



Community Baptist Church
Somerset – New Jersey
732-246-1122
cbcofficesomersetnj@gmail.com
www.cbcnjfamily.org

Date: JULY 2016

Q&A SESSION: CBC CONSTITUTION TEAM & ELDER BOARD

1. What do you think are the duties/responsibilities of the Elder board?

The functions of an elder are given in great detail. They: □ Shepherd and care for the church of the Lord (Act 20:28; 1Ti 3:5; 1Pe 5:2) □ Are alert to protect the church from attacks, both from without and within (Acts 20:29-31) □ Lead and rule, but by guiding, not driving (1Thess. 5:12; 1Ti:5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1Pe. 5:3) □ Preach the word, teach sound doctrine, and refute those who contradict it (1Ti. 5:17; Titus 1:9-11) □ Moderate and arbitrate in doctrinal and ethical matters (Acts 15:5, 6; 16:4) □ Are an example to the flock by the life they lead (Heb. 13:7, 1Pe. 5:3) □ Seek to restore the believers who have been overtaken in any trespass (Gal. 6:1) □ Keep watch over the souls of Christians in the local assembly as those who will have to give account (Heb. 13:7) □ Exercise a ministry of prayer, especially with regard to the sick (Jas. 5:14, 15) □ Are involved in the care of poor saints (Acts 11:30) □ Share in the commendation of gifted men to the work to which God has “called” them (1Ti 4:14).

The elder's role is to Teach (feed), Protect, Lead, and Care: □ Teach (feed). □ The primarily role and first order of work for elders is teaching. Teaching is the proactive side of the ministry, giving what is needed for spiritual growth. Studying God's word and giving the right view of God. 1 Peter 5:1-4 “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that

fadeth not away. John 21:17 Jesus says to Peter, “feed my sheep (helping them to know Christ) (Acts 11:25-26 / Acts 15:1-2 / Acts 20:28 / 1Timothy 3:2 / 1Timothy 4:13 / Samuel 5:2 / Hosea 4:6) □ Protect the church. □ Elders must work to create a healthy environment; not a judgmental church. We are to watch out for the Church with humility, protecting it from false Teachers and internal fighting. Titus1:9-10 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: James 4:1 From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? □ Leading the church. □ Elders should take the lead, as they are the overseers of the church, the stewards of God’s church. The office of the elder is to be distinguished from the spiritual gift of the Pastor teacher. 1Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. □ Care. □ Elders are to watch and pray, being aware of the changing society and the church; plan and govern. They must clarify direction for the church, set goals, make decisions, give direction, correct failure, and effect change and motivate the congregation. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gift of leadership. Elders may function differently according to their gifting; they must love people, and be involved in their lives. 2 Cor.2:4 Paul wrote reminding the Corinthians “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love I have especially for you” We are to pray for practical needs and the sick’ James 5:14 Is any sick among you? Let them call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord Christ

2

Acts 20:34-35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak and to remember the words of Lord Jesus, how He said " It is more blessed to give than receive" Paul reminds the elders to work hard help the needy and be generous like the Lord Jesus Christ . Acts 20:29

2. What do you think is the appropriate number of Elders CBC needs and why?

These comments are based on 1 Ti. 3:1 and other scriptures noted. □ In the New Testament, the words bishop, overseer, elder and presbyter, all refer to the same person. Actually the word translated elder (presbuteros) is used to describe an older man, and not one who is necessarily a leader of a church (1 Ti. 5:1, Gk.), but at most other times “elder” describes a man recognized in the local church as one who exercises pastoral care among the people of God. □ The New Testament envisages bishops, or elders in every local church (Phil. 1:1). However, it would not be accurate to say that a church could not exist

without bishops. From Titus 1:5 it seems clear that there were young churches in Crete in which elders had not as yet been recognized. □ The Scripture does not specify any number of elders for a local church, though there is always a plurality. It's only a matter of how many men respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit in this matter. □ There is a tendency for some to think that this is a dignified, ecclesiastical office, entailing little or no responsibility, whereas overseer ship is actually a humble service among the people of God – it is work.

However, seven Elders may be considered appropriate for the size of our church. □ Each elder can take a section of the congregation under his wing to nurture and build a closer relationship with them. This would be approximately 40-45 members per elder. Bible study, praying and fellowshiping would be a good start in this process. □ Elders are required to know and be involved in the personal lives of the people; they are to sacrificially care for the needy. This could be a rotating assignment of 1 year to 18mths.

