



ELDER BOARD FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (6-23-2023)

Eldership Research Report

1. Is an Elder Board Biblical?

Yes. God is very clear in His Word about how His Church is to be organized and managed.

- Christ is the head of the Church and its supreme authority ([Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18](#)).
- The local Church is to be autonomous, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations ([Titus 1:5](#)).
- The Church is to be governed by spiritual leadership consisting of two main offices - Elders and Deacons ([Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5; Acts 6:1-15](#)).

Refer to full Eldership Research Report, Page 2, Section I, The Need for Church Governance for more information.

2. What is the proper understanding of the term Elder?

An Elder is a person who is valued for spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and maturity, and holds a position of responsibility and authority in the church. The word means maturity, development and stability, and is more than merely a person of many years. Refer to the full Eldership Research Report, Page 2, Section III, What is an Elder, for more information.

3. What are the Biblical qualifications of an Elder?

The Biblical qualifications for Elders are found in [1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4](#). The qualifications center around 1) character (spiritual, moral and social), 2) knowledge of and adherence to Scripture and sound theology, and 3) faithfulness to spouse and leadership in the home. Refer to the full Eldership Research Report, Page 4, and Section VI, Qualifications of Elders, for more information.

4. What is the role of an Elder?

- Rule and Oversight ([1 Timothy 5:17, Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-5](#))
- Care and Protection ([Acts 20:28-30, 1 Peter 5:1-3](#))
- Prayer and Proclamation ([Acts 6:3-4](#))
- Instruction and Equipping ([Titus 1:9, Ephesians 4:11-12](#))
- Authority and Accountability ([Hebrews 13:17](#))

Refer to the full Eldership Research Report, Page 3, Section V, Responsibilities of Elders, and Page 12, Section X, What Might an Elder-Led Church Look Like at Saint Paul, for more information.

5. Does the New Testament use other titles to describe Elders?

Yes. "Elders" is used synonymously with the word "Overseers" "Bishop" and "Pastor" in the Bible ([Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25](#)). Elder is used most frequently. Pastor is used only once in scripture (Ephesians 4:11). The term *Elder* refers to the dignity of the office, while the term *bishop/overseer* describes its authority and duties ([1 Peter 2:25, 5:1-4](#)). Elders are called to

“shepherd” the church ([1 Peter 5:1-4](#)). In other words, Elders, Pastors and Overseers are all referring to the same group of leaders in the New Testament.

Refer to the full Eldership Research Report, Page 2, Section III, What is an Elder, for more information.

Additional Elder Board Research

6. Why are smaller churches being interviewed about having an Elder Board?

The Elder Board Task Force’s interviewed smaller churches and churches similar in size to Saint Paul to further our understanding of Elder Boards structure, foundation, and values. However, Biblically the function and need for Elders is not based on the size of the church. With that in mind, the Task Force reached out to churches of a variety of size with the understanding that we would be able to learn from congregations of all sizes. The Task Force faced some challenges in getting all the churches that were contacted to respond to our request for an interview.

7. Are there any statistics available showing the number of churches transitioning from congregational led to Elder Board led?

To date, the Elder Board Task Force has been unable to find any statistics on the number of churches that have transitioned from congregation-led to Elder-led governance.

8. Why would it be beneficial for a church of Saint Paul’s size to consider a new way of governance now?

- It is Biblical.
- It broadens the scope of how decisions are made.
- It takes pressure off the Senior Pastor to have all the answers.
- The Senior Pastor is held accountable to fulfill his calling to faithful teaching of God's Word and living an exemplary Christian lifestyle.
- It creates a fiscal accountability beyond the Senior Pastor.

Refer to the full Eldership Research Report, Page 6, Section VIII, Pros and Cons of an Elder-Led Church, for more information.

Elder Board Demographics

9. Will women be part of the Elder Board?

No. Based on Saint Paul’s interpretation of scripture, there are no scriptural examples of women serving as Elders. Although we do not find a Biblical basis for women Elders it will be important for Saint Paul to develop a structure whereby women are heard and utilized for the intellect, know-how, creativity, and spiritual maturity they bring to church ministry. Women will serve in an integral part of the decision making and policy making formation through advisory councils/and sub committees, with the final decision residing with the Elder Board.

10. If women will not be appointed to serve as Elders, what are the plans for ensuring and soliciting their input into major decisions and policies of our church as well ensuring they are seen and included in church leadership?

