

Saint Paul Church of Sacramento
Kenneth R. Reece, Senior Pastor

Elder Board Task Force

Abbreviated

ELDERSHIP RESEARCH REPORT



June 23, 2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the 2020 annual church Business Meeting, Senior Pastor Kenneth Reece expressed a desire to establish an Elder Board/Elder Council. If approved by our congregation, the Elders would be designated Officers of Saint Paul and along with the Senior Pastor provide spiritual oversight, be responsible for church governance and discipline, and shepherding our congregation.

During the January 2021, Leadership Conference, Pastor Reece led a Bible study on “Biblical Eldership.” The presentation covered the following topics:

- Definition of Elder
- Office of Elder
- Plurality of Elders
- Qualifications of Elders
- Functions of Elders
- Difference in Elder and Deacon
- Need for Elders for St. Paul
- Next Steps: Voting and Involvement of Women in Decision Making

In February 2022, the Elder Board Task Force was established under the direction of Executive Pastor Lamont Harris. The Task Force began meeting in March 2022. Deena Wilson serves as the team lead/facilitator, and current team members include: Deacon Michael Cubit, Minister Jerry Springer, Monique Bruce, Kayla Matthews and Rhonda Valdry. Former team member included the late Minister Francis Moore.

The Elder Board Task Force was organized to further explore the biblical concept of eldership with the aim of presenting its findings to our congregation who would have the opportunity to vote on the establishment of an Elder Board/Elder Council. If our congregation approves having an Elder Board/Elder Council, a secondary purpose of the Task Force would be to identify best practices for transitioning to an Elder Board/Elder Council to include the criteria for candidates, the appointment process, terms, and requisite training for selected elders.

The Elder Board Task Force’s efforts to date include:

- 1) Conducting additional research on the topic of eldership. The research included the Bible, several books, and Internet articles written by credible sources (see Reference section below).
- 2) Interviewing other churches that have Elder Boards/Elder Councils.
- 3) Briefing the Deacons, Trustees, and Servant Leaders.

This report summarizes the Task Force’s findings and aims to provide useful information to assist our congregation as we prepare to vote on transitioning to an

Elder Board/Elder Council. A more comprehensive report has been prepared and is available on Saint Paul's website: www.saintpaulsac.org

This report is intended to supplement, not repeat or replace Pastor Reece's 2021 Bible study on *Biblical Eldership*.

In this report, the term Elder Board and Elder Council is used interchangeably with the same meaning; however, if established at Saint Paul will be referred to as an Elder Board.

II. THE NEED FOR CHURCH GOVERNANCE

The concept of the eldership originated with God. God recognized the need for leadership within His Church for it to carry out His purposes here on earth. According to Scripture: 1) Christ is the head of the Church and its supreme authority ([Ephesians 1:22](#); [4:15](#); [Colossians 1:18](#)); 2) His Church has two officers - Elders and Deacons ([Acts 14:23](#), [Titus 1:5](#); [Acts 6:1-15](#)) who have distinct roles; and 3) each local Church is 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](#)).

III. WHAT IS A CHURCH ELDER

Practically speaking, a Church Elder is a person who is valued for godly character, spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and maturity, and is gifted and appointed to lead the affairs and direction of a local church. In the Bible there was always a plurality of elders (more than one) appointed by the leader to oversee the local church. The word Elder means maturity, development, and stability, and is more than merely a person of many years.

The qualifications of an Elder is 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, 3) ability to teach Scripture and 4) faithfulness to spouse and leadership in the home. Throughout the New Testament, the terms "Pastor," Bishop," "Overseer" and Elder" refer to the same office ([Acts 20:28](#); [Ephesians 4:11](#); [1 Timothy 3:1-2](#); [Titus 1:7](#); [1 Peter 2:25](#)).

