

The Biblical Case for Elder Rule

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Introduction

(John MacArthur at a large Southern Baptist Church seminary, faculty Q&A—personal account of what happened)

Many churches and their leaders think that the issue of how the church is organized, its polity, is unimportant.

“Any form...which the Holy Spirit can inhabit and to which He may impart the life of Christ, must be accepted as valid for the church. As all forms of life adapt themselves to their environment, so does the life of Christ by His Spirit in the church.” (Donald Miller, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*)

Church polity is not just “up-for-grabs.” This issue is crucial; organizational structure determines how people think and act. Too many of us are enshrined in our confessions and traditions rather than in the biblical text.

And if structure is important to secular organizations and nations, then certainly the structure of the church should be very important to us. Sadly, corporate America and Western democracy has shaped church polity, and this has resulted in a suspicion of elder rule.

Some of the worst havoc wrought to the Christian faith has been a direct result of unscriptural forms of church structure. Only a few centuries after the apostles’ death, for example, Christ’s churches began to assimilate both Roman and Jewish concepts of status, power, and priesthood. ...Under Christ’s name an elaborately structured institution emerged that corrupted the simple, family structure of the apostolic churches, robbed God’s people of their lofty position and ministry in Christ, and exchanged Christ’s supremacy over His people for the supremacy of the institutional church. (Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*)

What does the Scripture say about the structure of church?

“The church must have some form; in fact, it always does. The question remains as to which form is prescribed in the Scriptures.” (Saucey)

I. The Forms of Church Government (from Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*)

A. Episcopalian

1. The Definition—rule by bishops

This form of church government maintains that there are three legitimate church offices: bishop, presbyter (or rector of priests), and deacon. Bishops alone have authority to appoint other bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Some Episcopalians trace the authority of the bishop back to the apostles (apostolic succession); others trace the bishop’s authority to church history, and still others claim no historic succession.

2. The Denominations

- Orthodox
- Anglican
- Roman Catholic
- Methodist

3. The Defense

- Church history; “History seems to show decisively that before the middle of the second century each church or organized Christian community had its three orders of ministers.” (Lightfoot in *The Christian Ministry*)
- The position and authority of James in Acts 15 (for a response to this argument, see Saucy, p. 107)
- Titus and Timothy’s roles with several churches
- It is not forbidden in the New Testament.

4. The Arguments Against

- In the New Testament, bishop is not a distinct office but a synonym for elder (see discussion below).
- There is no New Testament evidence that bishops were designed to replace the apostles. For example, Paul alone did not ordain Timothy—a council of elders did (1 Tim. 4:14).

B. Presbyterian

1. The Definition—rule by elders over both local and regional or national churches as representatives of the members (see attached chart 2)

“The local church is governed by the session, which is composed of ruling elders elected by the membership, with the teaching elder or minister as presiding officer. The next highest-ranking body is the Presbytery, which includes all the ordained ministers or teaching elders and one ruling elder from each local congregation in a given district. Above the presbytery is the synod, and over the synod is the general assembly, the highest court. Both of these bodies are also equally divided between ministers and laymen or ruling elders.” (Saucy)

Typically, the congregation ordains the ruling elders, while only teaching elders ordain other teaching elders.

2. The Denominations

- Presbyterians
- Reformed churches

3. The Defense

- The opportunity for gifted men to serve beyond their local church
- A demonstration of the unity of the body of Christ
- The distinction between ruling and teaching in 1 Timothy 5:17

- The example of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
- The command of Titus 1:5
- They make a distinction between teaching and ruling elders—the New Testament makes no distinction?

4. The Arguments Against

- Scripture nowhere calls for elders to have authority beyond their local flock.
- Acts 15 cannot be used to defend Presbyterianism.
 - This is a unique gathering, not a pattern—the nature of the book of Acts.
 - The issue of “Gentile inclusion” is unique.
 - The apostles were present and in leadership—it’s not repeatable.
 - It is the first church planted in Jerusalem, so it naturally holds a place of leadership among peers; the church had to begin somewhere.
 - The context is not church polity.
 - The church at Antioch voluntarily requested the help of the Jerusalem church.
 - The entire Jerusalem church sent the letter (15:22); “If this narrative gives support to regional government by elders, it therefore also gives support to regional government by whole congregations!” (Grudem)

See 1 Timothy 5:17.