See the response to Question #9

11. Will young adults be considered for the role of an Elder?

Young adults will be considered for the role of an Elder if they are qualified and spiritually mature. There will also be the opportunities to be asked to be served on the advisory council and/or a subcommittee.

Appointment of Elders

12. What role, if any, will the congregation have in terms of recommending and expressing concern around approving Elders?

See response Question 14 (Part 1) and 15.

13. In addition to the Biblical criteria found 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4 for the qualifications for appointment of Elders, will Saint Paul establish any additional criteria?

Yes, the following additional requirements apply to Elders:

- Be in good standing with the Saint Paul
- Agree and embrace the Saint Paul's mission, vision, values and doctrinal statements
- Financially support Saint Paul with tithes and offerings
- Maintain positive working relationships with others
- Demonstrate giftedness in caring for and in spiritually nurturing others
- Have served in previous leadership capacities at Saint Paul

Refer to the full Eldership Research Report, Page 4, Section VI, Qualifications of Elders, for more information.

14. How will the first Elders be selected?

A. The Senior Pastor, together with the Executive Pastor and Board of Deacons, will be responsible for the initial appointment of Elders that meet the Biblical qualifications of the role, demonstrate a solid mature faith and knowledge of the Word, are in good standing with Saint Paul and the community and show giftedness in caring for and in spiritually nurturing others in the church.

B. The Elder Board will be comprised of men.

15. What will be the process for selecting members of the Elder Board?

The Elder Board will have a lead role in identifying and selecting new Elders to serve, following the initial appointment of Elders by the Senior Pastor.

Elder Board Structure and Function

16. How many Elders will comprise the Elder Board?

The New Testament always appeals to a plurality of Elders serving the church (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:17; James 5:14). For Saint Paul, the actual number of Elders to be appointed has not yet been determined. This will require further discussion and research. Consideration will be given to appointing men with diverse backgrounds such as age, education, knowledge, experience, and spiritual maturity.)

17. What is the structure below the Elders?

The Elders will have responsibility in the nature of a Board of Directors for a corporation since the Saint Paul Church of Sacramento has the legal structure of a corporation. The specifics of the structure below the Elders will be defined during the process ahead.

18. Will Elders have veto power?

Under the structure of our Elder Board, the congregation will only vote on:

1. The calling and termination of the Senior Pastor
2. Approval of church loans (financial indebtedness on the part of the church)
3. Approving the sale or purchase of property or the construction of buildings
4. Approval of revisions to church By-laws

The Elder Board has no veto-power in those areas.

19. Will all Pastors automatically be an Elder?

No. The Senior Pastor will be the lead Elder. By virtue of his role, the Senior Pastor will always be on the Elder Board. By way of responsibility for church administration, the Executive Pastor will be on the Elder Board. The only staff that will be on the Elder Board will be those who are qualified and spiritually mature. The role of Elder Board is to govern, and the role of staff is to deal with the day-to-day ministry issues and to ensure that the policies, direction, and ministry initiatives of the Elder Board are carried. These are two different responsibilities therefore being a Pastor on staff – such as a Youth Pastor or Pastor of Congregational Care – does not necessitate nor automatically qualify one to be on the Elder Board.

20. Will there be limits on serving on the Elder Board and other leadership positions?

An Elder's term has not been determined yet. For continuity in leadership and church governance, there are benefits to Elders having longer term appointments. The Church By-Laws will be updated to reflect the term, if any, and will define the ways an Elder's appointment can be discontinued such as in death, when an Elder is no longer able to perform the duties, or when an Elder no longer meets the qualifications of an Elder. Currently ministry Servant Leaders are appointed for a three-year term.

21. How many individuals will be appointed to serve on the Elder Board/Council?

This has not been determined yet. The Bible is silent on this issue, so we are able to set the number as we deem necessary. It is important for our church to be flexible and establish a process to change the number as the size and needs of the church changes. The goal is to follow the Lord's leading in the selection process for the number as well as the specific individuals.

22. Will Elder Board members receive a salary?

No. Elders will not receive compensation.

Eldership & Our Baptist Denomination

23. If our Baptist tradition does not call for Elder leadership, can we have Elders?

Yes. In the Baptist denomination, each local church is autonomous and free to establish a form of church governance that best meets their needs. An Elder-led governance structure is being recommended because of its benefits and because this is the Biblical model not because it is the traditional form of government shared by Baptists.

24. Will the Baptist Denomination of Saint Paul change?

No the Baptist Denomination of Saint Paul will not change.

