

Harvest Community Church

Elder Board Roles and Responsibilities

Harvest is a non-denominational community church and as such the elders hold the ultimate responsibility before God for the shepherding and well being of this particular body of believers. Elders, with diligence and discernment, must demonstrate sensitivity to God’s leading, competence in visionary leadership and strategic thinking, while possessing the character qualities described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Elders and staff are at the heart of service to the local church. The leadership model used at Harvest (**pictured below**) distinguishes the respective responsibilities for each. The elder board is primarily accountable for establishing vision and mission of Harvest and creating policies that foster achievement of those purposes and overarching goals. This is called “strategic thinking.”

The Church staff is primarily accountable for initiating and implementing a strategic plan, within the policy framework, for the fulfillment of the vision and mission. This is called “strategic planning. The staff is also responsible for managing church operations in alignment with policies set forth by the elders and the strategic plan. The elders’ intend to establish good policies, monitor progress toward the vision and mission, and avoid meddling in day-to-day operations of the church.



POLICY LEADERSHIP

Policies reflect the elders’ collective voice. Using this model, the elders lead through key leadership policies that guide decisions within the church. This model of leadership provides a framework for consistency from year to year as members of the eldership change.

This is a servant leadership approach and the origin for this leadership style is in Jesus Christ who said, “Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant.” Good leaders are good servants first.

Leading with this model demands proactive, rather than reactive, service by the elders. It calls for empowerment and delegation consistent with the biblical command (Ephesians 4:11-16) that leaders seek to prepare members of the church for ministry. It entrusts people, but monitors progress. In such leadership, the church can make quicker progress toward fulfilling its mission and achieving its vision.

COMPONENTS OF THE ELDERS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1. Values**—The elders lead based on a simple, but well-defined set of values that provide a spiritual framework for decision-making across the work of the local church. The elders model these values.
- 2. Unity**—For any given leadership issue, the elders speak with a single voice or they do not speak at all. This single-mindedness stems from a fundamental belief that consensus on key leadership issues leads to stronger and better decisions for the church.
- 3. Decisions**—Normally, the elders make few decisions because they are focused primarily on high-level policy issues. When a high-level decision is needed, consensus is required. Sometimes this means that policy refinements are addressed as part of the decision-making process. While this may take longer than “voting,” it elicits innovation and values the input from everyone. In the end, stronger decisions are made, motivation is increased, and division is avoided.
- 4. Empowerment**—In more traditional settings elders are accustomed to giving permission to proposed plans, ideas, and requests that are brought to them. This can limit the creativity, agility, and responsibility of those in frontline ministry. At Harvest the elders establish vision, define boundaries and set an empowerment environment for people to use their God-given talents, resources, and gifts.
- 5. Policies**—The elders board at Harvest is committed to speaking with one voice and expressing itself through policy. These policies provide clear and steady direction as well as freedom and empowerment for progress.
- 6. Vision**—The elders focus on clarifying and documenting the church’s vision, realizing that their vision must come from God.
- 7. Limitations**—All groups need boundaries (God demonstrated this with the Ten Commandments). Through limitations policies, the elders actually empower the senior pastor, staff, and volunteers to use all reasonable, legal, ethical, and prudent means and resources to make progress toward the shared vision and mission.

- 8. Design**—Looking always to the Scripture, elders design what they expect of themselves as a team by proactively addressing such issues as values, norms for personal behavior, elder responsibilities, and job products. While all policies are subject to change, the elders constantly recognize such policies are considered binding and basic to their structure and behaviors for leading.
- 9. Personnel**—The elders are responsible for one employee, the senior pastor, who also serves as a full member of the elder team. They empower staff through this direct linkage.
- 10. Metrics**—Performance is monitored rigorously, but monitoring is aimed primarily at measuring and fostering progress toward the vision and mission and living out the values of the church.

Source: York, G, Martin, J & Richards, R. . (2005). A guide to effective Christian leadership. *Christian Standard*. Available 7/18/08 online at: Source:
<http://www.christianstandard.com/articledisplay.asp?id=16>