Note: “If organizational structure is not evident, cooperation among churches in recognition of their basic unity certainly is. The Jerusalem council forbids an absolute independence in attitude and practice among local congregations. This is further supported in the New Testament by the practice of interchurch relief (1 Corinthians 16:1–3).” (Saucy)

C. Congregational

1. The Definition—ultimate authority for each local church resides within that church; each church is completely autonomous.
2. The Denominations
 - Congregational
 - Baptist
 - Mennonite
 - Evangelical Free
 - Independents
3. The Defense
 - The desire for self-government and autonomy
 - The democratic way
 - A desire to honor the New Testament pattern, language, and polity
4. The Diversity of Congregationalism
 - Single pastor (or single elder)—a monarchical episcopacy

- Corporate board—is unwieldy and unworkable
- Pure democracy—the sheep lead the shepherds
- “No government but the Holy Spirit”—scary
- Plural local elders (annual meeting, affirming leadership and senior pastor at Grace Community Church)

One of the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention, and its first denominational president, W. B. Johnson, left a legacy of plural eldership—“The Gospel Developed through the Government and Order of the Churches of Jesus Christ, 1846.”

Elder rule does not mean you bypass congregationalism completely. In the New Testament, the congregation was involved to some degree (Matt. 18:15–17; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:22). Congregation involvement existed but did not dictate the direction of the church or handle the day-to-day affairs of the church. The congregation took an affirming role, not a determining role.

Absolute elder rule and congregational government are not found in the New Testament (Heb. 13:17–19).

II. The Evidence for a Plurality of Leaders in Each Church

A. The Old Testament pattern—the Jewish mindset

The most common New Testament word for a church’s leader is “elder.” So let’s examine what would have been in the minds of the apostles from studying the Old Testament office of elder. The Old Testament office and the church office are not identical, but we can learn what the apostles were thinking.

There are two primary words in Hebrew for elder:

- *zaqen* (zaw-kane')—substantive; means “old”; speaks of mature age; usually plural; occurs 178 times in the Old Testament; about 100 of those times, is a technical term for those in authority (Num. 11:1; Deut. 27:1).
- *siyb* (seeb)—Aramaic; this means “gray-headed”; it appears five times in the Old Testament, all in the book of Ezra (after the Exile).

1. Elders ruled within a house or family (Gen. 50:7; 2 Sam. 12:17; Psalm 105:22)
2. They had strong moral character (Ex. 18:20–21)
3. They administered local government within a city (Num. 24:4, 7; Deut. 19:12; 21:1ff, 19; 22:15; Judg. 8:14; Ruth 4:9, 11)
4. They ruled within the nation—“elders of Israel”
5. Other nations had elders (cf. Gen. 50:7; Num. 22:7).
6. In Israel, elder rule existed by time of Moses (Ex. 3:16; 4:29; 12:21; 17:5; 18:12; 24:1, 9, 11, 14).

7. It continued in the monarchy as an advisory body (1 Sam. 8:4; 2 Sam. 3:17; 5:3; 17:4, 15; 19:11; 1 Kings 20:7; 21:8; 23:1).
8. The group was influential during the Exile (Jer. 29:1; Ezek. 7:1; 8:1; 14:1; 20:1) and after the return from Babylon (Ezra 5:9ff; 6:7; 10:8, 14).
9. In the Maccabean period and in the Gospels and Acts, “elders of Israel” describes the Jewish Sanhedrin, the highest ruling body of Judaism, which they believed Moses had established when he appointed the Seventy (Num. 11:16ff).
10. In the Gospels, there was a “civic” eldership (as in the Old Testament) with moral and spiritual overtones (Matt. 15:2; 16:21).
11. So clearly, in the Jewish mind, when you mentioned “elders,” you were referring to a plurality of godly leaders who administered the Law of Moses. And with this kind of history, it was only natural for the concept of elder rule to be adopted by the first churches, all of which were primarily Jewish.

