

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH HUNTINGTON BEACH

Her Functioning and Organization

The purpose of this document is to communicate what the Scriptures teach us about the purpose, role, function and organization of the local church with emphasis on the functioning and organization (the interdependent relationship between leaders and congregation). Where the Scriptures do not dictate but leave room for the specific application, the Deacons and Pastoral Staff have spent hours in prayer and discussion to seek clarity from the Lord and now share these with a broader group of church leaders.

There are three aspects of our consideration:

- 1) What the Scriptures teach;
- 2) Our Baptists distinctives and why we believe these; and
- 3) The Functioning and Organization of the body known as Calvary Baptist Church Huntington Beach.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

I. The Church in the New Testament	3
A. The Local Church	3
1. Congregation	4
2. Government	4
3. Leaders	5
a. Elder/Overseer/Pastor	5
i. Titles & Responsibilities	
ii. Characteristics	
b. Deacon	9
i. Title & Responsibilities	
ii. Characteristics	
II. Baptist Distinctives	12
A. The Bible- Sole Authority for Faith & Practice	12
B. Autonomy of the Local Church	13
C. Regenerate Membership	15
D. Two Ordinances	15
E. Priesthood of the Believers	17
F. Individual Soul Liberty	18
G. Separation of Church & State	18

III. Calvary Baptist Church- Titles, Functions, and Relationships	20
A. Pastor-Teacher	20
1. Title	
2. Function	
3. Selection	
B. Elders	20
1. Title	
2. Function	
3. Selection	
C. Pastors	26
1. Title	
2. Function	
3. Selection	
D. Deacons	26
1. Title	
2. Function	
3. Selection	
E. Ministry Staff	27
F. Support Staff	28

I. THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The “Church”

The church which was born on Pentecost is referred to over 100 times in the New Testament by the Greek work *ekklesia*. The term is used in two senses: The Universal Church and the Local Church.

Universal Church: This *ekklesia* is made up of all believers, from all nations and tribes around the world, beginning with those who were baptized into the body of Christ on the day of Pentecost through the moment the church sees her Savior “face to face.” This has been called through church history the Catholic Church, meaning universal church (not Roman Catholic Church).

The term was used this way by Jesus in Matthew 16:16-18; 18:15-20; and Paul in Galatians 1:13; 1Corinthians 15:9; and Philippians 3:6. Ephesians, while written to a local church, emphasizes many truths about the Universal Church.

Local Church: Most uses of the term *ekklesia* are used to describe believers together in community in a geographical location. In contrast to local churches today there was during the New Testament times only one church in each location (“the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), “the church at Antioch” (13:1), etc.). This likely meant that the believers met in many locations, depending on their size, in homes, school of Trypanias, yet they were considered one local church and were under one group of elders/overseers.

The Church’s Head

Jesus Christ is the Head, King, Groom, and Lord of the Church (Acts 2:36; Eph 4:15-16; 5:23; Col 1:18) and believers are members of His spiritual body (1Cor 12:12-13).

A. THE LOCAL CHURCH

The local church is a family made up of God’s people where they can learn, fellowship, share the Lord’s Supper, and pray (Acts 2:42). The local church is to be “one-flesh” with Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32) so that as the church functions together Christ is seen in a fullness not possible through an individual or any other organization. Through this believers grow in truth and grace and the lost are reached, in our neighborhoods (Acts 2-8); the surrounding regions (Acts 9-13), and around the world (Acts 13-28). Crucial to believers being witnesses and the Great Commission being fulfilled is the godliness of the local church (Acts 1:8, Matt 28:18-20). When believers were functioning under the authority of Christ, in the fullness of the Spirit- they were of one mind – the “mind of Christ” – the Head. When they were of one mind “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47; 5:14, 6:7, 9:31; 16:4-5). This is what Christ prayed for John 17:20-21, and the unity the Spirit provides as believers live together in obedience to God (Eph 4:3, 13). Just as a tuning fork is used to tune all instruments to the same note in an orchestra, so the Spirit provides the unity within the body of Christ.

1. Congregation

The Local Church is comprised of those who have turned to Jesus Christ for salvation, have been baptized by immersion and are continuing to grow in grace and truth until the day the Lord calls them home or personally returns. Every believer should be an active part of a local church for their growth as well as that of others.

The Local Church while autonomous and congregational (each congregation determining how they will function to “maintain the unity of the Spirit”), commits to Biblical interdependence with other churches within The Church.

While the body is to be active in the direction of the church to the end that the body will “grow up in love” (Eph 4:16) there are three ways that the Bible clearly states that the congregation is to relate to her leaders:

- 1) Disciplining erring believers (Matt 18:17-20; 1Cor 5:4, 11; 2Cor 2:6)
- 2) Examining prospective Elders and Deacons (1Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)
- 3) Honoring and disciplining Elders (1Tim 5:17-22; Heb 13:7, 17)

Clearly the responsibility of the church body is to recognize gifted, qualified, proven men who can teach and lead the body of Christ and then trusting them to do so, rather than evaluating and voting on all the decisions.

As the congregation looks to its elders for wise leadership, the elders also look to the congregation – their brothers and sisters – for wisdom, counsel, inspiration, creative ideas, help, and prayer. Elders who understand the sacred nature and dynamic energy of the Spirit-empowered congregation know the necessity of congregational participation in all major decision. The goal of the elders and congregation should always be to speak and act as a united community. Both the leaders and the led should take the time and make the effort needed to work and pray together to achieve this oneness of mind.¹

2. Government

As the church emerges in the New Testament we see that initially the Apostles were responsible for appointing the leaders in each local church. We see them lead the church, dealing with great success and challenges in the church in such a way that the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” was preserved, and the local body was “growing up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:3, 13). We also see godly leadership exercised when conflict arose over practical needs being met (Acts 6); churches springing up in other locations (Acts 11:22-24); over doctrinal issues of who is really a believer as well as addressing what rules are to be placed upon those who wanted to be a part of the church body (Acts 15). Thus the leaders led and the congregation participated and followed in such an interdependent way that the “unity of the Spirit was preserved” - Christ’s prayer was being answered (John 17), believers were growing together in love and the lost were being saved and added to the universal church through the local church.

Since these early days the purposes of God for the local church have not changed. There has

¹ Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1986), 294.

been a change from Apostles to other leaders and from their being one local church in each city under a common group of elders/bishops, to many autonomous local churches in each city. We see some of this transition take place as Paul planted churches and gave instructions to Timothy and Titus (non-apostles). Other changes have taken place since the closing of the Canon.

