



**SIBURT  
INSTITUTE**  
*for Church Ministry*

# Church Governance

Exploring a variety of models for  
elder-minister relationships and  
leadership structures

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# SECTION A

## **Central Church of Christ Amarillo, TX**

Allan Stanglin & Steve Rogers

# Central Church of Christ

## Statement of Relationship

“Leadership” at Central means both elders and ministers in a collaborative partnership. We’re committed to developing equal relationships of trust in which we validate and put to use the unique gifts of our leaders and, at the same time, guard against imposing roles and assigning functions to our leaders for which they’re simply not gifted. All elders and ministers are invited to and encouraged to attend and participate in all leadership meetings. Everyone in the room has an equal voice and is encouraged to express his/her views and opinions. We’re continually seeking a shared wisdom that we feel allows for a truer discernment of God’s voice for Central.

## Model of Governance

We refer to our governance model at Central as a partnership, a collaborative leadership that includes and values all elders, ministers, and deacons. As with most good things, our system has evolved over time and through experiences that run the spectrum from horrible to fabulous. It’s not a perfect model; but it seems to work well for us.

- **Elders** – We generally have right around a dozen shepherds serving at a time, ordaining new elders every four to six years whether we need to or not. We meet twice per month, on Wednesday nights, to pray for the congregation and to address any congregational needs. The chairmanship rotates among the elders every six months. The chairman sets each meeting’s agenda with the preaching minister, runs the meetings, and serves as the first contact and spokesman during his six months chairmanship. Our shepherds also honor a sabbatical policy: each elder takes a one year break once he’s served for six years (see the attached policy).
- **Ministers** – We employ ten full-time and part-time ministers at Central and they are all invited and expected to attend each leadership meeting. Elders and ministers serve the congregation together; the term “leadership” at Central always means both elders and ministers. Everyone in the room has an equal voice and is encouraged to share his/her views and opinions. We practice recognizing and empowering all the diverse gifts of the Spirit among our leadership. It’s unstated, but ministers don’t vote in our meetings; only elders vote, following a period of open discussion with input from all present. However, no one feels slighted. We all feel equal and comfortable with the protocol.
- **Management Cluster** – The policy-making, problem-solving, and budget-approving arm of our leadership is made up of three elders (the current chairman and two at-large elders on two-year rotations), two ministers (preaching minister and associate minister), and the chairman of the deacons. We meet once per month on a Wednesday night. The associate minister sets the agenda in conjunction with the other five members and runs the meetings. This is mainly the day-to-day, week-to-week business of the congregation. All decisions are reported to the leadership. Major congregational matters are generally vetted first by the management cluster, which then makes a recommendation to the full leadership for final decisions. The management cluster allows the majority of our elders

to spend the bulk of their time concentrating on pastoral duties, while the rotations insure that no one is left out of the nitty gritty details for too long at a time.

- **Deacons** – Central mainly ordains its deacons on an as-needed basis for a particular job that needs to be done or a committee that needs to be formed. Once the task is completed, the deacon is publically thanked and relieved of his duties. Our finance deacons who oversee the church's money tend to serve longer terms; our special project deacons are in there for shorter lengths. We usually have a total of six to ten deacons serving together at any one time. The deacons and the management cluster select the chairman of the deacons on an annual basis. That deacon runs the monthly deacons meetings, represents the deacons at all management cluster and elders meetings, and is encouraged to fully participate in all discussions.

We have found this model to be very beneficial in helping us validate and put to use the unique spiritual gifts of our leaders and, at the same time, guard against imposing roles and assigning functions to our leaders for which they're simply not gifted. We've got some ground to still cover on that front, but the trust in one another this model fosters will help us get there.

# **SECTION B**

## **Highland Oaks Church of Christ Dallas, TX**

**Pat Bills & Barry Packer**

# Highland Oaks Church of Christ

## Statement of Relationship

In 2009 the Highland Oaks Church of Christ (HOCC) was exhausted and searching for a fresh direction. In short, the previous Lead Minister (and preacher) departed amidst division and controversy. The church was steeped in debt, the ministry staff was fractured, and the congregation was emotionally drained and anxious for a new start. One way forward was the desire for a clear shift in how the Elder group and preacher worked together. Thus, a chief desire of the HOCC Elders was to hire a new Lead Minister/preacher who would strive for relational partnership rather than managerial hierarchy.

In addition to the Elder's desire, I, as a young minister looking for my first preaching post, also desired an Elder group who would shepherd my heart and family. I wanted an Eldership to see my newfound vocation through the lens of "person" before "employee." In short, I wanted leaders to be "shepherds" before "elders"; men who would tend to my soul while offering wise guidance for my new journey.

Since my arrival in 2009 as Lead Minister of the HOCC, I have had the opportunity to explore a renewed relationship between the Elder group and myself. Throughout the interview process the potential for this relationship was discussed at length. In particular, there was an opportunity to examine such questions as:

- How could we work towards relational trust in light of past relationships between the Elder group and preacher at the HOCC?
- Are there specific practices we could adopt that foster a relationship that honors Christ-like conduct?
- Can the current governance structure of the HOCC sustain a relational partnership between the Elders and preacher?
- What theological principles ought to serve as guideposts for a gospel-centered relationship between Elders and preacher?

I am pleased to announce we have grown in our relationship together in these last six years. Even more, I would characterize the relationship I have with the shepherds of the HOCC with words like: family, healthy, trusting, respect, and interdependent. The relationship we enjoy is fostered by regular meetings "outside of the Elder meeting," natural (as opposed to forced) correspondence by phone and text, and a genuine appreciation for one another and the respective "burden" we carry. Moreover, the relational partnership we have is far from perfect or without occasional strain. There are certainly differences of opinion, opportunities for conflict, and occasions of theological difference. Yet, the relationship remains intact and we are a team that strives to work alongside of one another for the sake of our mission to be mature followers of Jesus. This relational trust takes intentional time, commitment to being for one another, and a belief that God expects us to lead together for the sake of our church family. In sum, the Elder and Lead Minister at the HOCC are working in and towards a beautiful partnership as we navigate the challenges of being the church for our time and place.

## Model of Governance

Many church members have the mistaken assumption that all elder groups function alike. That could not be further from the truth. While we in Churches of Christ have historically placed a high value on “doing Bible things in Bible ways,” frankly there is little information in the Bible that actually describes how elders should function. We are given various lists of the qualities spiritual leaders should possess. And we have a degree of clarity about the specific functions we are to perform. But there is no clear and explicit teaching in the Bible that expressly describes *how* a group of elders are to function.

