders should be part of the ministry in some capacity (member, host, leader, or coach).

10b. Be available for interventions. Though rare, given our soul care ministry, elders may still be called upon to participate in interventions with individuals, couples, and families. Often this will be in tandem with a staff pastor or director. The dispatching of two elders to intervene acts as a proxy for the entire board in matters of church discipline, but also in matters where members and attendees may simply need next-level (ie. elder) help in living for Jesus.

11b. Teach. Elders may be called upon to teach, mentor, or lead various classes or groups.

6A. The Culture of Elders

A standard definition of culture is, “a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization” (Merriam-Webster). The culture of the elders in a church context depends considerably on the beliefs of the church (the Word of God) in primary (orthodoxy), secondary, and even tertiary matters. This results in traditions, customs, and best practices that define the elder culture.

In the Harvest context, our culture has been defined in part by our birth out of Harvest Bible Chapel Chicago, our 16 years in the Harvest Bible Fellowship, our subsequent in-depth DNA analysis completed in 2019, and our new affiliation with Acts 29. In saying this, it is evident that the culture, in non-biblically-prescribed ways ought to be changing as we grow in our understanding of leadership and our particular context.

Our culture currently reflects the following distinctives:

1b. Consensus decision-making. Our governing documents prescribe voting by the board of directors (non-vocational elders) only on all legal matters related to the corporation. Beyond that, the elders govern by consensus of the elders, including the lead pastor, who sits on the board ex officio.

Consensus decision-making avoids the win-lose scenarios that afflict many boards, providing instead an opportunity for all elders to commit to the decision.

It is essential to note that while all elders may agree to proceed with a decision, the level of agreement may not always be equal. An elder, who opposes a given decision, may not feel strongly enough about the matter to hold up the decision. But if his conviction is strong and he is unable to support the decision in the moment, the majority will respect his stand and pause on the decision, seeing God’s purposes in it. The goal is to always give room for the Lord to work in unusual ways.

In seeking consensus, the elders lean on three elements: (1) the directives of Scripture; (2) the leading of the Holy Spirit through prayer, fasting, and waiting on him; and (3) the collected wisdom of spiritually-qualified men.

2b. Speak with one voice. This flows naturally from reaching a consensus on all decisions. It is critical that once a decision is made and communicated to the church that all board members speak with one voice concerning the decision. Anything else is divisive and destructive. Jim Brown wrote, *“Speaking with one voice is crucial for boards. Watch how this proves true when someone on your board goes public with a contrary opinion.”*

This would also include the voluntary suppression of personal opinions on a wide range of issues and topics that when expressed may cause confusion in the church. The elder must always remind himself that, “When I speak, I speak as an elder” because that is how it is perceived among the members.

3b. Listen with one ear. Similarly, elders must listen to members and attendees of the church with one ear. That is to say, elders must be careful to hear a concern or complaint and relay it to the entire board, if necessary, and reveal the source. This seeks to avoid a situation where an individual may bring his/her concerns to multiple elders.

4b. Lead pastor as “first among equals.” The lead pastor role is unique among board members in several ways:

- 1c. He alone is remunerated;
- 2c. He gives full-time hours to eldership;
- 3c. He reports to the board as his direct supervisor, the chair being his primary point of contact;
- 4c. He speaks for the board on most occasions;

5c. He acts as the chief vision-caster.

A plurality of elders for every local church is well-established in the New Testament (ie. Titus 1:5), and provides the model for healthy leadership in the church today. The lead pastor as *first among equals* simply recognizes the uniqueness of the role and does not set the lead pastor to pontificate over the board.

5b. Spirit of generosity. It is so heartening to read through 2 Corinthians 8-9 and see the generous spirit of the Macedonians and Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to be just as generous. It is an appeal to all of us. Among the most stirring DNA pieces given to us by Harvest Chicago is this same spirit. Thus, as elders, with due consideration to being prudent, we strive to be generous toward staff remuneration and benefits, HOPE fund disbursements, partner support, blessing of pastors and churches beyond our own, and meeting the needs of the community of Barrie and Simcoe County. This is the heart of Christ.

6b. Authenticity, transparency, vulnerability modelled. The characteristics of our Biblical Soul Care and small group ministries must be modelled by the elders if we are to see the people in our church family live similarly.