Eldership & Saint Paul Leadership

25. Does leadership by Elders eliminate the role of a ministry Servant Leader?

No. Leadership by Elders does not eliminate the role of ministry Servant Leaders.

26. Do Elders replace the need for Deacons or Trustees?

No. Just as the leadership role is too large for a single Pastor by himself, the ministries of a church of our size cannot be carried out by a group of Elders alone. Many of those serving as Elders or Trustees will have full-time jobs. According to the Bible, Deacons and Elders are two separate offices of the church with very different assignments. Both offices are prescribed for the local church. The Church Bylaws will describe the responsibilities of the Trustees to serve under the Elders. See Philippians 1:1 and 1Timothy 3:1-13.

Deacons are charged with the responsibility of offering the ministry of mercy through service. Elders are responsible for protecting, feeding, leading, and caring and teaching for the practical needs of the church.

27. If our congregation does not approve implementing an Elder Board, will our church governance change? If so, how?

No our governance will not change.

28. Has Saint Paul tried creating an Elder Board in the past?

No. There was a Board of Directors not an Elder Board.

29. What will be the role of our Associate Ministers? Can an Associate Minister serve as an Elder?

There will be no impact on the role of the Associate Ministers as related to the governance of the church. However, an Associate Minister may be appointed to serve as an Elder, if qualified.

Misc. Elder Board Questions

30. Since the Elder Board will be responsible for holding the Senior Pastor accountable for performance, will there be written performance objectives developed by which the Elder Board can objectively (not subjectively) evaluate the Senior Pastor's performance and recommend salary compensation?

Yes. Elders will evaluate all Pastors. This is one of the reasons we want to have an Elder Board at Saint Paul. Deacons will still have the opportunity to make suggestions and give input on compensation and performance, but the Elders will give final approval and be the primary line of accountability.

31. What is the rationale for delegating the authority to the Elder Board which consists of only a few people to approve the church's budget and then "presenting" it to the congregation for informational purposes? The church's budget is a major capital expense that impacts the entire church body?

Although the final decision will rest on the Elders, a process will remain where the budget can be discussed – ministry leaders will have input and the congregation will have an opportunity for discussion. The goal is to make the process seamless without removing transparency. The budget will go through several hands for input before coming to the Elders for a final approval.

32. Is our congregation voting to be Elder-led or Elder-ruled (there is a difference)?

For some purposes, such as hiring or terminating the Pastor, the church will be Elder-led. For other purposes, such as church discipline, the church will be Elder-ruled. Therefore, by definition we would be both Elder-led and Elder-ruled, because our congregation still has involvement. However, the heart of our Senior Pastor and our leaders is never to rule over anyone, we are servant leaders and will operate as such.

Elder Board Next Steps

33. Will the implementation of an Elder Board require a new church charter?

No. No changes to the Articles of Incorporation are anticipated.

34. Assuming Saint Paul changes to an Elder Board church governance, how do we transition from one system to the other?

A preliminary plan for transitioning from one governing system to another is:

- Communicate a detailed timeline to the congregation
- Consult with legal counsel on revising the Church Bylaws
- Make revision to the Church Bylaws

- Vote on changes to the Church Bylaws
- Train/Install Elders
- Implement new governance

35. Will the Elder Board members be responsible for teaching?

Not all appointed Elders will have a teaching responsibility; however, one of the Biblical qualifications of an Elder is that he must be “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2).

36. Will the Elder Board need to reach consensus on all their decisions?

The goal is always to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. We want to hear His voice and do God’s will. The Elder Board will strive to reach a consensus on decisions because of its many benefits; however, we don’t expect all Elders to always agree. The input of every participant will be carefully considered and there will be a good-faith effort to address the concerns of all members. If there is division among the Elders in making decisions, all the Elders should Study, Pray, and Seek the will of God together until consensus is achieved. In this way, the unity and harmony that the Lord desires for the church will begin with those individuals appointed to care for His flock. As a guiding rule, once a decision is made, the Elder Board will operate in unison.

37. Do all Elder Board members vote hold the same weight? Does the Senior Pastor vote carry more weight?

Although the Senior Pastor is the Lead Elder, his vote does not hold a higher weight. Each Elder member’s vote holds the same weight; the Senior Pastor does not operate outside of the Elder Board’s final decision.

38. If the church approves implementing an Elder Board/Council, what will be the implementation date?

The target implementation date is January 2024.