Our experience has led us to believe that most elders groups operate on the basis of uninformed tradition and habit. Somewhere in the past, the typical church selected a group of elders. And the people who served as elders somehow developed what they felt were workable elder activities. Over time these activities and practices became traditions and habits. Whenever new elders are chosen, they come on board and observe the culture of the current elder group and the role it plays. They become enculturated, function the same way, and the situation perpetuates itself, usually without challenge. Here are five ways that most elder groups typically function:

1. Some elder groups function as rubber stamps. This is the extreme hands-off, passive approach to leadership. Of all the ways elder groups may function, this requires the least involvement and time commitment. The elders simply approve whatever the minister or ministers, or perhaps the “head elder” or patriarch in the church wants.
2. Some elder groups feel that their job is to keep an eye on the ministers. They function primarily as watchdogs or “guardians of the gate.” Initially you might assume this involves healthy accountability or legitimate monitoring of ministerial performance, but it’s more than that. It’s about control and preserving the status quo.
3. Though most aren’t aware of it, many elder groups believe that their purpose is to keep everybody happy for the sake of peace and church unity. While this is true in both small and large churches, it’s characteristic of many small churches that pride themselves on being one happy family. The elder group’s goal is to keep it that way.
4. There are some elders who believe that their job is to represent the various groups within the church, to see that their interests are protected at the elder group level. They view their function or role as involved representatives in a church that they believe is a representative democracy—at least that’s been their tradition. But elders are not called to lead or represent various constituent groups within the church.
5. There are some elder groups, particularly in smaller churches, who tend to micromanage the church. It is the most proactive, hands-on, time-consuming elder group approach. The problem with micromanaging is that it will guarantee that the church will remain small and ineffective. In many cases it reveals a lack of trust in the staff, creates leadership and operational bottlenecks, and stifles creativity. It also guarantees that the elder group will not deal with the more important issues, such as God’s vision and direction for the church.



So, if the elder group at Highland Oaks does not function the way most elder groups function, how do we see our role? We seek to proactively address what we understand to be the two primary functions of elders: *shepherding* and *overseeing*.

Much could be said about the shepherding function, but that is not the purpose of this paper. Instead, this paper is designed to describe for you the model that we use to address our oversight responsibility. First of all, this model is not a biblical model in that it is clearly spelled out in Scripture. As we have indicated, there is no model or approach that is prescribed for all elder groups to follow. It is, however, one that we have chosen to follow because we believe it has an effective balance of healthy delegation to our ministry staff with appropriate accountability for the elder group. It is a governance model taken from the non-profit world, and we believe it allows us to provide the oversight function that has been entrusted to us as elders. It is the Policy Governance® model, based on the writings of John Carver.

This model is not designed to dictate a specific structure, but rather it is based upon several universal principles that can be appropriately applied to a given organization or church. These principles, when consistently applied, allow an elder group to provide effective oversight for the church it leads, thus freeing it to spend the majority of its time on shepherding the church family that has been entrusted to its care. So let's explore the principles by which we as an elder group function.

### **Principle #1 - Ownership**

There is no question that the elders as a group are accountable to the members of the Highland Oaks church. But there is a greater accountability, and that is accountability to Jesus Christ, who is the true Head of His church. It is from Jesus that we derive our authority, and it is to Him that we are accountable. It is from Jesus Christ that we receive insight and wisdom and direction for His church. We are not ultimately accountable to the Highland Oaks members or even the ministry staff; we are accountable to Jesus Christ and we speak on His behalf. Thus, it is vitally important that we as a group of elders are intimately connected to our Head, Jesus Christ. Only when we are closely united with Him will we truly provide leadership for the church on His behalf.

### **Principle #2 - Oversight Position**

The role of the elder group is that of overseer. We have a responsibility, under the Headship of Jesus Christ, to provide leadership for the entire church. We are ultimately accountable to Jesus for the success or failure of the church. Thus, we have the responsibility to oversee, or govern, everything that takes place at Highland Oaks. It is important to note that the elder group—not the ministers—bear full and direct responsibility for everything that takes place within the local church.

### **Principle #3 - Elder Holism**

If the elders are to lead, then on any given issue we must speak with one voice. The strength of this single voice arises from the diversity of viewpoints that all elders bring to the group, as well as from the way in which the elder group focuses this diversity into a unified message. The authority of elders, therefore, is not as individuals, but as a group, a corporate entity entrusted to oversee and lead the church. This one-voice principle does not mean that

there should be unanimity or lack of diversity among the elders. On the contrary, differences among individual elders are not only to be respected, but also encouraged. Rarely will a decision be unanimous. However, those elders who lose a vote must accept that the elder group has spoken and that its decisions must be implemented as decided. Thus, it is important to remember that we as individual elders have no authority; it is the elder group that has it all.

#### **Principle #4 – Overseeing by Policy**

The word “policy” is often used in various types of organizations, particularly among those who are leaders. But seldom is the term clearly defined, thus leading to confusion when the word is used. So, for the sake of clarity, the Policy Governance® model defines policy as the value or perspective that underlies action, but it goes on to delineate strict rules as to its form. Policies established in a local church should be the heartfelt expression of the elders as a group. Policies created under this model should embody the elders’ beliefs, commitments, values, and vision, all under the umbrella of the Headship of Jesus Christ. The elders’ collective philosophy, reflecting the heart of Jesus, should be central to elder policy. There are four categories of elder policy: *Ends*, *Staff Limitations*, *Elder-Staff Delegation*, and *Elder Process*.

#### **Principle #5 – Policy “Sizes”**

The elder group at Highland Oaks has formulated policy by determining the broadest values before progressing to more narrow ones. Policies may be about very important, large issues, or they may be about less important, smaller issues. They can be stated broadly, or more narrowly. The advantage of stating values broadly is that such a statement is inclusive of all smaller statements. The disadvantage, of course, is that the broader the statement, the greater is the range of interpretation that can be given to it. A “large” policy decision will contain all smaller, related policies. For example, think of policy sizes as series of nesting bowls, each bowl contained within a larger bowl. The largest bowl symbolizes the broadest policy. In the same way that the largest nesting bowl holds all the other bowls, so the broadest policy envelops every policy within it. Thus, each of the four sections of our policy manual begins with a very broad statement that can be referred to as the global policy, within which all other policies are contained.

#### **Principle #6 – Ends Policies**

Ends policies are at the very heart of who we are as a church. These policies focus on why the Highland Oaks church exists. What is our purpose? What difference are we going to make in the world? *Ends* is a peculiar word invented to denote a peculiar concept. No other word in our language (*goal*, *result*, *outcome*, *product*) says quite enough to cover the full meaning of *Ends*. Ends policies define three things: (1) What results are to be achieved? (2) For which people? (3) At what cost? They are not about what a church does—that is, the activities we engage in. Rather, they are about the impact we intend to have.

## **Principle #7 – Staff Limitations Policies**

This category of policy addresses all of the operational means that take place within the church—that is, all of the ministries and activities that are put in place to see that the Ends are accomplished. The elders are not only responsible for seeing that the Ends are achieved; we are also accountable for the way the church conducts itself. The church’s conduct, activities, methods, and practices are its “means” rather than its ends. So it’s important to understand that budgets, ministries, personnel policies, building & grounds, equipment, and a host of other matters that traditionally consume many elder groups are staff means issues. We are delegating these things to the staff, but we ultimately are responsible for them.

