

Role of the Elder

~ Adopted by the Elders of Grace BFC Wallingford on August 15, 2009 ~

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to identify traits of an elder for a man who feels he is being led to become an elder at Grace BFC. It identifies the way a man should act, think and behave and his attitude in all things that he does. It also identifies responsibilities and duties of an elder at Grace BFC. In doing this it also sets expectations of the congregation so they know what an elder should be doing.

The attitudes and motivations of an elder are as important as the actions and results of his ministry. God calls men to serve:

- Willingly with joy because God desires it (Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 5:2, 1 Timothy 3:1)
- Humbly with submission because God loves it (1 Peter 5:5)
- Peaceably with love because God shows it (Ephesians 5:25)
- Sensitively with wisdom because God expects it (Acts 20:28)
- Faithfully with patience because God seeks it (2 Timothy 2:2)
- Prayerfully with faith because God teaches it (Ephesians 1:16)
- Carefully with discipline because God counsels it (1 Timothy 4:15-16)

The seven shepherding tasks listed below are those the Bible specifically links to the role of pastor/elder/shepherd. The ultimate goal for an elder is to make disciples for Christ. To this end we are to be witnessing, teaching, encouraging, and baptizing in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

• **Guard** – It is the responsibility of an elder to be on guard for his own spiritual well-being and to shepherd the flock, the Church of God, that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to him. Spiritual feeding and protection will involve ensuring that the congregation understands truth and is able to discern error. At times it will require confronting those who promote falsehood and those who live lives contrary to the Word of God. The elder will earnestly pray for himself and the spiritual development of the flock.

(Acts 20:28; Matthew 18:15-17; Luke. 17:3; Acts 15; I Corinthians. 5; Eph. 4:14-15; I Timothy 1:18-20; Hebrews 13:7, 17)

• **Oversee** – It is the responsibility of the elders to oversee the local congregation. This oversight includes, but is not limited to, providing clear vision and direction for the church; making decisions that affect the entire congregation; administering and coordinating the programs of the church; and overseeing the financial matters of the church.

(1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2)

• **Disciple** – The word disciple includes the meaning of such words as train, admonish and teach. The shepherd is commissioned to reproduce himself in the lives of others, and to be constantly thinking about producing additional leaders. Any contact the elder has with people, should be viewed as an opportunity to build a disciple.

(1 Thessalonians 5:12; 2 Timothy 2:2.)

• **Teach** – Essential to the role of shepherding God's people is the ministry of teaching. A constant refrain of the New Testament is to engage the mind: love the Lord with "all your mind," be transformed "by the renewing of your mind," "set your minds on things above," and "prepare your minds for action." The shepherd must be able to teach sound doctrine consistently and to refute those who might contradict, lest any be led astray. "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

(Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 2:2, 1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11-13, Colossians 3:1-2, 1 Peter 1:13)

• **Evangelize** – The Apostle Paul's exhortation to Timothy is very instructive to us. The elder is to be purposefully involved in sharing the Gospel with unbelievers and equipping the church to also share the Gospel (Equipping means to model, provide opportunities and / or training). Elders are not required to be gifted in evangelism, but are required to be 'doing the work of' evangelism.

(2 Timothy 4:2, 5; Romans 1:14-16)

• **Pray** – Prayer is to be of the first order of importance for elders as demonstrated by the deacons being selected specifically to free the Apostles to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Jesus set the example when He prayed for himself, the disciples and for all believers. He promises that the disciples will be able to do what He has been doing if they "ask in my name." Believers who are sick are told to request elders to pray for them.

(Acts 6:4, John 5:13-16, John 14:12-14, John 17)

• **Serve** – We are told as shepherds that we should be willing and eager to serve those entrusted to us, not lording it over them but setting an example for the flock. Jesus tells us that to be truly great leaders, we must become servants to those we oversee when we exercise our authority. We should be faithful and use the gifts that God has given us to serve others out of love. This will take many forms including serving in ministry alongside others, disciplining, encouraging, and praying for those in our congregation who are physically, emotionally or spiritually ill, helping in times of need, as well as sharing in their sufferings.

(1 Peter 5: 2-3, Matthew 20: 25-28, 1 Peter 4:10, Galatians 5:13, James 5:13-16)