We believe that where the Scriptures have spoken they give us the non-negotiables of church government and the way the church must function. In other areas we are given the principles and we are to trust the Spirit to give us, as a church, the wisdom to know what will keep us unified under the Head of the Church- Jesus Christ, growing together in truth and love while reaching our community and world. **So, whatever organization and processes are derived they must work to maintain the unity of the Spirit between the leadership and congregation, they being the two sides of the same coin.** We are not talking here about sacrificing clear Biblical doctrines for the sake of unity. We are talking about the tension between letting godly men lead with the congregation submissive and the leaders appropriately accountable to the congregation and the congregation to the leaders.

3. Leaders

a. Elder/Overseer/Pastor

i. Titles & Responsibilities

As the apostles established the church and began to identify, raise up and appoint leadership in local churches there are three terms that were used: “elder” (*presbuteros*), “overseer” (*espiskipos*), and “pastor” (*poimen*). It seems that as leaders were raised up initially in Jewish communities the Jewish term elder for leaders was used. When the church grew into predominately Gentile communities the more Gentile term for leaders of “overseer” was used, and twice the more illustrative term, based upon Christ Himself, of “shepherd” was used.

As numerous passages in the New Testament indicate, the words “elder” (presbuteros), “overseer” (espiskipos), and “pastor” (poimen) all refer to the same office. In other words, overseers and pastors are not distinct from elders; the terms are simply different ways of identifying the same people. The qualifications for an overseer (episkopos) in 1Timothy 3:3-7, and those for an elder (presbuteros) in Titus 1:6-9 are unmistakably parallel. In fact, in Titus 1, Paul uses both terms to refer to the same man (presbuteros in v. 5 and episkopos in v 7). All three terms are used interchangeably in Acts 20. In verse 17, Paul assembles all the elders (presbuteros) of the church of Ephesus to give them his farewell message. In verse 28 he says, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (espiskopos), to Shepherd (poimaino) the church of God. “1Peter 5:1-2 brings all three terms together as well. Peter writes, “Therefore, I exhort the elders (presbuteros) among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the suffering of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd (promaino) the flock of God among you, exercising oversight (espiskopei) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God.” “The different terms, then, indicated various features of ministry, not varying levels of authority or separate offices, as some churches

*espouse.*²

The primary responsibilities of an Elder are to do for the family of God what God calls a father to do in his family (1Timothy 3:5). They are called elders/overseers/pastors with the overall responsibility of shepherding- through leading, teaching, equipping and prayer.

The unchanged responsibilities of these men include:

- To determine doctrinal issues and how they are practically worked out for the unity of the body (Acts 15:22)
- Oversee/Organize the church (Acts 20:28)
Appoint deacons and deaconess to meet practical needs so they can devote themselves to prayer and the Word (cf. Acts 6:4)
- Equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12)
- Ordain others (1Tim. 4:4, Acts 13:1-3)
- Lead, teach, and preach (1Tim. 5:17; cf. 1Thes 5:12; 1Tim 3:2)
- Exhort and refute in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9)
- Setting an example for all (1Pet 5:1-3)

Not all men who meet the qualifications of elders will necessarily serve in the leadership role as an Elder, although by virtue of them being an elder in qualifications they will have a tremendous ministry.

ii. Characteristics

One of the Biblical tensions over church leadership, as played out in history is having a primary leader yet having multiple leaders.

(a) Shared Leadership

A PLURALITY OF ELDERS ACTING IN UNITY

The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of God-ordained elders. Nowhere in Scripture does one find a local assembly (congregation) ruled by majority opinion or by a single pastor.

The Apostle Paul left Titus in Crete and instructed him to “appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5). James instructed his readers to “call for the elders of the church” to pray for those who are sick (James 5:14). When Paul and Barnabus were in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they “appointed elders for them in every church” (Acts 14:23). In Paul’s first epistle to Timothy, the apostle referred to “the elders who rule well” at the church at Ephesus (1Tim. 5:17; see also Acts 20:17, where Paul addresses “the elders of the church” at Ephesus). The book of Acts indicates that there were “elders” at the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 15:2,4; 21:18).

² “The Office of Elder” in *Church Leadership Policy Statement for Elders* (Sun Valley, CA: Grace Community Church, nd), A1.

Again and again, references are made to plurality of elders in each of the various churches. In fact, every place in the New Testament where the term *presbuteros* (elder) is used it is plural except where the apostles John and Peter use it of themselves (2John, 3John; 1Peter 5:1). Nowhere in the New Testament is there a reference to a one-pastor congregation. It may be that each elder in the city had an individual group in which he had specific oversight. But the church was seen as one church, and decisions were made by a collective process and in reference to the whole, not individual parts.

In other passages, reference is made to a plurality of elders even though the word *presbuteros* itself is not used. In the opening greeting of his epistle to the Philippians, Paul refers to the “overseers (plural of *episkipos*) and deacons” at the church of Philippi (Phil. 1:2). In Acts 20:28, Paul warned the elders of the church of Ephesus, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which God has made you overseers (plural of *episkopos*)” (Acts 20:28). The writer of Hebrews called his readers to obey and submit to the “leaders” who kept watch over their souls (Heb. 13:17). Paul exhorted his Thessalonian readers to “appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction” (1Thess. 5:12) – a clear reference to the overseers in the Thessalonian assembly.

Consider also the example of the Trinity- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Godhead governs the universe in plurality but acts in absolute unity.

Much can be said for the benefits of leadership made up of a plurality of godly men. Their combined counsel and wisdom helps assure that decisions are not self-willed or self-serving to a single individual (cf. Prov. 11:14). 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 he has appointed to shepherd His flock.

(b) A Primary Leader

A LEADER OF THE LEADERS /PASTOR-TEACHER

It does seem clear from the way that Jesus referred to and gave responsibilities to His disciples that there is always a leader of the leaders (Peter with the disciples, James in Jerusalem, John in the area of Ephesus). In early church history this differentiated the bishop from the elders. Within the local body this is naturally the primary teacher and pastor. He is the one who is responsible to lead the leaders as well as the church.

Consider again the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, there is not only plurality and unity but the Godhead operates on the concept of “headship.”

- There is equality between the Father and the Son (John 5:17-18, Phil 2:6) yet the Son recognizes the authority and the “headship” of the Father (1Cor 11:3).

- Christ is equal to the Father yet submits to that authority and “headship” (1Cor 11:3, 15:24-28)

We also see this pattern in the home between the husband and wife.

(c) Male Leadership

Elders having the responsibility to teach and lead the congregation are to be men. This does not deny the crucial roles of women within the church by the design of God.