But in addition to the clear Old Testament pattern, when you examine several key passages, it becomes apparent that there is overwhelming New Testament evidence for a plurality of godly men leading each church.

B. The New Testament Passages

1. Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18 (the Jerusalem church)

- Elders played a dominant role in the life of the church in Jerusalem and in the Jerusalem council.
- The early church served as role models for elder rule.
- Acts 14:23—the elders were “appointed” but the New Testament does not give us a specific process—See Grace Community Church process at the end of this seminar.
- Note *church* (singular) with *elders* (plural); 15:4, 22.
- James, the half-brother of Christ, had become a key leader (a leader among leaders) in the Jerusalem church. Note what he says in the epistle that bears his name.

2. James 5:14

- The Epistle of James was sent to the Jewish believers who had been dispersed because of persecution, probably that of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12).
- It was written in the mid-40s AD; it is the first New Testament book written.
- James commands that if an individual is sick, he is to call for the elders (plural) of the church (singular).

3. Acts 14:23

- This is the first reference to Gentile leaders of the church.
- At the end of Paul’s first missionary journey (really the beginning of his ministry), he “appointed elders [plural] for them in every church [singular].”
- The construction calls for the distributive use of the preposition *kata*; it can be literally translated as “having appointed for them church by church, elders.”
- This is a reference to churches in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
- One of the key steps in organizing a new church was appointing elders; most commentators agree that this reveals Paul’s pattern for everywhere he went.

4. Acts 20:17

- In Acts 20, Paul was concluding his third missionary journey and heading to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost (May, AD 57).
- Earlier on the third missionary journey he had established the church in Ephesus and had stayed there about three years.
- His ship docked in Miletus for several days to load and unload cargo.
- Miletus was only 40 miles south of Ephesus, so Paul seized the opportunity and called the Ephesian elders to Miletus.
- This is the only record of Paul speaking directly to elders, and “elders” is plural.

5. Acts 20:28

- Paul warns them, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock [singular], among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”
- So the church in Ephesus had a plurality of godly men leading and pastoring it.
- Cf. 1 Tim. 5:17—Timothy was in Ephesus, and there was a plurality of elders.

6. Philippians 1:1

- “Paul and Timothy...to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.”
- At this point, the church in Philippi was more than 10 years old.
- Paul was under house arrest in Rome.
- The Philippians had sent an offering to Paul, and they also had sent him Epaphroditus as his personal assistant. Philippians is Paul’s response.
- In 1:1, Paul identifies two offices: overseers and deacons.

- Both are plural; but there was only one church in Philippi. Fifty years later, Polycarp wrote to the church [singular] and told them to submit to their deacons and elders.
- The pattern was to multiply elders at each church (Ephesus; Acts 14:23).
- No passage in the New Testament suggests that any church, no matter how small, had only one elder. (Wayne Grudem in Phil Newton's book, p.37)

7. Titus 1:5

- Paul harbored south of Crete in the ship taking him to Rome (Acts 27:7). After his release from his first Roman imprisonment, he visited Crete.
- Churches probably were already established and were weak and under assault from false teachers (Titus 1:10–16; 3:9–11).
- Paul left Titus there for a specific purpose: “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders [plural] in every city [singular] as I directed you.”

8. 1 Peter 5:1

- Peter is writing to churches scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia (1 Pet. 1:1)—those were territories, not cities.
- “I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight.”
- Every church in those regions had elders.