So how do we address these staff means issues appropriately without becoming mired in the details and distracted from our primary function of shepherding the flock that God has entrusted to our care? First of all, we must resist the temptation to prescribe staff means. In other words, we as elders do not tell the staff how to do their job. And second, we tell the Lead Minister, in writing, which staff means would be unacceptable, unapprovable, or off limits. In other words, we explicitly state what kind of means we will not accept. We establish boundaries or parameters, foul lines, or riverbanks — a “don’t do it” list, if you will. That may initially sound a little odd and rather negative. But ironically, this verbally negative language is psychologically positive because it allows a freedom, the boundaries of which need not be guessed. This action by the elders is like building an enclosure within which freedom, creativity, and action are allowed and even encouraged.

## **Principle #8 – Elder Process Policies**

It is in the policy category of Elder Process that the elder group states what it expects of itself. It describes how the elder group will conduct itself and perform its own job. It formally states what most elder groups never get around to writing, much less even discussing. It addresses such things as: oversight style, elder group job description, role of the chairman, elders’ responsibilities, elders’ code of conduct.

## **Principle #9 – Elder-Staff Delegation Policies**

This category of elder policy is intended to describe how the elder group is linked with the staff. It does not articulate what is being delegated—that is spelled out in the Ends and Staff Limitations policies. Instead, it describes the nature of the delegation and how that delegation takes place. One policy commits the elder group to delegate to our staff only through one individual. That individual currently is Pat Bills, our Lead Minister. Another policy outlines the job products of our Lead Minister. And yet another policy outlines how evaluation of the Lead Minister’s performance will take place.

I should add that the job products of the Lead Minister are rather simple to define and evaluate: the Lead Minister is responsible to ensure that the congregation as a whole (1) accomplishes expectations as set out by the elder group in its Ends policies and (2) does not engage in the means which the elder group has prohibited in its Staff Limitations policies.

## **Principle #10 – Monitoring**

When the elder group has told our Lead Minister to achieve certain ends without violating certain staff limitations, monitoring performance becomes no less—and no more—than checking actual performance against these two sets of expectations. Good monitoring is necessary if we as elders are to relax about operational matters and seriously attend to our shepherding responsibilities. In this approach to oversight, monitoring is absolutely essential, and it must be conducted only against existing elder-stated criteria in the Ends and Staff Limitations policies. Pre-established criteria are required for good monitoring. Having set the criteria, we must demand information that directly addresses these criteria. Such information will provide data and evidence that demonstrates compliance with the policies established.

The following are benefits to using the Policy Governance® model to fulfill our oversight responsibilities:

1. Elders can focus on the future.
2. Elders can provide meaningful oversight of the congregation without meddling in staff activities.
3. Ministers are empowered to lead the congregation.
4. Elders are freed to focus their time and energy on shepherding responsibilities.
5. The elders and minister know what is required of them.

# SECTION C

## **North Davis Church of Christ Arlington, TX**

Jeff Hubbard & Scott Souder

# North Davis Church of Christ

## Statement of Relationship

The Elders and Ministers at North Davis Church of Christ seek to have a transparent, strong, and deep relationship with one another. Together, both groups, lead our congregation spiritually, emotionally, and physically in an attempt to be a missional presence in Arlington. Our hope is that by trusting wholeheartedly and communicating effectively, we can lead our members into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. While we all come from different places physically, spiritually, and emotionally, we are united in our belief that our impact on the North Davis family is more effective when we function as a team rather than individuals. Thus we strive to be united in our leadership as we mentor, encourage, and shepherd the families under our care.

Our Eldership is made up of twelve faithful Christian men. Eight of these men comprise our "*Shepherding Team*" that concentrates on the pastoral care (*assured and provided care*) our members. Consequently, the other four Elders comprise part of our "*Oversight Team*" that deals more with the administrative decisions that occur in the normal rhythms in the life of North Davis. Joining these four men on the Oversight Team is our Executive Administrator and our Preaching Minister. These two teams meet frequently to adhere to their duties. Success is based on their willingness to communicate and trust each other with the responsibilities entrusted in to each team. There are certain decisions that the Eldership as a whole reserves the right to discuss, decide, and implement on their own without the input of the Ministers or Staff. Our "*Leadership Team*" (*Elders and Ministers*) meets about once a month to make sure we are all on the same page regarding people, events, decisions, dreams, and goals.

## Model of Governance

The governance model at North Davis Church of Christ was established through a combination of advice and suggestions from other congregational models, church consultants, and a study of the book *Me to We* by Alan Nelson. The model we currently have has been in place since November of 2012. It was adapted after much prayer and discussion among the ND Elders, Ministers, and Staff. The most important elements, that our model was built upon, are **TRUST** and **COMMUNICATION**. These are achieved through relationship building among our Leadership Team (*Elders, Ministers, Staff*) over time through prayer, accountability, and teambuilding activities. Our particular model divides our Leadership Team into three groups:

- Our *Oversight Team* is made up of four administratively gifted Elders, our Executive Administrator, and our Preaching Minister. This team is commissioned to make decisions on the administrative decisions that occur within the normal rhythms of North Davis Church. They meet regularly to discuss the topics that require their attention such as: building maintenance, staffing issues and yearly reviews, Missions opportunities, etc.. The most important key to the functionality of this team is their ability to report back to the rest of the Leadership Team their decisions and recommendations. If a whole Leadership Team consensus is needed on a particular decision, it is the Oversight

Team's responsibility to seek out that feedback and help facilitate a decision from the entire Leadership Team.

- Our *Shepherding Team* is made up for eight pastorally gifted Elders. This team is commissioned to pastor and mentor the North Davis flock. They meet regularly to discuss "family issues" and to pray over the North Davis members. It is the Shepherding Team's responsibility to let the entire Leadership Team know if a particular individual or family at North Davis is needing special attention and prayers. **NOTE:** Each North Davis member is assigned into a Shepherding Group attended to by one of our twelve Elders. While the Elders in the Shepherding are responsible for the care of most of the flock, the Elders on the Oversight Team are also assigned some individuals and/or families to care after. It is also important to note that it is the Preaching Minister's job to shepherd the Elders and their wives.
- Our *Ministry Staff* is made up of our four ministers and four support staff. This team is commissioned to attend to the day to day decisions and facilitation of the ministries at North Davis. The Ministry Staff must be intentional about their communication to the entire Leadership Team so that everyone is aware of what is happening within ministries at North Davis. This Ministry Staff meets weekly to plan, dream, implement, and maintain the individual ministries at ND. This model has worked well for us as it has utilized the individual gifts of each member.

Each person has a role and each role is important. We meet as an entire Leadership Team about every 4-6 weeks to report back about people, projects, and plans. Our meetings are bathed in prayer as we attribute our successes to the guiding of the Spirit. We realize that we are much stronger corporately than we are individually thus we sharpen each other as we strive to lead the members of North Davis.