Key texts:

- ◆ 1Timothy 2:9-15
- ◆ 1Timothy 3:2 -- “husband of one wife”
- ◆ 1Timothy 3:4-5
- ◆ 1Corinthians 11:2-26
- ◆ 1Corinthians 14:33-38
- ◆ Galatians 3:28

Other issues

- ◆ Male leadership- from creation, in Old Testament, Jesus picking disciples, apostles etc.
- ◆ All members of the congregation are to be equally under the authority of the elders.
- ◆ All women are not under the authority of all other men- within the body of Christ men and women are to relate to each other as brothers and sisters under the authority and structure of the church.

(d) Qualified Leadership

Taking the time to develop and select qualified leaders is the most sure antidote to ending up with “self-willed” men who will “lord it over” others and bring great destruction to that man, his family and the church family. The high qualifications for elders/overseers are given to us in 1Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9.

(e) Servant Leadership

Jesus often had to confront his own disciples and teach them that they were chosen by God to serve; not to be served. Note the following occasions on which Jesus addressed their self-absorbed, self-seeking, ladder climbing, number one attitudes:

- ◆ Matthew 11:29. Drawing a contrast between Himself and the religious leaders of the day
- ◆ Mark 9:33-35. Arguing over who is greatest.
“Nothing distinguishes the kingdoms of man from the kingdom of God more than their diametrically opposed views of the exercise of power. One seeks to control people, the other to serve people; one promotes self, the other prostrates self; one seeks prestige and position, the other lifts up the lowly and despised.” Chuck Colson

- ◆ Mark 10:35-45. James & John ask for promotion
Yet the world (and the church) is full of James and Johns, go-getters and status-seekers, hungry for honor and prestige, measuring life by achievement, and everlastingly dreaming of success. They are aggressively ambitious for themselves.

“This whole mentality is incompatible with the way of the cross. ‘The son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give....’ He renounced the power and glory of heaven and humbled himself to be a slave. He gave himself without reserve and without fear, to the despised and neglected sections of the community. His obsession was the glory of God and the good of human beings who bear his image. To promote these, he was willing to endure even the shame of the cross. Now he calls us to follow him, not to seek great things for ourselves, but rather to seek first God’s rule and God’s righteousness.” John Stott

- ◆ Matthew 23:1-12. “The Proud Humbled, Humble Exalted”
- ◆ Luke 22:24-27; John 13:3-17. “Among You To Serve”

As shepherds are servants of their master and lead the sheep entrusted to them so elders are servants of God and are to feed, protect and lead the flock of God. As fathers are responsible to God for leading and discipling the family God has entrusted to them, so elders are responsible to God to lead and disciple the believers entrusted to them and be a witness of God in the community around them.

Elders must care for themselves to insure their continued spiritual growth, shepherd those family members still under their care and be faithful to the priorities of “prayer and the ministry of the word”, shepherding the flock of God so that every person is cared for and given every opportunity to grow spiritually into the fullness of Christ.

Out of love, true elders suffer and bear the brunt of difficult people and problems so that the lambs are not bruised. They bear the misunderstanding and sins of others so that the assembly may live in peace. They lose sleep so that others may rest. They make great personal sacrifices of time and energy for the welfare of others. They see themselves as men under authority. They depend on God for wisdom and help, not on their own power and cleverness. They face the false teachers’ fierce attacks. They guard the community’s liberty and freedom in Christ so that the saints are encouraged to develop their gifts, to mature, and to serve one another.³

b. Deacon

i. Titles & Responsibilities

As the church in Jerusalem grew the needs of the body were not satisfactorily being

³ Strauch, 98.

met. When this was realized there were deacons selected to help meet these needs so that the Apostles could “devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word”. Since the qualifications for deacons are given to Timothy for the church at Ephesus in 1Timothy 3:8-13, it seems that deacons were selected for a specific ministry or ministries, at the discretion of the Elders (instead of Apostles), based upon the needs of the body, and that the role they were fulfilling required men of great spiritual maturity. It is possible that Titus does not include such qualifications because it was a younger and possibly smaller church and the responsibilities could be adequately met by the Elders, as it was in the churches in the early days of Paul appointing elders in the churches in Asia (there were deacons as a part of the churches after close of the New Testament). The deacons’ function continued to be that of multiplying the leadership of the Elders (Moses & Jethro) so the Elders could be faithful to “devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word”. The qualifications for the deacons in Acts 6 “select seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” are more precisely spelled out in 1Timothy 3:9-13. It is noticed that the qualifications for deacons are very close to those for elders.

To delegate responsibilities to people who are not qualified spiritually will not ‘lighten the load’ for spiritual leaders. Rather, it will only complicate their ministry.⁴

Men serving like Stephen, Philip and those first deacons are critical for the growth of any local body- for her members and in reaching the lost. Therefore we conclude:

- 1) It seems that the Apostles and the elders meet the teaching, overseeing, and meeting of practical needs. As the churches grew in order for the “elders” to have time to stay focused on their unique responsibilities (teaching and prayer) deacons were raised up with very high qualifications so that the practical needs could be met in very spiritual ways (Jesus often meet both physical and spiritual needs). It’s possible the church at Crete was smaller therefore there are no qualifications for deacons there (elders fulfilling both responsibilities) while at Ephesus the church was larger and therefore Paul gives Timothy the qualifications for both elders and deacons
- 2) It seems clear that Acts 6 was the first raising up of the role of deacons and that this initial role is consistent throughout the rest of the New Testament, namely to be responsible for the practical needs of those in the body of Christ which were not being met.
- 3) The importance of this work is seen in the many Biblical mandates to care for the poor; to free up the elders to focus on the “word and prayer” (not to say they are not to do this also- but it is not to be their primary role) so that both critical functions of the body of Christ are being met; and thus the high qualifications for Deacons.
- 4) The necessity of these men being spiritually mature in accordance with the qualifications cannot be overemphasized. It takes great wisdom and experience to know how to meet needs in the ways of Christ so that people are not enabled, their character and heart for God is developed, and they are being disciplined on

⁴ Gene Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 229.

how to meet needs as God matures them.