C. The Greek Words

1. *presbuteros* (“elder”)—defines who he is

- a) This Greek word has two primary uses in New Testament:
 - An older man or an old man (1 Tim. 5:1)
 - A title for a community official; an elder
- b) No specific age remains with this second usage, but it implies maturity, dignity, experience, sagacity and honor.
- c) Twenty-eight times in the Gospels and Acts it refers to the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin.
- d) Twelve times in Revelation it identifies the 24 elders—representatives of the redeemed people of God.
- e) Nineteen times in Acts and the Epistles it identifies a unique group of leaders in the church.

- f) “The usually thing about elders in the early church is that they were not unusual.” (Phil A. Newton, p.34)

2. *episokopos* (“overseer”; also translated “bishop”)—defines what he does

- a) It is a common word for an office holder in the Greek culture. It is used of secular officials of various kinds, especially local officials or any official who acted as a superintendent, manager, controller, or ruler.
- b) The Septuagint uses the word for army officers (Num. 31:14), tabernacle administrators (Num. 4:16), supervisors of the temple repair (2 Chron. 24:12, 17), temple guardians (2 Kings 11:18), and a city supervisor or mayor (Neh. 11:9).
- c) It occurs only five times in New Testament: one time of Christ (1 Pet. 2:25) and four times of church leaders; it is especially used for Gentile congregations such as Ephesus.
- d) It is a general word like supervisor, manager, or guardian.
- e) First Timothy 5:17 further develops the idea of oversight.

(1) “Rules” means “to put before,” “to set over,” or “to rule”; it is also translated:

- “Leads” (Rom. 12:8); refers to the gift of administration
- “Manages” (1 Tim. 3:4–5); refers to an elder’s oversight of his “household”
- “Managers” (1 Tim. 3:12); refers to a deacon’s managing of his “children” *and* “household”

(2) “Especially” is used 12 times in the New Testament.

- This Greek word occurs eight times in Paul’s epistles.
- Every time Paul uses this word, what follows it is a subset of what has come before.
- Gal. 6:10; Phil. 4:22; 1 Tim. 4:10; 5:8, 17; 2 Tim. 4:13; Tit. 1:10; Philem. 1:16
- In 1 Timothy 5:17 the point is:
 - All elders are supposed to “rule.”
 - Some elders rule particularly well (*kalos*).
 - While all elders are to be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), some work hard at preaching and teaching; the implication is that some elders have greater teaching responsibilities, probably because of superior gifts.

3. *poimen* (“shepherd”; also translated “pastor”)—defines how he leads (by protecting)

- a) The noun form occurs 18 times in the New Testament. It is used of:
- Actual shepherds; keepers of animals
 - Christ (e.g., Heb. 13:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:25)
 - Only one time of church leaders; translated “pastor” in English versions (Eph. 4:11)—“pastor-teachers”

- b) The Greek construction puts the two words together. *And* means “that is” or “in particular,” so *teacher* becomes explanatory of pastors.
- c) The word emphasizes the shepherd’s primary role: teaching or feeding the sheep.
- d) The verb form used three times in context of the church’s leaders.
 - John 21:16—Christ demanded that Peter shepherd His sheep.
 - Acts 20:28—Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that they are to shepherd the church.
 - 1 Pet. 5:1a, 2a—Peter charged the elders scattered across Asia Minor to shepherd the flock of God.
- e) The first three centuries had a strong agrarian mindset. During the Reformation, the term “pastor” was popularized as a reaction to the “priest” or “bishop.” It probably was never intended to be a title but rather a description of what an elder does.
- f) Ephesians 4:11 deepens the hues of the elder’s office.

Elder, overseer, and shepherd all refer to the same office and person.

- The qualifications for an overseer (1 Tim. 3:1–7) and for an elder (Tit. 1:6–9) are almost identical.
- Paul tells Titus to appoint *elders* (1:5), and then he calls the same office *overseer* (1:7).
- 1 Peter 5:1–2 brings all three concepts together into one office: “I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight.”
- Acts 20 uses all three terms interchangeably when Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders.
 - 20:17—“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the *elders* of the church.”
 - 20:28—“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers, to shepherd* the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

So the terms are used of the same office, and...