# SECTION D

## **Preston Road Church of Christ Dallas, TX**

Wade Hodges & Larry Pearson



# Preston Road Church of Christ

## Statement of Relationship

### Operational Principles for Decision Making and Elder/Minister/Staff Relationships

- Our system is based on trust, humility, common sense and grace.
- The elders must trust the Chair, Senior Minister, DFO and Staff. The Staff must trust the Senior Minister, DFO, Chair and Elders.
- Every position in the org chart requires the common sense to know when to bump a decision up to the next level, the humility to ask for input from others and the grace to forgive each other when we make a mistake.
- Our model requires significant collaboration between the Chair, Senior Minister, DFO and Executive Minister. If any one of these relationships breaks down our model is compromised.

## Model of Governance

- **Elders** – The ultimate authority for the church resides with the Elders as a body. Elders are periodically ratified by the church members. The Elders meet monthly and additionally as needed. The Elders monthly meeting time is reserved for spiritual matters, prayer and pastoral conversations concerning the flock, annual budget approval, encouraging staff, and discussing issues that might be divisive to the church. Additional meeting times are allotted for vision casting, theological discussions, goal setting, etc.
- **Chair of the Elders** – Elected by the Elders and is the primary liaison between Senior Minister, Director of Finance and Operations and elders between meetings. Works with Senior Minister and Executive Minister to determine agenda for monthly meetings, gives assignments to Elders and occasionally establishes committees or work group to deal with due diligence needed for various topics. He works to build consensus among elders and always acts with input of full Eldership.
- **Senior Minister** – The Senior Minister is selected by the Elders. Responsible for the staff ministers and all related ministries and reports to the Chair of the Elders.
- **Director of Finance and Operations** – Selected by the Elders. Responsible for all finance and operations including facilities and reports to the Chair of the Elders.
- **Executive Minister** – Responsible for the administrative staff, day to day operations of church business, liaison to Ministry leaders and reports to the Senior Minister.

# SECTION E

## Appendices

# Appendix 1

## Central Church of Christ

### Elder Sabbatical

#### Reasons for Sabbatical

1. The primary motivation for sabbatical is to provide a specific time for spiritual reflection, prayer, and renewal. There are several biblical references to Jesus taking time away for this kind of renewal:  
Matt. 14:23 "After he dismissed them, he went up on the mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone."  
Luke 5:15-16 "Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sickness. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."
2. Provides a hedge against the temptations of power, popularity and control.
3. Provides a break from formal elder duties and assignments.

#### Suggestions while on Sabbatical

1. Theological reflection on the role of shepherds and how you have functioned in that role with a mentor, elder, or spiritual director on a regular basis.
2. Retreat with the elders/staff
3. Meet with elders regularly, either formally (class, small group...) or informally (lunch, coffee...)
4. This time of spiritual renewal may include workshops and/or leadership conferences
5. Pray for current elders

#### Suggestions after Sabbatical

1. After sabbatical, a debriefing with the leadership is suggested in order to reflect on the time spent away, and make suggestions for others.

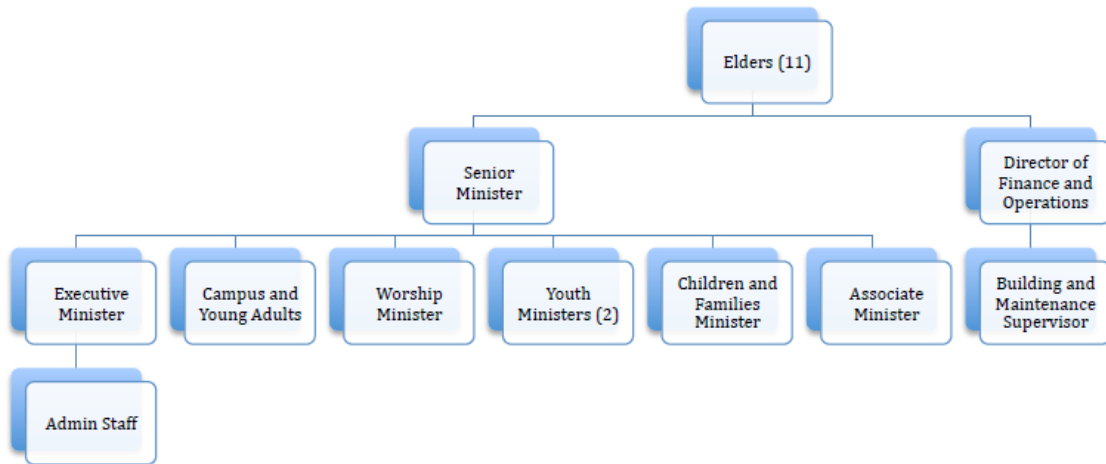
#### The Plan

1. Since the time is meant to be a period of spiritual renewal, all elders are strongly encouraged to take a one year sabbatical.
2. It is recommended that up to two elders at a time take a sabbatical after serving for six years and every six years thereafter.
3. While it is the intent for a sabbatical to be taken after six years, there may be circumstances in which a sabbatical after six years does not fit the schedule of an elder or the church. Therefore, an elder can wait longer than six years. However, in order to limit the number of elders on sabbatical at the same time to two, an elder who has served for six years and wants to take a sabbatical on schedule will be given first priority. Otherwise, priority will be given to the elder with the most time served.

4. There may be extenuating circumstances in which an elder needs to take a sabbatical at a time other than on his six year schedule. In that case, the leadership has the flexibility to allow such a request.
5. While an elder is on sabbatical, he will continue to be listed in all publications, i.e. bulletin, website, etc. as an elder, but will be denoted as “on sabbatical.”
6. Elders should communicate with the leadership and the class he is shepherding regarding his intention to continue to shepherd that class while he is on sabbatical.
7. The sabbatical will be from July 1 thru June 30.
8. This document shall be reviewed annually on or about April 1 each year to determine the sabbatical elder(s) for that year.

# Appendix 2

## Preston Road Church of Christ Organizational Chart



# SECTION F

## **First Colony Church of Christ Sugar Land, TX**

**Matt Davis & Bret Gowens**

# First Colony Church of Christ

## Statement of Relationship

First Colony operates under a trust model of governance that is staff directed and elder protected. The Administrative Board has ultimate responsibility for the legal, missional and financial well-being of the church. Having said that, we understand that our staff are all professional and trained for the various aspects of their ministries. The Senior Minister and Executive Minister have been given the freedom to manage, implement and carry out the vision of the church. All ministry functions are seeded to them and they in turn are responsible for the ultimate success of the areas we invest our time talents and resources. We believe that there must be trust, love and grace for any relationship to thrive and grow, including a church. We are in partnership with each other and operate from a standpoint of "yes" instead of "no" or an approval model.

It is important to note that there is no one church model or structure set forth in scripture. There is no one way of doing church leadership, no set rigid pattern that is workable for every setting. Many churches, in a noble effort to increase the care and feeding of the flock, have gone to a "large eldership" model – which is a wonderful model for shepherding. We believe the primary role of an Elder is to shepherd and promote the spiritual development of church members.