- 5) The meeting of practical needs as taught through many of the “one-anothers” is to be a regular part of the churches body life. The deacons are to cultivate this within the entire body and meet these needs in situations where individuals in the body are not meeting them (Hellenistic widows in Acts 6)
- 6) Deacon is both a calling based upon gifts and an office.
 - ❑ Deacons like all other ministries in the church are under the leadership of the elders, yet in a unique sense function alongside them.
 - ❑ Being a deacon is to be seen as a unique and high calling, not a stepping-stone to becoming an Elder. They take different gifts and callings. Elders need to be able to teach and exercise oversight; deacons have special gifts in meeting needs of people.
 - ❑ Elders are not more important than deacons or vice versa. Both are crucial to the proper leading and care of the body of Christ.
 - ❑ Deacons are to focus on the meeting of practical needs with-in the body and are not to be seen as the Elders “right-hand men” for any particular area of ministry as they deem necessary. While elders are to find capable people for other areas of ministry they are not to be called deacons.
- 7) 1Timothy 3:11 are qualifications for deacons concerning their wives (if married) rather than for “Deaconesses” or women “Deacons”. This means that:
 - ❑ A wife can disqualify a man from serving in the office of Deacon.
 - ❑ Wives are not a part of the “Deacon Board/Ministry Team”
 - ❑ Wives may or may not serve with their husband in this ministry. Their serving in this ministry would be based upon their own SHAPE and not that of her husband.
 - ❑ We understand that this same qualification should be applied to Elders even though it is not specifically mentioned in their qualifications.

ii. Characteristics

Deacons are selected from the congregation to meet practical/material needs in a spiritual way so that elders are more free to shepherd and manage, devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word. Meeting physical needs in the “name of Christ” requires great spiritual maturity; therefore the qualifications are very similar to those required for elders.

(a) Male Leadership

Deacons are to be men.

(b) Qualified Leadership

The kind of leader is described in Acts 6:3 with qualifications spelled out in 1Timothy 3:8-13. While the qualifications are very similar to elders they have the added qualifications of being tested and a wife who is “dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.”

(c) Servant Leadership

Have the same servant attitudes as elders.

II. BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

Baptist churches, like many of the denominations, began during the reformation as believers responded to what they saw going on in their churches in comparison to what they understood the Scriptures to teach. Since this began as a loose movement, not all Baptists then or today agree precisely on what the distinctives are or on how to apply them.

More recently, many churches have left what made them distinctive and adopted other beliefs and practices. This means that today a local church of a particular denomination may or may not be faithful to those distinctives which they adopted as they were formed. Thus today, for example, we find Baptist churches who do not believe in the authority of Scripture as well as other denominations which view Scripture as their sole authority.

Below are seven areas, generally agreed upon, of what historically identifies a church as Baptist. To help understand the differences there is a short comparison with some of the other historic denominations. This comparison is not given for the purpose of being negative of other groups or to imply that any particular church of that denomination embraces these today, but rather to help clarify these historical distinctives.

A. THE BIBLE- SOLE AUTHORITY FOR FAITH & PRACTICE

Baptists believe that the Bible is God's revelation to mankind and that it is our ultimate authority. All appeals in matters of faith and practice must be made to the Bible since it is the only sure, objective, source of knowledge about God's relationship with people. Even creeds and confessions of faith, which attempt to articulate the theology of Scripture, do not carry Scripture's inherent authority. 2Timothy 3:15-17; 1Thessalonians 2:13; 2Peter 1:20, 21.

Contrasting Views:

⇒ *Ecclesiastical*- Roman Catholic

To the RC, the Bible is only part of his religious authority. The other part of his authority are the traditions of the Church and the living voice of the Church at the present time (through the Pope). They view the RC church as the only true church, and thus the only infallible interpreter and teacher of the Bible. Therefore the Church has greater authority than the Bible. It alone can determine what God's Word teaches and what its members must believe and practice.

⇒ *Creedal*-

⇒ Presbyterianism- Westminster Confession of Faith,

⇒ Methodism- Twenty-Seven Articles of Faith.

These groups believe that godly men, meeting under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, at a definite time and place (Church Councils) adopted a statement of faith, which expresses clearly and concisely the teachings of God's Word and that these statements are the only interpretation and are therefore binding upon them and future generations.

Thus- the Creed has the potential of usurping the Bible's place of final authority if it is appealed to as the final authority rather than the Bible.

⇒ *Liberal*

⇒ The Bible is only authoritative where it can be rationally explained

⇒ The Bible is a revelation not from God to man, but of people's experiences with God.

This elevates man's understanding as the final authority, while the Bible is fallible and has errors.

Baptists have confessions of faith (not creeds which are fixed and final) to define what they understand the Scriptures to say on main points of doctrine, but these confessions are not the final authority.

The guiding axiom: "If it is Biblical, it is Baptist, if it is Baptist, it should be Biblical."

B. AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Baptists believe that each local church is autonomous and directly under the authority of Christ. They are not under the authority of any other church or group of leaders. They recognize they are a part of the larger body of Christ and the Biblical mandate of interdependence for the sake of the glory of God and Christ's Church. Therefore they function in mutually submissive relationships for expanding the Kingdom of God.

Contrasting views on church government:

⇒ *Episcopalian* (like the Roman Catholic)

The place of authority is *centralized* in a system of priests and bishops in an ascending scale. So the Roman Catholic Church finds her supreme authority in the Pope.

⇒ *Prebyterial* (Presbyterian Church)

The authority rests in a *representative* group called preaching and ruling elders. This group is delegated authority from the lower groups, all the way to the highest group.

⇒ *Congregational*

The authority rests in an independent or autonomous local church. Beyond this there is no higher court of appeal from another group.

Autonomy as established in Scripture:

1. The local churches are called churches (1Cor 1:2, Gal 1:2, etc) {albeit these were all the churches in one town}.
2. Decisions were made within the early local churches by those in that body (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 1Cor 5:1-2).
3. The relationship between the church in Jerusalem and Antioch (Acts 11:19-30; 15).
4. The establishment of local churches on the missionary journeys (Acts 14:23)-
They:
 1. Appointed elders in every church;
 2. Commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed (not another church or governing authority).

5. When Paul encouraged and confronted local churches he appealed to the authority of Christ as their head, the Word of God . . . not to another ruling body.
6. Many of the New Testament Epistles are written to local bodies.
7. Local church leaders (pastors, elders) will receive their reward from the Chief Shepherd and it is to Christ that they are accountable.

Therefore-

Local churches are to govern themselves by:

- 1) Equipping their own members for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12-16; Acts 6:1-6)
- 2) Disciplining those under her care (1Cor 5:13, Matt 18:15-20)
- 3) Determining God's unique task for the church. (Acts 11:27-30, 13:1-3, 15:2)
- 4) Settling its own internal disputes and those among the members (1Cor 6:1-11)

The form of government within the local church is considered by some to also be a "Baptist Distinctive," but not all agree. Some understand that "Congregational Rule" means the local congregation rules itself in whatever form she chooses, while others believe that the people of the local congregation are the ruling authority of the church and all decisions must be jointly made by them through congregational votes. As a rule- Baptist churches affirm the autonomy of the local church and each local congregation agrees upon a form of church government which includes the congregation being involved in selecting and entrusting godly leaders (called Pastor, Elders, etc) who they then trust to rule with certain areas in which the congregation has a say. The variety in this goes from the extremes of the Senior Pastor being the authority and whatever he says goes-to the congregation voting on everything that the church does and nobody does anything without a vote of the congregation. Most Conservative Baptist Churches have formed a church government which recognizes the Biblical responsibility for the congregation to select godly leaders and to honor and submit to them with a wide variety of how congregational input is given and votes are taken.