- The term *elder* emphasizes character—he is spiritually mature.
- The term *overseer* or *bishop* emphasizes function—he exercises oversight, leadership, and supervision.
- The term *shepherd* or *pastor* emphasizes attitude—he has a shepherd’s caring heart; he does this by leading, feeding and protecting the sheep.

“The term elder emphasizes who the man is. Bishop speaks of what he does. And pastor (shepherd) deals with how he ministers.” (John MacArthur)

The New Testament pattern is certain and clear—a plurality of qualified men leading the church. But is that pattern required for every church today? Is it a mandate?

I am compelled by Scripture, church history and practical issues in church life. I don’t find the New Testament pattern of sheep leading shepherds!

III. General Observations

- A. Elders are entitled to financial compensation (1 Tim. 5:17–22; Gal.6:6). However, elders can choose to forgo this compensation (1 Cor. 9:15; 1 Thess. 2:9). These texts lead us to make a distinction between staff elders and lay elders at Grace Community Church.
- B. Eldership is a limited to male leadership (1 Timothy 3 uses *only* masculine pronouns).
- C. Use biblical terminology if possible, *but* don't let the stigma of "elder rule" stop you from getting men to function in that role.
- D. There is no specific number of elders mention in the New Testament.
- E. The benefits outweigh the opposition. Some benefits are: spiritual men sharing the load, precision in ministry, accountability, wisdom (safety in a multitude of counselors), a curtailing of tyranny and pride, a modeling of unity in the local church, and a mitigation of quirks of individual leaders (Luke 6:40).
- F. Elders cannot be novices; they must have sagacity (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:9).
- G. Elder rule is a character profession. Elders have a greater accountability, not a greater standard. All these character traits are expected of all Christians, except being able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Elders are to act like genuine Christians.
- H. Elders must be qualified in several categories, based on 1 Tim.3 and Titus 1. These are present-tense character qualities; he is "right now" a man of character—there is a huge difference between having a bad day and having a bad year. Pre-conversion sins do not *necessarily* disqualify a man.
 - His public life
 - His private life
 - His marital life
 - His family life
 - His doctrinal life

These two lists are not exhaustive, but what the Word of God addresses with these two churches. For example there is no mention of being a "man of prayer" etc. There are other important elements that must be addressed like...the need to be counter-cultural (homosexuality); the need to faithful to the Lord's Day.

D. A. Carson writes, "The most remarkable thing about these characteristics is that there is nothing remarkable about them."

- I. Biblical leadership is servant-leadership (1 Pet. 5:1–4).
- J. There are leaders among leaders—different levels of being apt to teach.
- K. Churches rarely rise above their leadership (Amos 4:11). Strong spiritual leaders make for strong spiritual churches!

- L. We recognize elders by who they are, what they know, and what they do—Character, content and commitment—we are looking for *aspiration* on their part (1 Tim. 3:1).

IV. The Arguments for a Mandate

God is emphatic about the leadership of His church.

A. The Purpose of the Pastoral Epistles

1. They were written to church leaders with instruction about life in the church. They provide a fully orb ed ecclesiology.
2. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul spells out the purpose: “In case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”
3. Within the Pastoral Epistles, the evidence is clear. Paul is insisting on a plurality of leadership.

B. Apostolic Authority

1. The twelve Apostles probably established elder rule in the Jewish churches (Acts 15:6). The Jerusalem council is hardly a church.
2. Acts is descriptive, not prescriptive; this was a once-for-all event.
3. James, the most influential leader in the Jerusalem church, expected elder rule in the Diaspora (James 5:14).
4. Paul established elder rule in Gentile churches (Acts 14:23).
5. Paul commanded Titus to appoint elders in every church (Titus 1:5).