7b. One office (pastor, elder, bishop). The New Testament makes it clear that there is one office expressed with three descriptive words that give a fully-orbed understanding of what is required of the role. The Apostle Peter wrote, *"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:1-3).* In this passage, Peter uses all three words, "elders," "shepherd" (pastor), and "oversight" (bishop) to explain the function rather than fixate on a title. While each emphasizes a component of what it means to hold this office, any of the terms may be used.

In our context, we generally use "elder" for the non-vocational men who serve as part of the board, and "pastor" to refer to those who are vocational, whether on the board (lead pastor) or not (associate pastors). We don't use the term bishop, but the function of overseer is embedded in our culture. In biblical terms, all are elders, all are pastors, all are bishops.

This is a sobering reality for the non-vocational elders and how they see their role and responsibility in the church.

8b. Maintaining Confidentiality: The issue of confidentiality is complex in an organization like the church because we are also, by the biblical definition, a family and one body. Nevertheless, it is never appropriate for everyone to know everyone else's business. Even as we promote authenticity, vulnerability, and transparency, we let people know that it is always their story to tell, not ours. Along with all staff members, elders are required to sign a confidentiality agreement and must abide by it or be subject to disciplinary action.

1c. With respect to counseling relationships: we follow the parameters set out by the oversight body to which our Biblical Soul Care team belongs. Strict confidentiality is maintained. Only when an issue escalates to be a disciplinary matter for a member, thus requiring elder intervention, will the board be informed. In such cases, consent has been granted by the member when they joined the church. Beyond that, members and attendees must have a reasonable expectation that the private matters they are dealing with in the counselling room are being kept confidential even from the board and other staff.

2c. With respect to the member and attendee database: The private data of our members and attendees is protected by provincial and federal law. We are appropriately bound by legalities. No database information can be shared outside of the normal work of the elders.

3c. With respect to staff information: As it pertains to staff, the board may have access to personnel files, but the divulging of information from those files could be grounds for legal action against the church by current or former employees, exposing the church to liability claims. The Government of Ontario has guidelines under the Ministry of Labour with respect to confidentiality that are no less applicable to churches than to other places of business.

4c. With respect to his wife and children: No specific parameters are dictated with respect to what an elder may or may not share with his wife. Each man must “live with his wife in an understanding way” and therefore determine what is best to bring her into (and seek her counsel about) versus what should be kept from her. What is essential is the maintaining of confidentiality. If a wife is made aware by her elder-husband of confidential matters being discussed, she cannot share it with anyone, even other wives of elders. She is bound by her husband’s confidentiality agreement and could compromise his place on the board if a breach of confidentiality occurs. As a general rule, the children of an elder should not be aware of any confidential matters, but they should also be briefed on the proper handling of information should they inadvertently become aware.

7A. The Concern of Elders

At Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie, the elder is asked to navigate the challenges of wearing two hats. First, because Harvest is a provincially incorporated non-profit as well as a federal charitable organization, the elder serves as a director of the corporation and sits on the board having specific legal and fiduciary responsibilities to the two levels of government. He also occupies the biblical office of “elder” functioning in a shepherding (pastor) and oversight (bishop) role.

In addition, our approach to leadership and governance means that the elder, as one of the directors of the corporation, sits as a member of a governing and not a management board. This is an important distinction and allows for the smooth functioning of the entire organization. In the parlance of *Leadershift* (Don Cousins), the elders *protect* while the staff team *leads* the church. Protection largely happens through prayer, well-defined and up-to-date policies, as well as regular reporting by the lead pastor and finance team.

The staff team is charged with leading the ministry; authority to do so being delegated to them by the board and guidance being provided through policy and appropriate reporting channels. The elders must always be careful to not interfere with their work by delving into the details of the ministry. It is understood that as elders are expected to serve, they may communicate with staff and directors within the scope of their serving role (eg: an elder serving as small group coach or leader communicating with the appropriate pastor/staff within that context).

The Scriptural rationale for this model is found in Acts 6:1-7, Ephesians 4:11-12 and 1 Peter 5:1-3.