Interdependence as Established in Scripture

Baptists believe that being a local church carries with it the Biblical obligation of interdependence with other local churches as a part of The Church. In Conservative Baptist this is why we call ourselves an "association." This distinguishes them from most other Baptists who are part of a denomination.

Churches should cooperate in three primary areas:

- 1) Doctrine- There should be fellowship among those with common doctrinal beliefs (Eph 4:4-6; 1Cor 4:17) as well as discussion and theological growth in doctrinal areas (Acts 15, 16:4).
- 2) Duties- The linking of resources to accomplish the Great Commission multiplies rather than adds to God's establishment of His Kingdom.
 - a) Common projects (2Cor 8:1-11)
 - b) Appointment of people for tasks which represent them (2Cor 8:18-19)
- 3) Discipline- Those who are propagating error are to be rejected by all churches (2John 9-11)

C. REGENERATE MEMBERSHIP

This principle separates Baptists from most other denominations, except for Mennonite/ Anabaptist groups and Pentecostal/ charismatic churches. It grows out of a “gathered church” concept and a rejection of a covenantal or sacramental view of baptism. Hence, the Baptist puts an emphasis on personal conversion while rejecting the idea that a parent can exercise faith for the child. Acts 2:41-47; 1Corinthians 12:12; 2Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 4:3

Contrasting Views:

- ⇒ *Reformed: View children of believing families as part of the covenant community and therefore part of the Church (universal).*
- ⇒ *Roman Catholic: Believe that it is water baptism which regenerated therefore all those who are baptized are members of the church, which includes people of all ages.*

D. TWO ORDINANCES

Each local church is instructed to practice and observe two important ordinances, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Communion). These are symbolic, and are observances having or imparting no justifying grace. They are ordinances (statutes to be followed) not sacraments (that which imparts justifying grace). There can be grace received as there is through any act of obedience and worship to the Lord.

Believer’s Baptism

Before the Lord ascended into heaven, He gave His disciples what we call “The Great Commission.” This can be found in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16.

A study of the book of Acts clearly shows that this ordinance was faithfully and consistently carried out including water baptism for those who repent and receive Christ. (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18).

There is absolutely no warrant in the New Testament for baptizing babies who cannot possibly believe for themselves. It is only those who exercise saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who can obey the Lord in baptism.

- ⇒ Baptism is an identifying with the triune God (Matt. 28:19-20) {Part of moving from gentile to God of Israel, John the Baptizer}
- ⇒ Picture of new spiritual realities (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12-3:3)
- ⇒ Appeal to God (1Peter 3:21)- Expression of our desire to live a life of obedience to Him by His Spirit

Contrasting views:

- ⇒ *Reformed:*

Baptism is the sign of the New Covenant as circumcision was for the Old Covenant. This is sometimes known as the covenant argument for paedobaptism, because it sees the infants born to believers as part of the “covenant community” of God’s people. “Reformed theology requires adult converts to be baptized after making a profession of faith, while their children

receive baptism before they profess faith.” R.C. Sproul

⇒ *Roman Catholic:*

Water baptism is necessary for salvation- the act of baptism itself causes regeneration. Therefore baptism is a means whereby the church bestows saving grace on people and they become a part of the church. Thus, infants should be baptized.

Note: Infant baptism was unknown in the early church, and it was not until at least the end of the second century AD that this practice was introduced into some of the churches. Over the next several hundred years the practice became much more widespread.

The Lord’s Supper (Communion)

The Lord’s Supper was instituted by the Lord Himself, just prior to His death on the cross, in Matthew 26:26-29. At this time He took the Passover meal which had been a proclamation of His future death as a substitute for sin and replaced it with the Lord’s Supper which looks back on His death as our substitute sacrifice until He returns.

The Lord’s Supper is:

- Symbolic representation of the Lord’s death- using all five senses
- Symbolic of the believer’s participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (we don’t just look at them, we receive them- Romans 6:5-10)
- Symbolic of believer’s union with each other (no distinction ethnically, socially, economically, age, male, female, or what sins have been committed. 1Cor 10:17; Rom 3:22-24)

Therefore it is a time for each believer to reflect upon what the Lord did for them, and upon their relationship with the Lord. It is easy to forget what a great and terrible price the Lord Jesus paid for our sins. The Lord’s Supper therefore provides us with an opportunity both to witness to our belief in Christ’s death and substitutionary sacrifice, and to examine ourselves to see that we are in a proper relationship with Him and others. 1Corinthians 11:23-34.

It is important to note that there is no frequency of observance laid down in the Scriptures, but as often as it is celebrated believers are to carefully observe the Lord’s instructions.

Contrasting Views:

- ⇒ *Transubstantiation*- the bread and wine becomes the actual body and blood of Christ (change in essence not in substance)- Roman Catholic view.
- ⇒ *Consubstantiation*- while the bread and wine do not become the actual body and blood of Christ, they coexist or are conjoined in union with each other. Luther’s and reformers view.

Note: With reference to Hebrews 10:10-14, 18 we see clearly that there was only ever one offering made that could take away sin. That offering was the perfect sacrifice of Himself by the perfect Son of God. Baptists, in common with all who would hold the Scriptures dear, reject totally the unbiblical teaching that the bread and the wine either actually, or are understood to become the actual body and blood of Christ, and that hence Christ is crucified afresh each time communion is observed. This teaching denies the perfect, and finished work of Christ on the

cross. It cannot be stressed highly enough that the Lord's Supper is purely a memorial feast, and the bread and the wine are only memorial elements.

E. PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVERS

Also sometimes a part of Soul Liberty- we have split them out

By this we mean that all believers come to God through the one High Priest Jesus Christ (they do not need a priest, pastor, or anyone else to intercede for them) and they are personally responsible to God to offer themselves in grateful service to God and to their neighbors.

Therefore all believers have equal access to God, are in equal relationship with God and are equal servants of God. So- the prayers of a pastor are no more effective than the prayers of a brand new believer.

⇒ Philippians 4:6; I Peter 2:4-10; Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22; Revelation 1:6,5:9-10

Believer priests can and should offer up spiritual sacrifices, i.e., presenting their bodies to Christ for service, offering Him the praise and devotion of their lips, and giving to others who are in need as an offering to God. Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15,16; Philippians 4:15-18.