3. What responsibilities do you see the current constitution lacks for the board of elders?

□ The responsibility to establish Ad Hoc teams need to be clearer. □ There is no responsibility for mentoring the next generation. Although our church is providing programs for children and young adults we are not being effective in winning and making fruit bearing disciples of the next generation to follow Christ or take over as future leaders.

4. What responsibilities do you see the current constitution has that you think are important to keep?

□ All of the responsibilities listed in Article IX of the current constitution are in sync with the responsibilities outlined in the answers to Question 1 above.

5. What do you think are the greatest challenges for the Church?

1. Defending what we believe. 2. Resolving spiritual problems among the leadership. 3. Encouraging the need for a heart of repentance among the people. 4. Getting leaders to lead by example. This void is negatively impacting our church.

6. What do you see as an appropriate spiritual / governing structure for the church? Article 1V (The Church Government) in the current constitution may require additional Biblical alignment as identified below:

The appropriate spiritual and governing structure for the church is the plurality of godly leaders selected from the local church.

While many churches have over the years, adopted governance structures such as Deacons/Trustees-led, Council-led and even corporate-like CEO-led models, the New Testament clearly teaches the plurality of Elders structure as the only sound biblically-based model for the church.

A Plurality of Elders Pastor John McArthur gives a clear biblical insight on this subject. He states: “The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of God-ordained elders. Simply stated, this is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Nowhere in Scripture does one find a local assembly ruled by majority opinion or by a single pastor”.

Biblical Mandate for Plurality of Elders Governance Model: Several passages in the New Testament that confirm the words “elder” (presbuteros), “overseer” (episkopos), and “pastor” (poimen) all refer to the same office and are used interchangeably in scriptures even as found in Acts 20.

The Apostle Paul through the Holy Spirit clearly defined the ‘plurality of Elders’ as the governing structure in the local churches. He expressed the roles and qualifications in much detail than any other leadership role in the New Testament church. In Acts 20:28 as an example, the Apostle Paul when he assembled all the Elders (presbuteros) in his farewell message to the church in Ephesus boldly proclaimed: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [episkopos], to shepherd [poimaino] the church of God.”.

The Apostle Peter also writes In First Peter 5:1-2: “Therefore, I exhort the elders [presbuteros] among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd [poimaino] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [episkoepo] not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God.”

The Word of God clearly points to the “Plurality of Elders for a true New Testament, scripture-based governance structure for the local church. Other

creative and man-made governance may be appealing to reflect trendy cultural changes and corporate models but, they do not have any sound biblical or spiritual foundation in the Word of God.

7. What qualifications should be considered when selecting candidates for the elder board?

□ The qualifications of a bishop/elder are given in 1Ti. 3:2-7, Titus 1:5-9. These are God's standards for any who would exercise spiritual leadership in the local church. They stress four main prerequisites: a) Personal character b) The witness of the home c) Teaching aptitude d) A measure of experience

□ It is clear that in the early church, elders were appointed by the apostles and their representatives (Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5). This does not mean, however, that the apostles and their delegates had the power to make a man an elder. In order to become an elder there must be both divine enablement and human willingness. Only the Holy Spirit can make a man an elder (Acts 20:28),

4

but the man must aspire to the work (1 Ti 3:1). Thus, there must be this mingling of the divine and the human. □ In connection, several observations should be made: □ According to Acts 14:21, 23, after their work at Lystra was completed, Paul and Barnabas (as missionaries) went to Iconium and Antioch, where churches had already been established. Their purpose for visiting this time was to do follow-up work. They were never satisfied merely to preach the gospel and see souls won to the Lord. To them this was only the beginning. They then sought to build up the believers in their faith, especially by teaching them of the truth and its importance in God's program. □ New Testament elders were Godly mature men who exercised spiritual leadership in the local church. □ In the book of Acts, elders were not appointed when the church was first founded. Rather, it was when the apostle revisited the churches that this was done. In other words, during this intervening time there was opportunity for those who had been made elders by the Holy Spirit to become manifest. □ Elders were appointed by the apostles and their delegates. At this time, the New Testament was not yet written to give explicit instructions concerning the qualifications of elders. The apostles knew what the qualifications were, however, and they were able to single out the men in it who meet the scriptural requirements. □ We do not have apostles today to appoint elders. However, we do have the qualifications of elders in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Therefore, each local assembly should be able to recognize those men in it who meet God's requirements as elders. □ The apostle Paul called himself an elder (1Pt:5:1). In this verse, Peter introduces himself as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the impending glory. Then he says