1b. Responsibilities as an elder

1c. The Three D’s

1d. Doctrine: The elders are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the doctrine of the church. Each elder must be thoroughly convinced of the doctrinal statement of the church and be able to defend it. Further, all teaching at Harvest must be consistent with the doctrinal statement, and it is the elders’ responsibility to ensure that it is. While much of this is delegated to various staff members and even some non-staff servants, (eg. the children’s ministry director will select the curriculum for Harvest Kids), the board remains ultimately responsible for this. It is for this reason that elders must have a level of proficiency in the Word.

2d. Discipline: In a staff-led church with a ministry approach that includes small groups and a biblical soul care model overlaid, as Harvest does, there will be few issues related to the discipline of members and regular attendees that will reach the elders. Individual elders may be assigned, on occasion, to assist with interventions, but largely this is about the elder protecting the church through the practise of biblical principle of disciplining unrepentant members. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 5)

3d. Direction. The overall vision of the church is determined by Scripture and primarily the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Harvest exists to glorify God by making more and better disciples of Jesus Christ who love God and love people. The elders are charged with protecting the over-arching vision of the church (ie. mission statement, four pillars, doctrinal statement), as well as specific directional initiatives. This vision ought always to be reflected in the policies, ministry initiatives, and in the annual budget which serves as an annual vision document for the ministry.

2c. Shepherding the flock

Though fulfilling the role of board members, the non-vocational elders should be conscious of their responsibilities as lay-pastors. Along with the vocational pastors and ministry directors, the elders share the load of shepherding the flock. They are not exclusively or primarily board members. They are first shepherds who happen to also have legal authority over the church. In their role as shepherds, they may assist with any aspects of the ministry and should have some visibility and engagement directly with the congregation. (eg. prayer post-service, interventions, small group involvement, participation in teaching, etc.)

Theodore Roosevelt⁴ said, “It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Or, as we hear in the well-known saying, “Elders smell like sheep.” It is on the elders to, “Be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2). The elders must also be prepared to deal with wolves and false teachers and to protect the church from those who are divisive (Titus 3:10).

3c. Shepherding the lead pastor

Simon Sinek wrote, “Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge.” (Leaders Eat Last).

In 1 Timothy 5:17-25 we have a passage that addresses the dual issues of honouring and disciplining elders. The Apostle Paul is writing this to Timothy who, evidently, was serving as the lead pastor/elder of this church. The elders will be aware of the weight that is borne by being an elder and must see their unique role as a board in caring for the lead pastor who bears the lion’s share of the weight of ministry. The notion that the lead pastor must bear the weight of overall leadership alone and must bear the burden of “it is lonely at the top” flies in the face of the plurality of elders that God ordains for the church. The elders bear the weight with the lead pastor. They are “at the top” with him.

As the elders govern together in the biblical sense, they will include the lead pastor in consensus on decisions. Though legally he is an ex officio member of the board and therefore, non-voting, on all matters not related to the obligations of the corporation, the lead pastor should be included in decisions related to shepherding the flock.

It is also understood that the board functions as the employer with respect to the lead pastor. He is their employee, and with that comes obligations and responsibilities. In general, churches have often played fast and loose with employment standards set out by the Ontario Ministry of Labour as well as privacy laws. Anything that is said privately or confidentially should never be shared in public. In the event of a significant conflict between the elders and the lead pastor, all applicable

⁴ <https://www.leadershipnow.com/tr-citizenship.html>

labour and privacy laws must be adhered to lest the board expose the church to litigation. This applies to all employees by all supervisors in the church. The board should never assume that it is exempt from such laws because it is a church.

There is a common but false assumption held that the lead pastor is okay and does not require pastoring. Care for the lead pastor includes reviewing his work and that of his team in a manner that is consistent with established policy and procedures, and holding him to account for the job, so to speak. It includes ensuring a fair compensation package for him and approving his sabbaticals and ensure they are taken according to established policy. "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages" (1 Timothy 5:17-18). The elders must ask themselves the two-sided question: Are we doing anything to "muzzle our ox," and what are we doing to give him "double honour"?

It also includes caring for his overall well-being by encouraging him in his life and leadership. This extends beyond him to his wife and children as well. Inasmuch as the lead pastor shepherds the staff team, the elders must shepherd the lead pastor.