In the earliest Old Testament times the Patriarch (Father) of the family acted as a priest for his family (as with Job, Abraham etc.). Later, when the Lord called out a special nation (Israel), He appointed one of their tribes (Levi) as a priestly tribe, and from this tribe He appointed a particular family (that of Aaron) from which the high priest was anointed. It was necessary in those days for there to be a priest, as the Messiah (Jesus Christ) had not yet come. In fact the Old Testament priesthood and all the sacrifices that were offered by the priests was a type (picture) of the person and work of Christ who was to come. By being obedient to the Law of God and bringing the required sacrifices to the priests in those days the people of God were able to have their sins covered, and thereby be in a right relationship with God. However, these offerings and sacrifices could never remove their sin, Hebrews 10:4. Only when Christ (the sinless Son of God) came and offered Himself as a once for all perfect sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, was it possible for people's sins to be removed for ever. When Christ died on the cross He said, "it is finished" (John 19:30). Nothing more needed to be done, nor could be done to make atonement for sin. Hebrews 10:10-14, 18 makes it abundantly clear that Jesus Christ offered a perfect, once for all, one time only sacrifice for sin. He is now our great High Priest and the only mediator between God and man, 1 Timothy 2:5.

The New Testament further states that all true believers are now priests in their own right and God has opened up a new and living way for them to come directly to God's throne with their prayers, intercessions, requests, supplications, petitions, etc. Priestly orders, altars, sacrifices, rituals etc., were all done away with when Jesus Christ died on the cross. Jesus Himself said to His disciples "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23).

F. INDIVIDUAL SOUL LIBERTY

Soul Liberty can be defined as “The right of every soul to both approach and interpret God for themselves, without recourse to any other individual or body of individuals.” It is sometimes called “Individual Religious Freedom.” Every man or woman is entirely responsible before God for both their decision whether or not to become a Christian, and what they do and believe after they become a Christian. No person or persons has a right to persecute another for their belief, or the manner of expressing their belief, neither does anyone have the right to coerce another to believe or act as they do.

Romans 14:5, 12 states, “One man regards one day above another: another regards every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

It must be stated though that “Individual Soul Liberty,” does not mean that any individual can behave in any way that he chooses. The Bible makes it very clear that each person is responsible for his or her choices, and will have to give an account to God. Wrong choices and sinful behavior will result in discipline from the Lord (this could include local church discipline), or either short or long term consequences that may have to be borne as a result of these choices or behavior patterns. A person is free to choose to do or believe what he wishes, but he is not free to choose the consequences of these choices. In short, the doctrine of “Individual Soul Liberty” does not give a believer a license to sin, Galatians 5:13. A Christian should be more concerned about building up and encouraging others, and not causing others to stumble, than about exercising his own Christian liberties, Romans 14:7-23.

Those who we believe to be in error must be persuaded by sound Biblical teaching administered in a spirit of love, not by force, or coercion, Titus 1:9-11; 2Corinthians 4:2; Ephesians 4:15.

G. SEPARATION OF CHURCH & STATE

Baptists have believed and taught that the state should not exercise control over the theology, administration or ministries of the church. Nor should the church exercise control over the governing process of the state. God established both the church and the civil government, and He gave each its own distinct sphere of operation. The government's purposes are outlined in Romans 13:1-7 and the church's purposes in Matthew 28:19-20.

In other words, the state must not dictate to the church, nor the church to the state. We do believe, and most emphatically, that Christians should be involved in the political process. Christians should vote, run for office and pray for their leaders in government. Romans 13:1-7; 1Peter 1:13-17; 1Timothy 2:1-2

Baptists rejected the state-religion union that was common in Europe during the reformation period and advocated for religious freedom. Baptist pastors, especially John Leland and Isaac Backus, were strong advocates for the disestablishment of religion in the second half of the 18th century. John Leland was a close friend with James Madison and Thomas Jefferson and helped establish the language of the First Amendment, guaranteeing freedom of religion in the fledgling

United States. We believe each person must have the freedom to choose for herself or himself whether to live with faith and by which faith to live.

We believe that every person is responsible to God for his/her own religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, they should have the right to worship God as their own convictions and conscience dictate. And so, we do not presume to dictate to anyone or any church that “you must worship in this manner or in this way.” There is no official prescribed order or uniform church service.

Now that we have worked to understand and clarify what the Bible teaches, clearly and in principle, and what the Scriptural truths are which we must keep in tension concerning the church body and her leadership - what does this look like at Calvary Baptist Church, located in Huntington Beach California in early 21st century?

III. THE TITLES, FUNCTIONS, AND RELATIONSHIPS AT CBCHB

“Therefore, I exhort the leaders among you . . . shepherd (pastor) the flock of God.”

1Peter 5:1a, 2a

A. Pastor-Teacher

1. Title

The Pastor-Teacher is the “leader of leaders” among the elders - as a fellow elder, as well as being the primary teacher and voice for the church. Therefore he must meet all the qualifications of elders (with strengths in teaching, shepherding and leading), will be affirmed by the congregation, and will have the same voting power as any of the other elders.

2. Function

The Pastor-Teacher is the primary teacher for the church and the one who is freed up through financial compensation to be the “leader of the leaders.” However because he is one of a plurality of elders, through whom the direction of God is discerned, he must never lead in a direction which has not been unanimously agreed upon by the elders.

3. Selection

The Pastor-Teacher shall be selected by the Elders and presented to the church body for their examination. This presentation shall include him sharing his testimony, meeting his family, and teaching on a Sunday morning for at least two Sundays. The church body will be given three weeks to approach the Elders with any of their concerns (based upon what they know of him from other sources or his conduct while candidating). After the three weeks, he will be confirmed by the church at a specially called business meeting with a quorum of members present. To be confirmed he must receive three-fourths (3/4) majority of all the votes cast. If an individual votes against having him as their Pastor-Teacher they need to give their name and reason for not affirming him (this is to give opportunity for the elders to determine if this person knows something they have missed, never denigrate the person who has concerns). He shall remain as Pastor-Teacher for an indefinite period of time subject to the following reservations:

- 1) The Elders determining that he is mentally or physically incapacitated or no longer spiritually qualified to serve as Pastor-Teacher and give him one month’s written notice of their intention to dismiss him.
- 2) The Pastor-Teacher gives one month’s notice of his intention to resign.
- 3) The time limit of a Pastor-Teacher’s resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the Pastor-Teacher and the Elders by mutual agreement provide otherwise.

B. Elders

1. Title

Because the leaders of the early local church were most often called elders in the Scriptures, and this is a common term within evangelicalism today we have chosen this term for those who are responsible to God for the leading of the body of believers.