Unfortunately, a large group of shepherds can become a large group of managers which results in stalemates, fractures, competing visions, eternal meetings, etc., causing many churches to return back to smaller elderships. Rather than either/or, the early church and many churches since have opted for a both/and approach. Practically, this looks like every Elder serving as a shepherd with a select few - who have the giftedness and willingness - also serving as Administrative Elders. These Administrative Elders are involved in the policy and direction of the church as a whole.

Scripture References: Ephesians 4:11-12 & I Timothy 5:17-18

## Model of Governance

**Administrative Board of the Elders.** The Administrative Board of the Elders (Administrative Board) manages the affairs of First Colony Church of Christ. The Board directly supervises the Senior Staff through the Senior Minister.

**Senior Staff.** The Senior Staff – Senior Minister, Executive Minister and CFO – oversee all campuses of First Colony Church of Christ.

**Ministry Staff, Program Staff & Office Staff.** The Ministry Staff, Program Staff and Office Staff develop and direct the ministry programs of the church.

**Volunteers.** First Colony relies heavily upon volunteers and volunteer leadership. These volunteers follow the leadership of the Ministry Staff, Program Staff & Office Staff.

**Shepherding Elders.** The First Colony Church of Christ has Shepherding Elders. The Shepherding Elders are charged with caring for the church, primarily through Connection Groups. The Elders assist in pastoral care, provide spiritual direction for members and provide high capacity lay leadership. The First Colony Shepherding Elders work closely with the Staff Elder, Senior Minister and Executive Minister and fall under the direction of the Administrative Board.

**Connection Group Leaders.** Connection Group Leaders are the link between Shepherding Elders and people in need. Group leaders are mentored by a Shepherding Elder on pastoral matters and work closely with the First Colony staff.



# SECTION G

## **New Beginnings Church Houston, TX**

Tom Parish & Mark Waltenbaugh

# New Beginnings Church

## Statement of Relationship

- The Senior Pastor is the only employee of the Elders.
- All other employees are under the supervision of the Senior Pastor.
- Elders direct the Senior Pastor through Ends Policies which state which results are to be achieved, for which people, and at what cost.
- The Elders create Limitations Policies that state specific practices or methods that are unacceptable in the implementation of the Ends Policies.
- The Senior Pastor provides the Elders his “reasonable” interpretation of the Ends Policies and Limitations Policies in writing.
- The Elders provide direction to the Senior Pastor through group decisions (no individual elder is permitted to direct the Sr. Pastor or staff outside an Elder group decision).
- The Elders continue to have access to all staff members for questions, conversations, or feedback that relates to specific area of ministry but may not direct the staff except through the Senior Pastor.
- Senior Pastor performance is evaluated through Monitoring Reports related to the Ends Policies which are provided by the Sr. Pastor to the Elders under a specific reporting schedule.
- Elders can ask for a monitoring report at any time they feel it necessary.

## Model of Governance

The New Beginnings Church Elder Group, under the authority of Jesus Christ and on behalf of the members of NBC, provides oversight and shepherding so that New Beginnings Church will be a community that will love and glorify God, live and love like Jesus, and be led by the Holy Spirit, at a cost that demonstrates Christ-like stewardship of the resources provided by God. The Elders will provide oversight and shepherding that is biblical, lawful, and full of integrity. This governing process will choose to emphasize:

- Outward vision rather than internal preoccupation
- Unity with tolerance of diverse viewpoints
- Strategic leadership more than administrative detail
- Clear distinction of Elder and Senior Pastor roles
- Collective rather than individual decisions
- The future rather than past or present
- Proactivity rather than reactivity

Within our leadership structure the Elders delegate day to day operational responsibility to one individual, currently the Senior Pastor. The Elders instruct the Senior Pastor through written policies that prescribe the organizational Ends to be achieved and proscribe organizational situations and actions to be avoided, allowing the Senior Pastor to use any reasonable interpretation of these policies. This leadership structure is referred to as the Policy

Governance(R) model. The New Beginnings Church model of governance was adapted from John Carver's work on non-profit board oversight which he entitled "Policy Governance." We are also grateful to Jon Mullican, minister at Highland Oaks Church of Christ for his help in developing our unique policies based on this model.

# SECTION H

## **West Houston Church of Christ Houston, TX**

**Mike Arnold & Brian Offutt**

# West Houston Church of Christ

## Statement of Relationship

In the West Houston governance model oversight elders are responsible for making all decisions regarding long-term vision, operational matters, financial matters, oversight of the preaching minister and executive minister, communication of the vision, and all other matters involving the church. Typically, one oversight elder rotates off each year and incoming overseers serve a five year term although there have been exceptions made in the past. Ultimately, the active oversight elders decide who rotates onto the oversight elder group and when.

1. On issues that the oversight elders feel are of critical importance to the body, or issues that cannot be comfortably resolved within the group, the oversight elders will call a formal meeting of the combined oversight and shepherding groups to explain the issue involved, and ask for the prayers, input and counsel of the group before making a decision on the matter.
2. There are occasionally issues of great significance that come before the entire eldership that could potentially generate “vigorous” discussion and different opinions. Through such discussions the overseers will seek to be gentle and maintain unity. However, once a decision is finalized, even though that decision may not have been unanimous, all elders will fully support and endorse the decision made by the overseers.
3. Furthermore, all elders serve at the discretion of their fellow elders and are accountable to each other. If at any time an elder is requested by the Oversight Elders to resign, he agrees to do so quietly, respectfully, and without public complaint, always keeping the unity of the church first and foremost in importance.

## Governance Model

The overseers desire to direct, control, and inspire the congregation in a way that is biblical and lawful. The goal is to emphasize the following: (1) outward vision rather than internal functioning, (2) unity with tolerance of diverse viewpoints, (3) strategic leadership more than administrative detail, (4) clear distinction of overseer and preaching and executive minister roles, (5) collective rather than individual decisions, (6) future rather than past or present, (7) proactivity rather than reactivity.

1. The overseers, not the staff, are responsible for excellence in overseeing. The overseers make all decisions concerning policy and vision.
2. The overseers will govern the congregation through the careful establishment of broad written policies reflecting the elders’ collective values and perspectives. The overseers’ major policy focus will be on the intended long-term impacts outside the staff organization, not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those effects.

## Delegation and Monitoring

The overseers are the sole official connection to the lead ministers (preaching and executive minister) and the operational organization.

1. Organizational achievement of the vision set by the overseers is delegated to the preaching and executive ministers as set forth in West Houston Church of Christ's written governance policy document.
2. The delegation to the lead ministers extends to hiring and firing of staff, and the alignment of deacons and ministry leaders. The lead ministers are to keep the overseers informed of major decisions, seek overseer counsel when appropriate, and inform the shepherds concerning major decisions.
3. Systematic and rigorous monitoring of the lead ministers' job performance will be done as necessary through any or all of the following: (1) by internal reports from the preaching and executive ministers, (2) by an external report from a disinterested third party, (3) by direct overseer inspection.