The elders must fully recognize that the lead pastor is the lightning rod for the church. It is not an exaggeration to say that the lead pastor will be the primary target of the "fiery arrows of the devil" which are repelled, of course, by the "shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:17). Faith can falter, especially in the face of unrelenting attack from Satan and his agents and even from those who do not intend to be a burden, but who nevertheless are.

4c. Communication

While the staff team will engage in many and varied strategies for communicating with the church, the elders must have their own vehicle for communication with the church family, independent of the staff. This comes in the form of regular elder update emails, the Annual Members Meeting, and other means of keeping the lines of communication open.

5c. Multiplying leaders

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul lays out the responsibility that leaders have to multiply themselves. While this is a necessary function in the church as a whole, the elders' board at Harvest is a self-propagating entity, needing to add to and replace elders as needed. The regular means of growing elders is through the small group ministry which includes both leaders and coaches, and the elders should be looking to identify men who may be qualified for the office of elder. This document should be a primary resource in equipping and multiplying elders for the church.

This principle also extends to other leadership positions in the church as well as the development of church planters and their support teams as they carry out the mission, including sending vocational workers to the mission (Acts 13).

2b. Responsibilities as a board member

In keeping with the applicational principle of Acts 6:1-7, the elders primary calling and desire is to be concerned with the ministry of the Word and prayer. The legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the board must also be fulfilled with godly integrity, but always in keeping with the primary vision of ministry. Biblical elders should desire nothing more than to shepherd the flock and thus have much less interest in the business of the church. But, of necessity, legally, they must. The first church resolved this issue through the appointment of qualified servants who would free the Apostles up to serve as they were

called. The incident and resolution serve as a prototype for the church and explain Paul's instructions regarding "deacons" in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Thus, it is the elders' strong desire to focus on the more spiritual aspects of leading the church while appointing qualified servants who would care for matters of budget, buildings, and benevolence. In a larger church, these "deacons" are often found on the staff team in support roles. In addition, to satisfy legal requirements, non-staff members are appointed to give oversight to the finances, providing an internal review process to ensure the integrity of the charity's finances.

ELDER CODE OF CONDUCT

As elders of Harvest Bible Chapel, for the sake of Christ and his church, we covenant to submit ourselves fully to this code of conduct regardless of personal cost, and we will not expect to continue in this privileged capacity of service should we fail to abide by the code.

1. I covenant to pray fervently for our church, its staff, congregation, and my fellow elders. *(1 Samuel 12:22-24; Ephesians 1:15-19)*
2. I covenant to model a life consistent with being a mature follower of Christ by pursuing personal disciplines of prayer and Bible study, loving my wife and family, maintaining purity, and placing myself in relationships of mutual accountability. *(1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 9:26-27; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 1 Peter 3:7)*
3. I covenant to serve faithfully in our church beyond my ministry as an elder. I will shepherd the flock through personal ministry of prayer, teaching, small group discipleship, and protecting the church and its mission to the best of my ability. *(Acts 20:27-29; 1 Corinthians 9:23-25; Romans 12:1; 2 Timothy 4:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3)*
4. I covenant to honour God with my financial resources through faithful, cheerful, generous, and sacrificial giving to the ministry of our church. *(Proverbs 11:24-25; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8:2-4; 9:6-8)*
5. I covenant to make known to my fellow elders any potential conflicts of interest prior to participating in discussions or decisions, and to not use my position for personal gain. *(1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-3)*
6. I covenant to esteem my fellow elders by never speaking against them either publicly or privately, and by always believing the best about them, their views, and their motives. *(1 Corinthians 13:7; Ephesians 4:29; 1 Peter 2:1; 3:15)*
7. I covenant to speak respectfully of those not present in our meetings, including past and present congregational attendees/ members, as well as men who previously served to the best of their ability as elders. *(Romans 13:7-8; Ephesians 4:15-16)*
8. I covenant to submit myself to the consensus of the board, which requires the collective elders to speak publicly with one voice, while still allowing for individual elders to hold varying levels of agreement around the elder table. This consensus will supersede any personal viewpoint or preference that I may have. *(Ephesians 5:15-21; Philippians 2:3-7)*
9. I covenant to speak honestly yet humbly in every meeting according to my own conscience, ensuring that my reflections are expressed and included in establishing elder consensus. *(Proverbs 16:20-22; Colossians 4:5-6)*
10. I covenant to hold in complete confidence all elder discussions, including after I leave the board. I will exercise discretion in sharing elder interactions with my wife, being mindful of her capacity to bear those burdens and maintain those confidences. *(Proverbs 12:23; Matthew 10:16; 1 Peter 3:7)*
11. I covenant to respect the established boundaries between board and staff, and to not use my position to access or influence staff in any way that undermines the agreed upon authority structure. *(1 Corinthians 14:40; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Peter 5:1-4)*
12. I covenant to place the well-being of the church above my own participation on the board, and to accept any decision to limit or end my participation on the board that the elders, by consensus, deem necessary. *(1 Corinthians 9:27; Hebrews 13:17)*

Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie
Confidentiality Agreement



I acknowledge that, during the course of my term as elder with Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie, I will gain access to confidential information in various forms including verbal, written, and/or electronic.

I agree to exercise all reasonable care and caution in protecting this confidential information, and I will not divulge this confidential information within or outside of Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie unless required in the performance of service to Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie or duly authorized by Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie.

I will ensure that any party to whom confidential information is disclosed, where such disclosure is authorized, will keep the information confidential.

I agree that failure to comply with these confidentiality provisions may cause irreparable harm to Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie. I also understand that a violation of these confidentiality provisions, either through a willful act or by negligence, is a serious matter that may result in instant removal from the elder board.

The obligations contained herein shall survive the end of my term as elder.

I acknowledge that I have carefully read and considered these confidentiality provisions, and I accept the terms.

Elder Name

Elder Signature

Witness

Date

ELDER RENEWAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Elder under review: _____

Date of review: _____

Name(s) of Elder's reviewing: _____

Date of becoming an elder: _____

Date of last renewal: _____

A. Spiritual Life

1. How would you describe your spiritual walk at this time including your personal, spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, study, prayer, fasting, witnessing, etc.?

2. What would be one or two disciplines you would desire to grow in?

3. What one or two areas of your character are you seeking to mature in? What temptations are you working to overcome?

4. Aside from the Bible, what else are you reading?

B. Family Life

1. How would you describe the health of your marriage right now?

2. What are some commitments you have with your wife to continue to build your relationship?

3. Are there any areas of concern or struggle in your marriage right now?

4. Describe your relationship to your children and/or grandchildren? How are they doing in their spiritual walk?

C. Personal Life

1. Are there any personal or relational struggles in your life right now that are burdening you?

2. What is the state of your personal finances at the present time?

3. Who are the people holding you accountable in your life right now?

4. What is your work/career situation like currently?

5. Are you keeping a good balance between work, family, ministry and personal time?

D. Ministry Life

1. Where are you serving at Harvest right now? (list all areas)

2. Are you making an impact with this service? Are you looking for a change in any of this?

3. Do you believe that your term as an elder has been positive for you, your family, the church?

4. Are you willing to commit to another three-year term as an elder? Yes No

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE REVIEWER

AREAS OF STRENGTH	AREAS TO WORK ON

_____ is _____ is not _____ recommended for another term of service as
an
Elder of Harvest Bible Chapel.

SIGNED: _____ ELDER INTERVIEWER(S)

JANUARY 7, 2020

THE SCRIPTURES

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments to be the full record of God's self-disclosure to humanity. The human authors, while writing according to their own styles and personalities, were supernaturally moved along by the Holy Spirit to record God's very words, without error in the original writings and fully reliable in what they communicate. Those who humbly apply themselves to the study of the Scriptures, within their grammatical-historical context and various literary genres, will come to a trustworthy understanding of God's Word and see it as the final and sufficient authority for all of life.

Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21

THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe in the one living and true God, eternally existing in perfect unity as three equally and fully divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead, while executing distinct yet complementary roles in redemptive history, has precisely the same nature, attributes, and being, and is equally worthy of the same glory, honour, and obedience.

Genesis 1:1-2, 26; Isaiah 6:1-4; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 3:21-22

GOD THE FATHER

We believe that God the Father created all things in six days through his Son, Jesus Christ, according to his will and for his glory. He upholds all things by the word of his power and grace, exercising divine providence and sovereign headship over all creation. He demonstrated his deep love for the world by sending his only Son to offer salvation to humanity.