2. Function

This is the governing body for Calvary Baptist Church. They are responsible to the Lord Jesus for the “souls of those God entrusts to them.” This includes all aspects of the ministry at Calvary. The heart of this ministry is the shepherding of those who become a part of the congregation, those who come under the influence of Calvary, locally and internationally, as well as the community in which we live.

The Elders will be comprised of qualified men who have been selected and affirmed by the congregation on an annual basis. It will always include the Pastor-Teacher and may include other pastors.

The Elders must protect the sound doctrine, once for all delivered to the saints and lead the church protecting the unity of the Spirit. To ensure this unity:

- Unanimity in decisions
The elders, all with an equal vote, will practice unanimity in all decision making, valuing each other and knowing that disunity in the leadership will always spread to the body damaging God’s precious body and His glorious reputation. If unanimity is not achieved decisions will be dropped, postponed, reevaluated or modified. Unanimity is defined as, “total agreement by the elders to support a decision.” This means that at times there may not be total agreement on a decision but a willingness on the part of all the elders to submit to that decision and never outside of the elders to voice anything contrary to the decision. If unanimity cannot be reached and a decision must be made- it will be deferred to the Executive Director of the Conservative Baptist of Southern California or his designated representative.
- Minimum number of elders will be seven (7)
- Majority participation
There must always be a majority of elders participating in all decisions.
- Non-pastoral majority
Must always be a majority of unpaid elders making up the elder board. At no time will elder decisions be made by a majority of paid elders (pastors). If circumstances cause there to be more paid elders (pastors) than non-paid- it is not an official elder meeting and no decisions can be made.
- Two- way communication
They will take very seriously their role in leading the body, through two way communication, giving opportunity for the congregation to give input on issues, affirming votes, and any other ways so that the congregation will trust and follow. Issues/needs can and should be raised by people in the congregation (Acts 6) . . . everything must not come from the leadership down.

The Board of Trustees, the corporate officers, will be a part of the Elder Board, elected by the Elders each year. The corporate officers will be President, Vice-President, Secretary and/or Treasurer. The Pastor-Teacher or other pastors may not serve as corporate officers.

The Elders will elect their own chairman who may or may not be the Pastor-Teacher or one of the corporate officers.

The Elders are responsible for hiring all employees of the church, fixing salaries and benefits, and prescribing their duties consistent with the Scriptures, the mission and by-laws of the church.

The Elders are responsible for establishing policies and procedures so that the Church can fulfill her God-given responsibility in a God-honoring, law-abiding way.

The Elders are responsible for the financial well being to include the collection and disbursements of funds, budgets, property, and any other business matters which relate to the corporation.

➤ **Budget**

The Elders will present the next years Church Ministry Budget to the congregation at a business meeting, announced two weeks in advance, each November.

➤ **Property**

The Elders will submit to the church body their recommendations for the purchasing or selling of real estate, at a special meeting, announced 30 days in advance for their affirmation. The buying and selling of property must be affirmed by the church membership, at a business meeting with a quorum of 25% of the membership, by 67% of those voting.

The Elders are responsible for presenting to the congregation any changes to the Constitution and By-Laws for affirmation. They must present the changes, in writing, 30 days before they are to be voted on. The business meeting must be announced two Sundays in the bulletin or from the pulpit. A quorum of 25% of the membership shall be present and changes must be affirmed by 75% of those voting.

The Elders are responsible for the administration of the ordinances of baptism and communion.

The Elders are responsible for pursuing sinning members through all Biblical means and if there is no restoration bringing them before the congregation for the last step in church discipline. (Matthew 18:15-35; Galatians 6:1-5)

Any Pastor and/or the Pastor-Teacher will recuse himself from financial, policy matters that concern him. Any Elder will recuse himself if a family member is a paid employee and issues concerning them are being dealt with.

3. Selection

OVERVIEW OF SELECTION PROCESS

September:

- Current Elders- Determine if they are going to serve another year
- Elder Candidates- Final examination
- Possible Elders- Gather names from congregation

October:

- Presentation to congregation of Elders who will be serving next year, new elders

share their testimonies

- Congregation given chance to examine, make concerns known
- Elders examine prospective candidates to determine if they enter the discipleship process

November- December:

- Examination of elders through affirmation vote
- Elders consider the vote and any concerns addressed, determining who is qualified to serve for the next year

January:

- Dedication for service for that year

DETAILS OF SELECTION PROCESS

Two tracks which run concurrently

Elders Already Serving:

1. Are to examine themselves each September by going through the elder qualifications taking an opportunity to affirm their qualifications or remove themselves (which should happen during the year at the time they become disqualified).
2. Any fellow elder who is aware of any reason why another elder should not serve will approach him privately and if the concerns continue bring it to the full elder board.
3. Congregation will be given an opportunity to examine them at the same time and in the same way as new elders.

Selection of New Elders

Nominations for new elders come from two sources: Elders and Congregation
[September]

FROM ELDERS

1. Current elders can recommend men to be considered for prospective elders. The process is identical with that for nominations from the church members.

FROM CONGREGATION

1. *Nominations from CBCHB Members*

Current church members will be given the opportunity to nominate prospective elder candidates once each year during September.

For a man to be nominated they need to be:

- a. A member of Calvary Baptist Church in good standing
- b. Exhibit the qualifications in 1Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9
- c. Be demonstrating faithfulness in serving the body of Christ through teaching and shepherding the flock at CBCHB.

If any member of CBCHB is aware of a man they consider as being qualified for the position of elder, they are to go to that man and ask him if he believes he is qualified as well as willing to be considered as a prospective elder candidate.

If after a time of prayer, consultation with wife (if married), others on ministry teams, and others, the man responds in the affirmative, then the member will give the prospective elder candidate's name to any one of the elders, no later than September 30th of each year.

2. *Examination by the Elder Board*

- Full elder board will consider each recommendation which comes from the congregation. If the Elders determine that the man should not be further considered then they will give both the man and the person who submitted his name the reasons for their determination.
- If the full elder board agrees, this constitutes them being accepted into the Elder Candidate Process.
- The Elder Candidate Process will as a minimum include:
 - Initial contact: ask him if he believes that he meets the qualifications, is desirous to serve as an Elder, any concerns he has and explain the examination and discipleship process.
 - Initial examination: talking to wife, family, people in ministry with them and others who are familiar with the candidate
 - If determined to be qualified, recommended to begin discipleship process
 - If not qualified, told why and tell them whether with further growth they can be or not.
- Discipleship Process:
Qualified candidates are:
 - a. Assigned a mentor
 - b. Their name is mentioned informally to congregation (so that if people have concerns they will raise them without taking the candidate formally before the congregation).
 - c. Attends Elder meetings (no vote).
 - d. Works through Biblical Eldership- Mentoring Guide, CBCHB Constitution, and any other documents which related to Elder responsibilities and guidelines, with his mentor.