C. Practical Wisdom

1. No one leader possesses all the gifts and skills to lead the church. This is precisely the reason for a plurality of godly men.
2. Proverbs 11:14: “In the abundance of counselors there is victory.”
3. Elder rule protects the pastor-teacher.
4. Elder rule provides a way to share the load (2 Cor. 11:28).
5. Single elder rule is characteristic of cults, not churches.
6. Pastoral ministry in the New Testament is a team concept.

V. Conclusion

- A. If you *already* have a plurality of godly men leading the church, then this should serve as a great encouragement to you. Elder rule is not the “end-all.” Godly elders who understand their calling and ministry is God’s antidote for a confused church and polity.
- B. Carefully study what the Scripture teaches about this crucial subject. A return to the biblical pattern would revitalize the contemporary church.
- C. Preach through the Pastoral Epistles—thorough preaching before implementation is a must. Lay the scriptural authority before the people, and give them time to digest the new polity.
- D. Emphasize the character element, not the ruling element. Remind them it is a “work,” not just an office (1 Tim. 3:1).
- E. If you determine that your church’s government needs to change, pray for wisdom and move very slowly.
 - 1) The first step is reestablishing the sufficiency and authority of Scripture. Remind your people that the Scripture must be obeyed, even when it means difficult change—tradition can be a powerful enemy.
 - 2) Begin to slowly and carefully teach the biblical form of church leadership.
 - 3) Identify some men in the church who meet the biblical qualifications, and begin to involve them in decisions—don’t move ahead until you have qualified, functioning men. There is no merit to changing your polity and bylaws if you have no qualified men.
- F. It may take several years, but the day will come when your congregation embraces the biblical pattern

VI. Lay-Elder Affirmation

The lay-elder affirmation process consists of eight stages. The candidate continues through the process only as each step is successfully completed.

- A. Aspiration**—The process begins when the candidate demonstrates an aspiration to the office of elder (1 Tim. 3:1). At this point, the candidate should discuss his desire with a staff elder. If the staff elder (with counsel from the other staff elders) affirms the candidate’s qualifications, faithfulness, and readiness, the candidate may proceed to stage 2.
- B. Application**—The candidate completes a lay-elder application. This application provides the elders with the candidate’s personal testimony, family information, and ministry experience. The completed application is given to the staff elder, who will then present it to the elder board.
- C. Examination**—Once the application is approved by the elders, the candidate is responsible to organize an elder council to oversee his affirmation process. This council should consist of three elders (one of whom must be a staff elder). The council will meet with the candidate at least two times throughout the process. The first time they meet is for the purpose of more thoroughly examining the candidate’s conversion, giftedness, calling, and personal holiness.

- D. Preparation**—With the council’s approval, the candidate will continue the process by preparing for his oral evaluation (see step 6), including the completion of all required reading. The candidate should take as much time as necessary to properly prepare. During this preparation period, the council continues to observe and evaluate the candidate.
- E. Proclamation**—During his preparation time, the candidate must provide a tape of his teaching (in a Grace Church setting—junior high or older) to the elders. The elders can then evaluate whether or not the candidate has a capacity to teach.
- F. Evaluation**—After adequate preparation, the candidate appears before his council for a three-hour oral exam. The exam covers the candidate’s ability to articulate, defend, and apply the church doctrinal statement, distinctives, and philosophy of ministry.
- G. Recommendation**—Upon passing the oral exam, the nominee will be recommended by his council to the elder board.
- H. Confirmation**—With the process complete, the candidate will be recognized and added to the elder board. In that meeting, the elders will have a special time of laying-on-of-hands for the new elder.

The following information regarding elders is taken from the Bylaws of Grace Community Church.