IV. WHAT IS AN ELDER BOARD

An Elder Board is a group of individuals appointed to serve as managers and caretakers of their local church ([1 Timothy 3:5](#)). Although the Bible does not specify the number of Elders to be appointed or the length of time Elders serve, it does state the following duties for Elders:

- Leadership, Oversight, Church Policy ([1 Timothy 5:17](#), [Acts 15:18-22](#); [Acts 20:28](#), [1 Peter 5:1-5](#)); [1Thessalonians 5:12](#)
- Care, Protection and Example to Congregation ([Acts 20:28-30](#), [1 Peter 5:1-3](#))
- Prayer and Preaching ([Acts 6:3-4](#))
- Teaching and Equipping the body for Ministry ([Titus 1:9](#), [Ephesians 4:11-12](#))

- Accountability for the Congregation and Senior Pastor ([Hebrews 13:17](#))

In practical terms, under the direction of the Senior Pastor, the duties of the Elder Board at Saint Paul would include the following:

1. Provide Church governance, including setting and/or reviewing church policies and exercising church discipline of members
2. Provide accountability for all Pastoral Staff performance and establish all Pastoral compensation
3. Approve Church's budget following development by the Finance and Budget Committee for presentation to the Congregation
4. Approve church loans (financial indebtedness on the part of the church) following approval by congregation
5. Approve the sale or purchase of property and the construction of buildings following approval by the congregation

In carrying out its responsibilities, the Elder Board would work cooperatively with the Senior Pastor whose primary responsibilities include:

- Providing Biblical preaching and teaching
- Providing Biblical vision for the congregation
- Providing general care and ministry for the congregation, either personally or through Deacons, staff and other ministries as he appoints
- Defining and communicating the Church's purpose
- Overseeing and coordinating the day-to-day ministry of the congregation and administration of the church
- Serving on and providing direction and support to the Elder Board/Elder Council
- Appointing Church Officers and ministry leaders
- Staffing the church as he deems necessary to help administrate church affairs

V. WHY SAINT PAUL NEEDS AN ELDER BOARD- WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS

1. It is Biblical. Eldership is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Nowhere in Scripture does one find a local church ruled by majority opinion or by a single pastor.
2. Allows the Senior Pastor to spend the time needed in prayer and in the ministry of the Word for God's direction to lead our congregation. Also, taking on too much responsibility over an extended period of time can lead to ineffective leadership as well as personal burnout. Caring for the whole church is a burden God does not intend one man to bear alone. Even the most faithful, gifted pastor needs help from other godly men.
3. Strengthens overall church leadership and governance. No one person has all the gifts that are necessary to build up a congregation of the size of Saint Paul.

Having a plurality of elders serves the congregation by bringing individuals with different gifts into the church's leadership structure who can complement the Senior Pastor's strengths. Also, having a group of Elders serving together can assist one another in identifying blind spots in leadership.

4. Enhances problem solving and decision making. Appointing Elders with different backgrounds, knowledge, and abilities will broaden the scope of how decisions are made. Their combined counsel and wisdom helps assure that decisions are not self-willed or self-serving to a single individual. There is more wisdom to be found in a multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14; 24:6).
5. Increases transparency. When transparency is an important part of a church's culture, members tend to become more at ease, more engaged and more committed to the church's vision.
6. Offers the Senior Pastor and congregation with a new level of accountability.
7. Creates fiscal accountability beyond the Senior Pastor.

VI. CONCLUSION

Approximately two years ago Senior Pastor Kenneth Reece introduced the idea of establishing an Elder Board/Elder Council at Saint Paul with the primary aim of broadening the scope of how decisions are made, creating fiscal accountability, and establishing accountability for the Senior Pastor's position. The Elder Board Task Force has worked diligently to thoroughly research the topic of biblical eldership as well as garner input from Saint Paul Officers and ministry Servant Leaders prior to presenting this abbreviated report to the congregation.

Clearly there is a biblical basis for the appointment of Elders to serve in partnership with the lead Pastor to provide church governance, congregational care and spiritual oversight. As indicated in this report, this form of church leadership and governance is ordained by God, was the pattern for the first century church, and offers several benefits for a congregation and its lead Pastor.

May you find this report helpful for our discussion of and eventually voting on transitioning to an Elder Board/Council. Let us remain prayerful, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and ever committed to walking in love and unity that the Lord, our God, might be glorified in this process and in the ultimate decision.

A more detailed version of the Eldership Research Report along with Frequently Asked Questions is available on Saint Paul's website at: www.saintpaulsac.org

References:

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[What Are Church Elders? - Anthony Hilder](#)

<https://www.biblicaleldership.com/what-biblical-eldership-0/restoring-be-series/>

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[7 Key Characteristics of Diversity-Oriented Churches - Lewis Center for Church Leadership](#)

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[Balancing Relationships Between Staff and Non-staff Elders : 9Marks](#)

[Elder-staff issues - Biblical Eldership Resources](#)

[TJ Addington - Leading From the Sandbox : Should church staff serve on the elder/leadership board?](#)