The mentor and candidate will meet at least once a month outside of Elder meetings including the wife when her participation is advantageous to helping the elder candidate or preparing her for her future role as an elder's wife. This process can take up to one year.

The process has a two-fold goal:

- 1) To disciple the prospective Elder so that he will be ready to faithfully discharge his responsibilities before the Lord.
- 2) To reveal character flaws, wrong beliefs, etc. and either help him grow through them or help him determine that he is not yet ready to serve.

The Mentor will keep the Elders apprised on the Candidate's progress and upon

completion of all the assignments make a recommendation to the full elder board for their consideration when new elders are being considered in September. There should be no surprises at this point, the intention is for the process to naturally lead to either a recommendation or recognition that the man is not ready to serve.

Presentation to Congregation- All Elders being considered to serve for the next year

[1st - 2nd Sundays in October]

This presentation to the Congregation will include the publication of their names in the Sunday service bulletin for at least two weeks and the announcement of when they will be introduced (regular worship services, business meeting or special meeting) where a quorum of the membership will be present.

The purpose of this presentation to the full membership is fourfold:

- 1) It provides a specific time when the entire membership is given the opportunity to review the CBCHB Elder Selection process.
- 2) It provides a specific time when the entire membership is given the opportunity to see the current Elders, those who are returning, and those who are being recommended for the office of Elder for the first time.
- 3) It provides prospective Elder candidates with the opportunity to share their Personal Testimony with the congregation (at any designated service or meeting).
- 4) It establishes a specific three to four week period of time during which the entire congregation is encouraged to personally address prospective Elders with their concerns about his qualifications and if these concerns are not cleared up, they must make this known to another Elder.

During the three-four week period, the entire congregation will be asked to follow the Biblical model for church discipline as specified in Matthew 18:15-17. Those with concerns about the suitability of any candidate must first attempt to work through those issues with the individual candidate; Second, if there is no satisfaction after confronting the individual candidate, then the concerns should be expressed to any Elder, or if a new candidate the Elder who has had the responsibility for discipling the prospective Elder candidate; And lastly, if this does not resolve the issue, then the concern should be expressed to the church.

The current Elders will deal with any concerns which are raised to them in the most expedient manner possible with the goal to resolve misunderstandings, disqualify an Elder, or affirm that the charges are not valid.

Affirmation or raising concerns through a ballot

[1st - 3rd Sundays in November]

At the end of the time for people to go to the candidates personally, there is a “vote” taken. This is the opportunity that the congregation has to either voice their affirmation or a final opportunity to raise concerns about a man’s qualifications. On this ballot they can either say they affirm a man to serve as Elder or they have concerns. If they say they have concerns they must state their concerns and identify themselves so the issue can be honestly dealt with. Announce at this time any men who have entered the Elder Candidate Discipleship process and their discipler.

Examination by elder board

[December]

Following this ballot the elder board will review the affirmations and any concerns. The Board of Elders, or its representative Elder(s), will meet with both the individual with the concerns and the prospective Elder and determine if the prospective Elder is still qualified to be considered.

The full elder board must unanimously approve all Elder candidates before they can be presented to the congregation. If a prospective Elder is not unanimously approved he must be told what biblical reason has disqualified him and help him grow in that area.

Dedicating them for service- laying on of hands

[1st - 3rd Sundays in January]

Several weeks after the ballot (giving enough time to deal completely with any concerns) there will be a public dedication of all Elders through a dedication service.

C. Pastors

1. Title

Pastor in our culture is understood to be a man who has been called of God to shepherd in an official capacity, in a local church. Often they are freed up to do this through financial compensation (1 Timothy 5:17-18). We use the term pastor to describe a man who has been called to vocational ministry, meets the qualifications of Elders, is exercising shepherding responsibilities over either the whole body (in a particular area like outreach), or a smaller segment of the body (like youth), and they are being financially compensated for their work. While all pastors are shepherds, not all pastors are serving in the position of church Elders.

2. Function

Pastors will serve in shepherding roles in those areas which are determined by the Elders to need a man who meets the qualifications of Elders. The specific responsibilities will be specified by the Elders.

3. Selection

The Elders will pursue and call men who meet the qualifications of Elders as well as those spiritual gifts, heart/passions, abilities, personality and experience unique to each ministry position. They will involve the congregation in this process as appropriate for the ministry position under consideration.

D. Deacons

1. Title

Spiritually mature men, who meet the Biblical qualifications for deacons as specified in 1 Timothy 3:8-13; who serve the body of Christ at Calvary insuring that practical needs are being met in the name of Christ.

2. Function

Deacons are spiritually mature men who serve the body of Christ at Calvary, insuring that

practical needs are being met in the name of Christ. They will do this through insuring that the practical needs of all believers are being met as a part of following Christ and living in community as well as personally ministering to those in need (where the person is not in a group who is meeting these needs, where the needs are beyond the groups wisdom or means, or when the group needs discipleship on what it means to meet the need in a spiritual way).

This will include:

1. Cultivating the believers at Calvary
 - To live out a life of serving others- knowing that meeting practical needs is a spiritual act of worship.
 - Building a culture where needs are being met in informal ways, secret ways, within groups, ministry teams, at every level as a part of body life.
2. Deacons personally serving those in the body of Christ (Deaconesses assist) through visits, meeting needs, sharing the Lord's Supper, etc.
 - Widows
 - Orphans
 - Shut-ins
 - Hospital patients
 - Single parents
 - Those not in a group or ministry team
 - Assisting groups or ministry teams with the wisdom of what to do, the resources, and the personal example as needed
 - Assisting the Elders in serving of the Lord's Supper
 - Assisting with Baptism
 - Discipleship on God honoring use of finances and property
3. Extending the care of Christ to those beyond the church body
 - Determining projects within the community to help widows, orphans, etc.
 - Assist those who come to church for financial assistance
 - Do this through the churches outreach ministries

3. Selection

Same process as for Elders and running concurrently with the following differences:

1. The qualifications are found in 1Timothy 3:8-13.
2. The selection of deacons is done by the deacons with final approval by the Elders.
3. Deacon candidates are mentored by a currently serving Deacon.

E. Ministry Staff

Men and women serving in ministry leadership positions who are not Elders, Deacons or Pastors. Their qualifications and responsibilities will be determined by the Elders.

F. Support Staff

Men and women who are serving in an official capacity, but not in a leadership position. Their qualifications and responsibilities will be determined by the Elders and the leader they support.

(August 4, 2006)