ARTICLE VI

Elders

Section 1. Powers

Subject to the limitations of the Articles and these Bylaws and of pertinent restrictions of the Corporation Code of the State of California, all the activities and affairs of the Corporation shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Board of Elders, who are responsible for shepherding and having oversight of the flock. Without prejudice to such general powers, but subject to these same limitations, it is hereby expressly declared that the Board shall have the following powers in addition to the other powers enumerated by these Bylaws:

- a) To select and remove all the officers, agents, pastors, staff, and employees of the Corporation; prescribe such duties for them consistent with the Scriptures, with law, with the Articles of Incorporation, or with these Bylaws; and fix the terms of their offices and their compensation.
- b) To make such disbursements from the funds and properties of the Corporation as are required to fulfill the purposes of this Corporation as are more fully set out in the Articles of Incorporation, thereof and generally to conduct, manage, and control the activities and affairs of the Corporation and to make such rules and regulations consistent with the Scriptures, with law, with the Articles of Incorporation, or with these Bylaws, as they may deem best.
- c) To adopt, make and use a corporate seal, and to alter the form of such seal from time to time as they may deem best.
- d) To establish policies and practices for the church consistent with the purposes of this Corporation.
- e) To assist the Pastor-Teacher in the administration of the ordinances of baptism and Communion.
- f) To borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purposes of the Corporation and to cause to be executed and delivered, in the corporate name, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, deeds of trust, mortgages, pledges, hypothecations, or other evidences of debt and securities.

- g) To carry on a business and apply any such profit that results from the business activity in which it may legally engage.

Section 2. Number of Elders

In accordance with the provisions of Section 9151 of the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law, the authorized number of directors of the Corporation shall not be less than eleven (11) until changed by an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation or by an amendment to these Bylaws.

Section 3. Nomination, Selection, and Tenure of Office

Recommendations to fill the office of Elder shall be requested once a year from all church members. A Nominating Committee consisting of not less than five members of the pastoral staff shall be appointed by the Board of Elders who will also designate a chairman of the committee. This committee shall review all nominations and determine each nominee's qualifications. A proposed slate of nominees prepared by the nominating committee shall then be submitted to the Board of Elders, along with any relevant comments.

Section 4. Qualifications

Each member of the Board of Elders must be an active member of this church and possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. He shall be:

- a) Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6–7)
- b) Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)
- c) Temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2)
- d) Sober-minded, prudent (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- e) Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- f) Given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- g) Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)
- h) Not given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- i) Not violent; not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- j) Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)
- k) Not a brawler; uncontentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- l) Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- m) Rules well his own house; his children are faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:7)
- n) Not a novice; not a new convert (1 Timothy 3:6)
- o) Has a good report or reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7)
- p) Not self-willed (Titus 1:7)
- q) A lover of good men and things (Titus 1:8)
- r) Just, fair (Titus 1:8)
- s) Holy, devout (Titus 1:8)
- t) Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)

Section 5. Vacancies

Subject to the provision of Section 9226 of the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law, any Elder may resign effective upon giving written notice to the Chairman of the Board or the Secretary of the Board, unless the notice specifies a later time for the effectiveness of such resignation. If the resignation is to take effect at some future time, a successor may be selected before that time.

A vacancy or vacancies in the Board shall be deemed to exist in case of the death, resignation, or removal of any Elder, or if a need exists and the specified limit is not exceeded.

No reduction of the authorized number of Elders shall have the effect of removing any Elder prior to the expiration of the Elder's term of office.

Section 6. Removal of Elders

Any Elder may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the Board if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified (according to pertinent Scripture, including 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9), after thorough corroborating investigation by the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per Article VI, Section 17 of these Bylaws, at the sole discretion of the Board), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15–18 and 1 Timothy 5:19. When an Elder is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from shepherding, and if he refuses to repent from that sin, the removal shall be accompanied by a public rebuke, and notice shall be made before the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly-scheduled worship service as prescribed in 1 Timothy 5:20.

Section 7. Place of Meetings

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary provided in these Bylaws, any meeting (whether regular, special, or adjourned) of the Board of Elders of the Corporation may be held at any place within or without the State of California.

Section 8. Regular Meetings

Regular meetings of the Board shall be held without call or notice on the second Thursday after the first Sunday of each month, unless otherwise modified by the Board. Regular meetings shall be open to church members.