## Oversight Elder Team

### Purpose and Qualifications

The goal at all times is to glorify God as the overseers guide and lead the church toward the fulfilment of West Houston Church of Christ's vision. Oversight elders are expected to have all the qualities of a shepherding elder as identified in the Bible and as expressed in the Consider the Opportunity document prepared for incoming elders in May of 2015 (see appendix 5). In addition, oversight elders need giftings that are appropriate to the specified task. The overseers have identified the following criteria as indispensable when choosing elders to serve on the oversight elder team: 1) visionary leadership as opposed to managerial skills, 2) good chemistry with the other overseers, and with the preaching and executive ministers, 3) advocacy and support of governance policy, 4) freedom from a conflict of interest: for example does not have a spouse employed at the church, or does not have a schedule that precludes serving.

### Structure

1. The active overseer team currently consists of five members, but will always have no less than three and no more than five members subject to the discretion of the active overseers. The oversight elder pool is composed of both active overseers and those that are eligible to become an overseer.
2. Active oversight elders will seek to maintain a minimum of two inactive overseers in the oversight elder pool at all times. This allows for an oversight elder to serve a full term and then take two years off before serving an additional term.
4. Active overseers will evaluate the oversight elder pool annually to determine if the existing oversight elders fit well with the criteria listed above, and to decide whether to add additional elders to the oversight elder pool.
5. Active overseers have the freedom to make exceptions to the rotation rules when needed due to circumstances such as: 1) the need to extend an active overseer's term for continuity through a temporary transition, 2) the lack of qualified candidates for the position of overseer, 3) other unexpected events. If exceptions are made, the overseers

will immediately communicate these exceptions to the overseer pool and the shepherding elders.

6. Any change in the written governance charter or governance policy document requires the majority support of all overseers: active and those serving in the overseer pool.
7. Once every two years the overseers will seek formal feedback from the shepherds concerning the governance process and the effectiveness of the overseer elders. Once the feedback is collated, it will be shared with the shepherding elders.

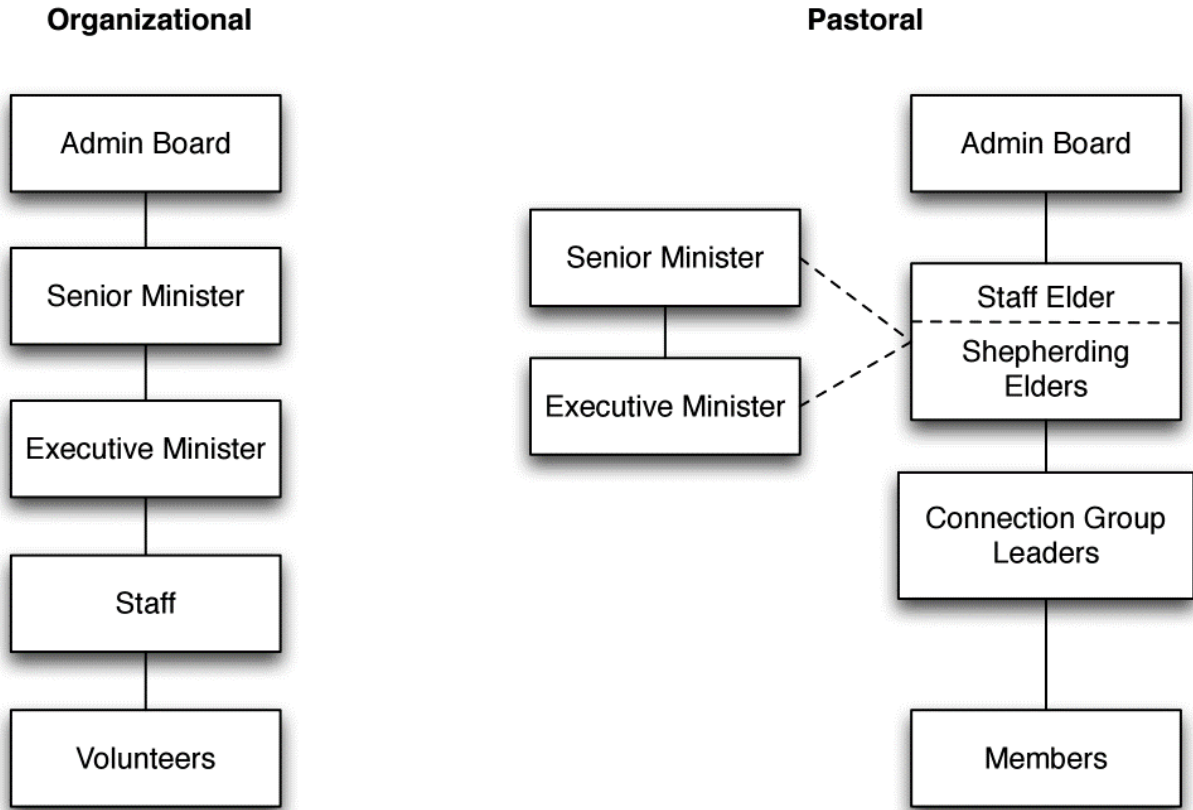
# SECTION I

## Appendices



# Appendix 1

## First Colony Church of Christ Organizational Chart



## Appendix 2

### New Beginnings Church Policy Governance

Have you ever wondered what it is we are trying to accomplish? How would you determine to what degree we are successful? What do you think Jesus Christ wants from us as a congregation? Have you ever wondered how to evaluate a Pastor? Who has the final say in developing a budget? Who has the authority to hire staff? Can an elder ask a member of the staff to undertake a special project?

- Your leadership has implemented a system of oversight called Policy Governance, effective July 1st that attempts to answer all these questions and many, many more.
- We began searching for a better way to govern the congregation in Feb 2011, after our previous Sr. Pastor left after many years of dedicated service.
- By May 2011 we decided to implement Policy Governance, a system developed by John Carver for non-profit organizations and a system adapted by many churches.
- We made it known to all Pastor candidates that we intended to implement Policy Governance in the immediate future.
- We held a workshop in October 2011 with an expert in the system, where we developed a rough draft of most of the policies.
- In March of this year, with Mark on board, we held a two day retreat where we developed what are called the Ends Policies, a statement of what it is we think Jesus wants us to accomplish as a congregation.
- And, then with a few final touchups completed, we implemented it July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- This slide shows how, at a high level, oversight and management occurs under Policy Governance.
- Jesus is at the top as the head of the church. He is the “owner” of the church, and as such, dictates the purpose of his church.
- It is the Elders’ role to understand what it is that the “owner” wants in terms of what is accomplished, what is unacceptable behavior or practice, who is served and at what cost.
- The Sr. Pastor’s role is that of leader. It is his responsibility to put into practice, in practical terms, activities and programs that accomplish what the elders have understood the “owner” wants.
- The church organization is all of us...elders, staff and members of the congregation. Our role is to follow the Sr. Pastor’s leadership as he works to accomplish what is expected by the elders.
- Policies are the vehicle by which oversight and management is accomplished. In the circular diagram, the outer circle is where we state global, high level ends. Then, if we want to further define an end, we move to the next circle closer to the center; etc.
- Ends policies define what it is we want to accomplish, for whom and at what cost. These are the most important policies in the entire model. For New Beginnings, we have almost 20 ends policies when taken to the most detailed level.