“Fellow elder” – what a far cry from claiming to be the supreme leader of a church. Peter saw the Shepherd die for the sheep and the memory of such love must have constrained him to care for them as the faithful under shepherd. Until Christ returns, the commission remains “Feed My lambs” ... “Tend My sheep.” (John 21: 15-17). To me this is the most important question which Jesus asked Peter, and elders must come to answer it for themselves. We also should be looking at verses 2-5. Some good points to notice are that: □ Overseeing the flock is not a work into which men are coerced by election or appointment. □ The Holy Spirit provides the burden and ability, and the elders must respond with a willing heart, as also stated in 1 Ti 3:1. If a man desires the position of an elder, “he desires a good work”. □ So, as mentioned above, coupled with divine enablement must be human willingness. □ Elders should be example, not dictators. They should be walking in front of the flock, not driving from behind. They should not treat the flock as if it belongs to them. This strikes at the very heart of authoritarianism. □ The Spiritual qualifications are provided in 1 Timothy 3:2. Above reproach, Bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach. □ Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; □ Personal desire; if any man aspires the office of overseer (elder) it's a fine work he desires to do. The starting point is a spiritual desire, anyone that has a desire for eldership; that person should demonstrate Christian living in action. The person should be giving much time to loving and caring for people and studying of the scriptures. This is not a Board position; it is a spirit lead task. And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. (1 Timothy 3:1-7 / Titus 1:5-9 / 1 Peter 5:1-3 / Acts 20:28 / 1 Timothy 3:1 / Jer:3:15) Above reproach is key!

8. What does the following statement mean to you “Elders shall have oversight responsibilities for the other boards and Teams”?

□ 1 Peter 5:2-3 Peter carefully describes how the elders are to serve exercising oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God, and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; not lording over those allotted to their charge.

5

□ Being good examples to the body of Christ, providing spiritual oversight. The word of God speaks of elders in the plural who share in the overall governance of the church.

9. Nominating Team – what is the Board’s view regarding formal participation (i.e. elected membership) on the Nominating Team by one or more members

of the Elder Board ? What functions does the Board foresee Elder(s) performing on the Nominating Team?

□ There should be at least one, but preferably two elders on the team. □ As mentioned in item 1 above, the elders are to shepherd the people. In 2 Sam. 5:2: Ps. 78:71, 72, to shepherd means to lead, pastor or to govern. Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5 say the elders are to shepherd the church of God. Thus, to shepherd the local church means, to lead the church. In Titus 1:7, Paul's mandate that elders be morally and spiritually above reproach is because they are God's steward. That is, elders are household managers, who are responsible for people, property and finances. In 1 Peter 5:1 and 2, Peter combines the concepts of shepherding and overseeing when he exhorts the elders to do their duty. □ The elders must clarify direction and beliefs for the flock by setting goals, making decisions, giving direction, correcting failures, affecting change, and motivating people. This is particular important in choosing future CBC leaders, and the elders have the discernment to recognize the spirituality of future leaders. This does not imply that only the elders have this ability. Else, only elders would be allowed to serve in the Nominating Team. However, by and large, chosen elders should recognize the gifts in others through fervent prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit. □ The elders will perform the same functions as the rest of the team (e.g., identify and interview candidates) but will primarily provide the spiritual discernment for the team.

10. Elected positions term limits dichotomy in current Constitution – Members of the Nominating Team have a specific term limit without re-election. However, all other elected positions (Deacons, Elders & Trustees) do not – office holders can be reelected indefinitely – i.e. for life. Does the Elder Board have an opinion regarding this inconsistency & topic of reelection term limits?

□ There doesn't appear to be a biblical mandate for term limits for any leadership position. □ However, a single individual or a group of individuals in the Nominating Team should not be placed in the position to effect the nominations of every candidate for all the offices, for all times. If the members of this team have no term limit, they would have the ability to influence all offices in the church, forever, notwithstanding the fact that its members are subject to congregational vote. An elder, deacon, or trustee, however, can only influence its own office, when he or she is in that position.