John 3:16-17; 6:27; 10:29-30; 17:3; Romans 1:7; Romans 5:8; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 4:11

GOD THE SON

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, moved by love in accordance with the will of the Father, took on human flesh. Conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, he was born of the virgin Mary. Being fully God and fully man, he lived a sinless life and sacrificially shed his blood and died on the cross in our place, accomplishing redemption for all who place their faith in him. He rose visibly and bodily from the dead on the third day and, after being seen by many witnesses, ascended into heaven. He now sits at the Father's right hand, head of his body the Church, the only Saviour and Mediator between God and humanity, and will one day return to earth in power and glory to consummate his redemptive mission.

John 1:1-4, 18; John 14:8-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:17-18; Revelation 19:11-16

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all he does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ during this age. He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He draws the unredeemed to repentance and faith, and at salvation imparts new life to the believer, bringing the convert into union with Christ and his body, his Church. The Holy Spirit baptizes and permanently indwells at salvation, seals, sanctifies, fills, guides, instructs, comforts, equips, empowers, produces fruit as evidence of genuine faith, and confers spiritual gifts for service in the life of the believer.

John 16:8, 13-15; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; Romans 8:9-17; 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 3:16; 6:19-20; 12:4-13; Galatians 5:16-25; Titus 3:5

HUMANITY

We believe that God created humanity—male and female—in his own image and likeness, free of sin, to glorify himself and to enjoy an intimate, personal, and unhindered relationship with him. Tempted by Satan, yet within the sovereign plan of God, the first man and woman freely chose to disobey God, bringing upon all people the curse of sin and death. All human beings, therefore, are sinful by nature, rebellious by choice, and under the influence of a sin-marred world and the evil one himself. Every person is alienated from God without defense or excuse, subject to his righteous wrath, and in desperate need of the Saviour to reverse the curse and restore their relationship with the Father.

Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-6; Psalm 139:13-16; Romans 1:18-20; 3:10-19, 23; 5:12, 18-19; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 2:15-17

SALVATION

We believe that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ, who died in our place as the once-for-all substitutionary atonement for our sins. Before the foundation of the world, God chose those who would be saved based solely on his sovereign good pleasure. Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross paid for the sins of the world, fully satisfying God's righteous wrath against sin and evil. Those who turn from sin in repentance and faith become a new creation by the Holy Spirit, are declared righteous before God, and are eternally secured as an adopted child of the Father. Genuine faith is authenticated by a growing obedience to and love for Jesus Christ, and with an evident eagerness to glorify God and persevere to the end.

Matthew 24:13; John 3:16-18; Acts 4:12; Romans 7:15-25; 8:29-30, 37-39; 10:9-13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:3-8; 2:4-9; Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 John 2:2-6

THE CHURCH

We believe that upon placing faith in the Lord Jesus, the believer is made part of the body of Christ, the one universal Church, of which Christ is the head. Additionally, believers are to assemble together for worship, prayer, teaching, fellowship, to practice the ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's Table, to serve one another through the use of spiritual gifts, and to carry out the mission to make disciples. The local church is to be led and protected by a plurality of elders who shepherd and oversee members working together in humility, love, and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 11:17-29; 12:7; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 10:24-25; 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5

THINGS TO COME

We believe in and expectantly await the glorious, visible, imminent, and victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed hope of his second coming and the culmination of God's redemptive plan for creation and humanity have vital bearing on the believer, producing an inward assurance of salvation and an outward zeal for service and mission. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The lost will be raised to judgment and experience eternal wrath in hell. The saved will be raised to eternal joy in the new heaven and new earth in the presence of God forever.

Daniel 7:9-14; 12:1-4; Matthew 10:28; 25:31-46; Luke 12:35-40; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Revelation 19:11-16; 21:1-8; 22:1-7

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Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie

Elder Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate's Name: _____

1A. CONVERSION and CALL

Please describe your story of coming to faith in Christ and your baptism, as well as why you desire to serve as an elder (see 1 Timothy 3:1).

2A. CHARACTER

1b. Personal

1c. Describe how you believe your relationship with Jesus Christ is growing.

2c. Describe your personal disciplines of the Word, prayer, and fasting.

3c. What are your spiritual gifts? How have you been using these gifts?