- Executive Limitation policies state what methods, behaviors and practices are prohibited. Once these limitations have been defined, all other methods, behaviors and practices are allowed. The intent is to give the Sr. Pastor freedom, within these limits, to pursue any path, practice, method his imagination might develop without being questioned or second guessed by the elders or anyone else.
- The Elder-Staff Delegation policies clearly state that the way the elders interact with the staff in an official way is through the Sr. Pastor. In fact, the elders have only one employee...the Sr. Pastor. All other staff work for him.
- The Elder Governance Process Policies clarify the role of the elders; we are to focus on the strategic, the visionary, the oversight of the congregational activities, shepherding of the members, etc. We will speak with one voice and can only issue direction as a body speaking as one.
- An elder chairman is to be selected to manage elder meetings, to ensure the integrity of the elder processes and to represent the elders to outside parties when called for. I have been asked to serve in that role, and will do my best to move us forward with the help of our Lord God as my guide.

In summary, we expect some of the benefits to include:

- The Elders will focus on the future...where we should be going, what we should be accomplishing, etc.
- The Elders will provide meaningful oversight of the congregation, without getting Involved in micro-managing what we are doing and how we go about it. We are not to meddle in the day to day activities related to running the church.
- Mark is empowered to lead the congregation. No more asking who has the ball or who's on first.
- The Elders will have more time to devote to their shepherding duties.
- Roles will have been clarified...everyone in leadership will know what is required of them.
- If you want more detail, be watching our web site for a complete presentation about this new system of governance.
- We ask your prayers for us as we embark on this new approach. And, let me be the first to lead us in prayer for success in implementing Policy Governance.

Twp 7/8/12

# Appendix 3

## New Beginnings Church Non-Profit Policy Governance

### Principles

These principles of policy governance for non-profit boards of directors are known as “The Carver Model” and are taken from John & Miriam Carver’s material on governance.

**Principle 1: *Trust in Trusteeship.*** The board of a nonprofit or public organization represents the ownership of the organization. It governs on behalf of all the affected persons who are not seated at the board table. It must therefore establish, maintain, clarify, and protect its relationship with the organization’s “owners.”

**Principle 2: *The Board Speaks with One Voice or Not at All.*** In order to lead and make authoritative decisions a board must have a single voice on any given issue. The power of boards of directors is not as individuals, but as a group; a corporate entity entrusted by the owners with the authority to govern and lead the organization. Diversity of viewpoints from board members must be respected and encouraged. Rarely will votes be unanimous, however those trustees who lose a vote must accept that the board has spoken and that its decision must be implemented as decided.

**Principle 3: *Board Decisions Should Predominately Be Policy Decisions.*** Board policies should be the expression of a board’s soul. They should embody the board’s beliefs, commitments, values, and vision. The board must address the largest or broadest values in four categories:

1. Ends. The board defines which customer results are to be achieved, for whom, and at what cost.
2. Executive limitations. The board establishes the boundaries of acceptability within which methods and activities can responsibly be left to staff. These limiting policies apply to staff means rather than to ends.
3. Board-staff linkage. The board clarifies the manner in which it delegates authority to staff as well as how it evaluates staff performance on achievement of the ends and executive limitations policies.
4. Governance process. The board determines its philosophy, its accountability, and the specifics of its own job.

**Principle 4: Boards Should Formulate Policy by Determining the Broadest Values Before Progressing to More Narrow Ones.**

1. The board should resolve the broadest or larger policy issue in each category before dealing with smaller issues in any category.
2. The board should, if it wishes to address smaller levels, never skip levels but move to the next smaller level in sequence.
3. The board should grant the CEO authority to make all further choices as long as they are “within” the board’s ends and executive limitations policies.

**Principle 5: A Board Should Define and Delegate, Rather Than React and Ratify.**

The very act of approving things forces boards to become entangled in trivia.

**Principle 6: Ends Determination Is the Pivotal Duty of Governance.** The justification for any organizations lies in what difference it can make. A nonprofit organization exists so that the world in which it operates can be a better place. The ends of an organization are the reasons for its existence. Careful, wise selection of ends is the highest calling of trustee leadership.

**Principle 7: The Board’s Best Control over Staff Means Is to Limit, Not Prescribe.**

The distinction between ends and means will enable the board to free itself from trivia, to delegate clearly and powerfully, and to turn its attention to the large issues of ends. Quite apart from ends, the board is also accountable for the way the organization conducts itself. This is best done by setting limits.

**Principle 8: A Board Must Explicitly Design Its Own Products and Process.** It is in the policy category of governance process that the board states what it expects of itself. This important category of board policy deals with a portion of the board’s own means: how the board will conduct itself, perform its own job, and evaluate its own performance. Boards must enunciate and hold fast to the principles guiding their own operation or they will appear directionless or even capricious.

**Principle 9: A Board Must Forge a Linkage with Management That is Both Empowering and Safe.** No single relationship in the organization is as important as the one between the board and its chief executive officer. This relationship supersedes any relationship with other staff.

**Principle 10: Performance of the CEO Must Be Monitored Rigorously, but Only Against Policy Criteria.** When the board has told its CEO to achieve certain ends without violating certain executive limitations, monitoring performance becomes no less – and no more – than checking actual performance against these two sets of expectations.