Section 9. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Board of Elders may be called at any time by order of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman or the Secretary of the Board of Elders or by a quorum of the members of the Board of Elders.

Section 10. Notice of Special Meetings

In accordance with the provisions of Section 9211 (a)(2) of the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law, special meetings of the Board shall be held upon four days notice by first-class mail or a forty-eight-hour notice given personally or by telephone or other similar means of communication. Any such notice shall be addressed or delivered to each Elder or at such Elder's address as it is shown upon the records of the Corporation or as may have been given to the Corporation by the Elder for such purpose of notice.

Section 11. Quorum

Except as otherwise provided herein, a majority of the Elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum except when a vacancy or vacancies prevents such majority, whereupon a majority of the Elders in office shall constitute a quorum, provided such majority shall constitute either one-third of the authorized number of Elders or at least two Elders, whichever is larger, or unless the authorized number of Elders is only one. A majority of the Elders present, whether or not a quorum is present, may adjourn any meeting to another time and place. Whenever the matter to be considered concerns calling or dismissing a pastor, or buying or selling real estate, a quorum shall consist of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Board. Whenever the matter to be considered is of a nature to require action by Lay Elders only, a majority of the Lay Elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum. Except as the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws and the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law may provide, the act or decision done or made by the Elders present at a meeting duly held at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Board of Elders.

Section 12. Participation in Meetings by Conference Telephone

Members of the Board may participate in a meeting through use of conference telephone or similar communications equipment, so long as all members participating in such meeting can hear one another.

Section 13. Adjournment

A majority of the Elders present, whether or not a quorum is present, may adjourn any Elders' meeting to another time and place. Notice of the time and place of holding an adjourned meeting need not be given to absent Elders if the time and place be fixed at the meeting adjourned, except as provided in the next sentence. If the meeting is adjourned for more than forty-eight (48) hours, notice of any adjournment to another time or place shall be given prior to the time of the adjourned meeting to the Elders who were not present at the time of the adjournment.

Section 14. Action Without Meeting

Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Board may be taken without a meeting if all members of the Board shall individually or collectively consent in writing to a duly prepared resolution to such action. Such consent or consents shall have the same effect as a unanimous vote of the Board and shall be documented by attaching the signed resolution with the minutes of proceedings of the Board.

Section 15. Rights of Inspection

In accordance with the provisions of Section 9513 of the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law, every Elder shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect and copy all books, records, and documents of every kind and to inspect the physical properties of the Corporation of which such person is an Elder, for a purpose reasonably related to such person's interest as an Elder.

Section 16. Decisions of the Board of Elders

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration by unanimous vote in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding one another before himself.

Section 17. Committees

Committees of the Board may be appointed by resolution passed by a majority of the whole Board. Committees shall be composed of two or more members of the Board and shall have such powers of the Board as may be expressly delegated to it by resolution of the Board of Elders, except with respect to:

- a) The approval of any action for which the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law also requires member's approval (must be approved by the Board as a whole).
- b) The filling of vacancies on the Board or on any committee.
- c) The amendment or repeal of Bylaws or the adoption of new Bylaws.
- d) The amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board which by its express terms is not so amendable or repealable.
- e) The appointment of other committees of the Board or the members thereof.
- f) The approval of any self-dealing transaction, as such transactions are defined in Section 9243 (A) of the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law.

The Board shall have the power to prescribe the manner in which proceedings of any such committee shall be conducted. In the absence of any such prescription, such committee shall have the power to prescribe the manner in which its proceedings shall be conducted. Unless the Board or such committee shall otherwise provide, the regular and special meetings and other actions of any such committee shall be governed by the provision of this Article applicable to meetings and actions of the Board. Minutes shall be kept of each meeting of each committee.

Section 18. Fees and Compensation

Elders (as such) shall not receive any stated or fixed salary for their services, however, nothing herein contained shall be construed to preclude any Elders from serving the Corporation in any other capacity and receiving compensation. Any person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from Grace Community Church shall not be in a position to determine the nature or amount of said compensation.