4c. Describe any experience you have had with commonly abused substances or activities such as alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling, pornography, etc. Have there been *any* addictions in your life that you have wrestled with and, if so, describe your current status with respect to these.

5c. What is the state of your personal finances at the present time, and what is your understanding of the Bible's teaching on giving and managing what God has provided for you?

6c. Whom do you have in your life that tells you the truth even when it is difficult to hear? How do you respond to him/them?

7c. Describe the moral fences you have put into your life to keep yourself sexually pure and above reproach.

8c. What do you consider to be the major priorities in your life?

9c. Please provide the names of three people outside of the church (from your workplace, neighbourhood, etc.) with whom we could speak about your character. See 1 Timothy 3:7.

2b. Family

1c. Describe your marital status and history. If married, can you tell us the condition and quality of your relationship with your wife at the present time?

2c. Is your wife respectful of your leadership within the home and in spiritual matters?

3c. What are your wife's spiritual gifts and passions in ministry?

4c. List the names and ages of your children. Describe your relationship to your children. What is the state of their spiritual life? If they are mature enough to understand, do you know of any hesitancy they would have about you serving in this capacity?

3b. Church

1c. Are you aware of any relational problems that would hinder your service as an elder?

2c. Have you ever been under formal church discipline? If so, how was that matter resolved?

3A. CHEMISTRY

1b. As it relates to working on a team like the elders' board, what does the word commitment mean to you?

2b. What does the word loyalty mean to you, and how have you demonstrated that characteristic in your life?

3b. Understanding that the biblical role of eldering involves, among other things, shepherding, overseeing, leading, teaching, and giving counsel, and prayer what particular strengths would you contribute to the effectiveness of our team?

4b. Please describe your understanding of consensus decision making.

5b. Are you willing to demonstrate a level of responsibility that is equal to the level of authority that an elder possesses?

4A. COMPETENCY

1b. Have you read and studied the relevant passages for eldering (i.e. Acts 6:1-7; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-25; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1; 1 Peter 5:1-5)? Provide a brief summary of these passages.

2b. How would you characterize your knowledge of the Scriptures and your familiarity with its teaching? What, if any, are the areas of biblical teaching that you feel less informed about?

3b. Provide a brief biblical understanding of the following topics:

1c. The charismatic gifts (Are you in agreement with Harvest's position on this as articulated in messages preached in August 2020?)

2c. Six-day creation

3c. Divorce and remarriage (Are you in agreement with Harvest's position on this issue?)

4c. The end times

4b. Please describe any formal training in leadership, theology, etc. that may help you serve as an effective elder.

5b. Articulate and evaluate any previous church experiences you have had.

6b. Describe your previous experience, if any, of service on a church staff or board as either an elder or a deacon.

7b. How do you respond to criticism? What do you do if things do not go your way?

5A. CAPACITY

1b. Do you have a work schedule that would permit your regular attendance at elders' meetings and other meetings that are irregular but part of the elder role?

2b. Is your wife supportive of your involvement at this level of leadership?

3b. If you still have children at home, describe the impact being an elder may have on them.

4b. What other serving roles are you currently fulfilling that may have to be altered or set aside in order to take on the role of an elder?

5b. Are you committed to extra Sunday responsibilities and continued involvement in a small group?

6b. Are you able to fully commit to a three-year term as an elder?

6A. CONVICTION

1b. How long have you been a member of Harvest Bible Chapel?

2b. Can you speak enthusiastically and unreservedly about the ministry of Harvest Bible Chapel and the Harvest Bible Fellowship? If no, please explain any reservations.

3b. What, if any, are your hesitations about the doctrinal statement of Harvest Bible Chapel?

4b. Are you in agreement with our governing documents and the form of government that it outlines?

5b. Have you read "Uncommon Elders" and, if yes, do you have comments, questions, or concerns about what you read?

6b. Do you understand the difference between biblical convictions and personal preferences? How do you see this distinction affecting the office of an elder?

7b. Briefly describe your position on these issues: cannabis use, abortion, euthanasia, same-sex attraction and marriage, gambling, tobacco and alcohol use.

Candidate's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

In signing this form, you give your consent to Harvest Bible Chapel Barrie to use this information for the purposes of its operation. Please refer to the Privacy Act Policy at www.harvestbarrie.ca.

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