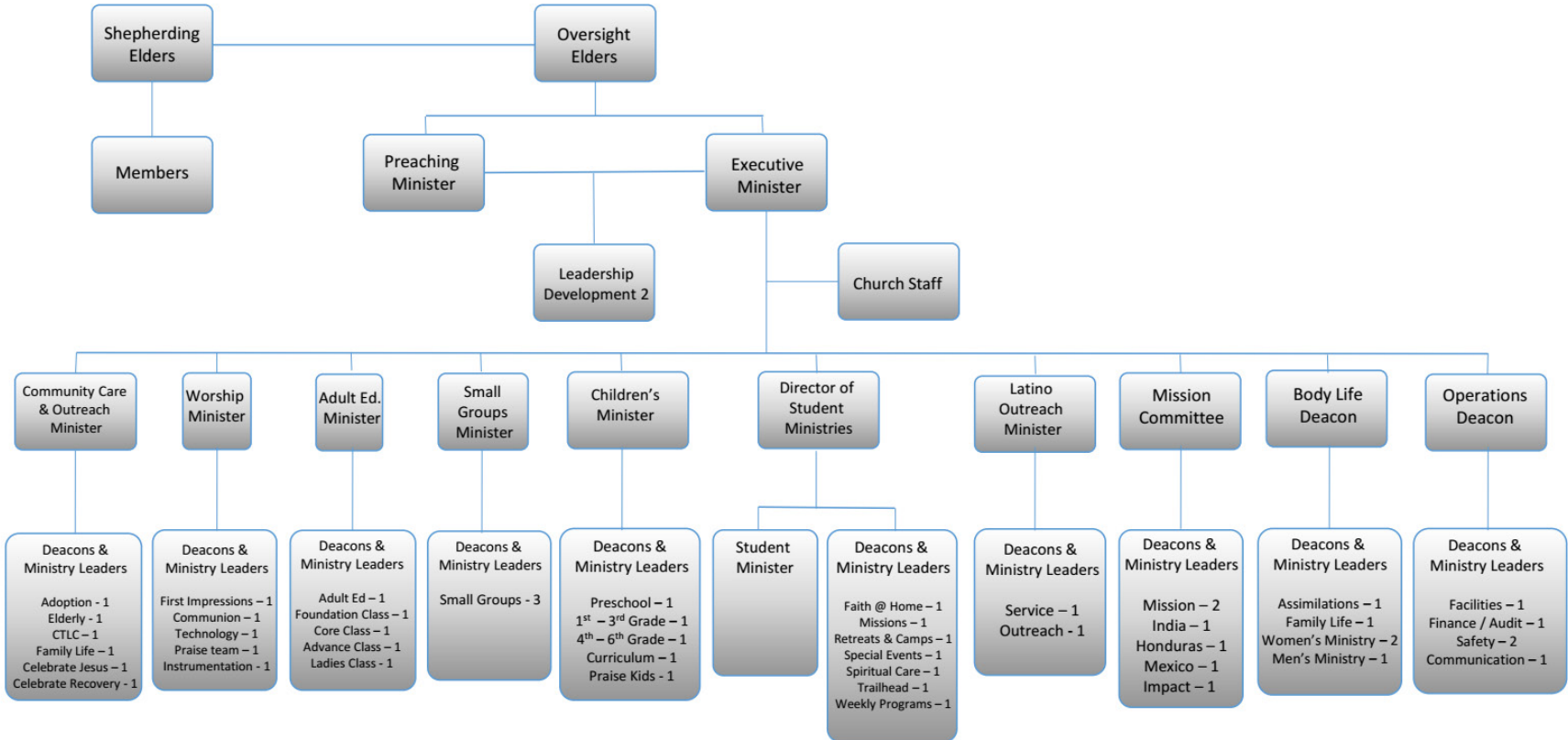
## Nine Steps to Implementing Policy Governance

1. Be sure that board members and the CEO understand the model.
4. Make a full board commitment to adopting the model.
5. Put the board's commitment to move ahead on paper.
6. Develop all policies except ends. (Ends will be saved until last).
7. Adopt a single temporary ends policy.
8. Do an administrative and if necessary legal check.
9. Prepare the first few agendas for board meetings.
10. Design the first steps in connection with the ownership.
11. Set a specific date to inaugurate the system.

Most boards take from six to twelve months to implement this process. Completing the nine steps above means only that the real governance work can begin. Three efforts will demand the majority of board time and energy forever. First, the ends will need continual attention in perpetuity. Second, finding ways to gather owners' input - this is not an easy task. Third, sufficient self-evaluation and redevelopment are needed so that board leadership can continue to improve.

# Appendix 4

## West Houston Church of Christ Organizational Chart



# Appendix 5

## West Houston Church of Christ

### Role Description: Shepherding Elders

A Shepherding Elder is primarily responsible for the pastoral care and spiritual concerns of the members at the West Houston Church of Christ. Shepherding elders are called to willingly and eagerly shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1–2, Hebrews 13:17).

### Shepherding Philosophy

- Realistically, our elders cannot shepherd every single individual at church. Shepherds are called to focus on the one sheep that leaves the pen (sick, lost, struggling), not to spend equal time with the 99 sheep that are doing well (Matthew 18:12-14).
- Elders are responsible for shepherding people in their own missional community, people with whom they have relationships, people who directly approach them for shepherding, and people to whom they are directed by others.
- West Houston members receive spiritual support by being connected to the church family in various manners, but primarily through membership in missional communities.
- Shepherds are available when needed, but cannot have a personal relationship with every member at West Houston.
- It is important to clearly communicate to the congregation the paths available for shepherding.
- Generally speaking, the shepherds are only responsible to shepherd those that are willing and want to be shepherded.

### Key Responsibilities of Shepherding Elders

- Maintain a willingness to grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Exhibit the characteristics of an elder as outlined in Scripture.
- Provide pastoral care to church members as needed.
- Spend time in prayer—praying specifically for the body at West Houston. On page twelve of the vision document the elders commit to lead the congregation by spending more time in prayer.
- Be prepared to give spiritual guidance/direction to those seeking wisdom, discernment and counsel in their lives.
- Make it a priority to visit those in the hospital, shut-ins and with those who are struggling spiritually (those in need of spiritual guidance).
- Participate in the biblical process of conflict resolution as outlined in Matthew 18.
- Mentor other leaders by participating in the discipleship formation process at West Houston.
- Readily welcome all guests who enter our doors and provide a welcoming presence on behalf of the leadership at West Houston.



## Specific Commitments

- Husband and wife will make attending worship, bible class, and other church-wide events a priority. Events that are considered a priority for all elders to attend will be communicated in advance.
- Husband and wife should actively participate in a missional community. See page 12 of the vision.
- Elders will be available to pray with those responding for prayer (including members and visitors) during our Sunday morning assemblies. Wives are encouraged to join their husbands during this time, though it is not a requirement.
- Meet once a month on Wednesday nights with the overseers and Brian for prayer, fellowship, and communication.
- Meet once a month on Wednesday nights with Brian to pray for those in need and coordinate shepherding activities.

## Essential Skills of Shepherding Elders

- Servant/Christ-like spirit
- Strong knowledge and understanding of Scripture
- Able to keep confidential information
- Strong interpersonal communication skills—connects and relates well with others
- Be a calming presence in the face of conflict
- Clothed with humility
- Committed to unity
- Conflict-resolution skills
- Willing to be accountable
- Exercises discernment when relating to members of the opposite sex

# Additional Resources from the Siburt Institute for Church Ministry

## MinistryLink

This web-based service connects ministers with churches. With MinistryLink, churches can post job openings and view ministers' resumes. Similarly, ministers can upload resumes as well as browse church profiles and job postings.

Learn more: [www.acu.edu/ministrylink](http://www.acu.edu/ministrylink)

## Church Health Assessment (CHA)

This robust and statistically reliable instrument helps church leaders by gathering and reporting congregational members' perceptions on nine different areas such as ministry effectiveness, spiritual formation and discipleship, congregational culture and values, and family life stages. The Siburt Institute partnered with social researchers to develop the CHA.

Learn more: [CHA web page](#)

## CHARIS

This website hosts critical, contemporary conversations through invited blog posts. The Church section features posts from small-church ministers, scholars, elders, and more.

Learn more: <http://char.is>

## More!

The Siburt Institute website includes a host of additional tools and resources for churches and church leaders—such as Bible class curricula, videos, consulting information, minister transition resources, and a peer-reviewed digital journal.

Learn more: [www.acu.edu/siburt](http://www.acu.edu/siburt)

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