

Lead Ministers
&
Eldership Boards

**... Wise and workable Guidelines for
responsible and accountable Church
Leadership and Governance**

by Pastor Bill Vasilakis, 13th May 2025

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INTRODUCTION

This book aims to answer seven very important questions needing definitive answers.

What role and authority should a Lead Minister have in a local church?

... What's his/her job description?

What role and authority should a collective Board of Elders have in a local church? ...

What's their collective job description?

Where do their roles and authority cross over? ... Where does one stop and the other start?

What are the spiritual and character requirements for Lead Ministers and Elder Boards in a local church?

What's a tested and workable division of responsibilities for Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards?

What's the best and fairest system of accountability for Lead Ministers and Elder Boards who belong to a denominational family?

How can we create a preventative organisational framework that will be conducive to well ordered governmental practices and healthy relationships between Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards?

For over half a century I have observed and been directly involved in trying to help Local churches handle the fallout when Lead Ministers and their Eldership Boards fail to work together in love and unity. So often the breakdowns could have been **prevented** if both the Lead Ministers and Elders were crystal clear on their roles and had realistic expectations of each other in the outworking of their respective responsibilities. The most serious problems our local churches face centre around these questions, and this book attempts to provide some Biblically grounded and Christ-centred wisdom and practical help for Lead Ministers and Eldership Teams as they walk through this potentially explosive minefield.

Bill Vasilakis

May, 2025

PART ONE – ROLES AND AUTHORITY

... THE ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF LEAD MINISTERS AND CHURCH ELDERSHIP BOARDS

1. THE GENIUS OF THE PLURALITY OF LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

The New Testament implies a plurality of leadership in all local churches.

We see a picture of Ministry Gifts and Elderships working together in loving unity to advance the cause of Christ through local churches.

The New Testament describes the functional role of Ministry Gifts and Elders but little else according to the following Scriptures.

Ministry Gifts. Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11

Elderships. Acts 11:29-30; Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; Acts 20:28-35; Acts 21:17-19; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17; James 5:14

The division between ministry-gifts and Elders according to some commentators appears a little arbitrary. For example, there appears to be no distinction drawn between Pastors/Shepherds in Ephesians 4:11 and Elders/Shepherds in Acts 20:28-35 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Though there are some problems with the more traditional view, it seems to be around differentiation between people who are specially gifted to operate a specific ministry role in the church, and with others whose character qualification seems to be the predominant issue if they are to be on the government Eldership body of a church. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Some people like Peter and John operate as ministry-gifts (ie apostles) and can also be Elders in a governmental/leadership sense within a local church. (1 Peter 5:1-3; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1)

THE ROLE OF ELDERS – A traditional Biblical view

“The New Testament is clear that the church is to be led by a plurality of godly leaders under the oversight and watchcare of Elders. The Elders are given ultimate responsibility and authority to see that the church remains on a true course biblically, that its members are being appropriately shepherded, that the

body is being fed through insightful and accurate biblical teaching, and that the life of the church is being well managed with the assistance of other competent and godly leaders. They are to care about the spiritual and physical well-being of members, regularly praying for the sick. They are to guard the body against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting biblical truth or who are continuing in patterns of sinful behaviour. In doing so, they are to keep closing potential entrances for satan so that the truth of Christ will remain credible to both the congregation and the community. Scripture indicates that the ultimate decision-making authority in the church rests with the Elders.

(1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9; James 5:14)

In response to the biblical pattern of leadership, members of the body are taught in Scripture to lovingly support their leaders and submit to their leadership.

(Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-33; Acts 21:17-19)¹

It is fairly clear Ministry Gifts like Paul, Barnabas and Titus appointed Elders, but we can only assume they also had the spiritual authority to terminate those appointments. (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5)

We are simply not told how long the appointments were for and what procedures were in place to keep everyone (including Ministry Gifts and Elders) accountable. The Greek word “appoint” in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5, does have a fairly clear connotation that the membership of a congregation can be involved either in the actual selection, or in the confirmation of the appointment of elders.

The Zondervan Study Bible note on Acts 14:23 sheds light on this unique word and the practice of the first church.

“Appointed - The Greek for this word (used also in 2 Cor. 8:19) can mean (1) to stretch out the hand, (2) to appoint by show of hands or (3) to appoint or elect without regard to the method. In Acts 6:6 the appointment of the Seven included

¹ Broudak, P. (1997), *Church leader's handbook*, Willow Creek Association, pg. 6

selection by the church and presentation to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. Because these were new churches, at least partly pagan in background, Paul and Barnabas may have both selected and appointed the elders.”²

SELECTION OF ELDERS/TERM OF ELDERS

“Scripture gives evidence of the first Elders being appointed by the founders of the church. By this example it is implied that the existing spiritual leadership of a church be intimately involved in the process of selecting Elders to ensure that the selection is based on spiritual rather than superficial qualifications. Beyond this, there are no specific guidelines given regarding the selection process. It would therefore appear that freedom is given to the individual churches to develop a process that will best serve its own special needs and situations.” (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5)³

CRC Churches International’s founder, Leo Harris, though strongly believing in the plurality of leadership concept as the New Testament’s way of operating, gives no practical guidelines on how to outwork this concept in any of his inspirational writings.⁴

2. HOW TO OUTWORK THE NEW TESTAMENT LEADERSHIP GOVERNMENT PATTERN

I have reflected at length over the years on this big issue and have framed a workable operating structure that clearly defines the specific role and the respective powers of the Lead Minister and his/her collective Eldership (Board, Oversight, etc.).

The following principles and guidelines are not just theoretical but have been outworked by our team at the Christian Family Centre on the anvil of around fifty years of practical experience. In all these years, we have never had a major division and rarely taken a vote on big issues. We have only had to ask one

² NIV Study Bible, (1985), Zondervan

³ Broudakis, P. (1997), *Church leader’s handbook*, Willow Creek Association, pg. 7

⁴ Leo Harris, *Vision - The Concept and Challenge of the CRC*, and *Operation Outreach – The New Testament blueprint for revival*, Legacy CRC Churches International Publications

Elder out of the 27 who have served, or are still serving with us, to step aside; and this situation in our early years was with the unanimous endorsement of the entire Eldership Board.

A clearly defined division of responsibilities and duties should be in place to ensure power is never absolute; and all who are involved in church ministry and government should operate within a highly responsible and fully accountable framework.

The best examples of how this operates in secular government is **first** the Westminster model of responsible Government. The Leader (The Prime Minister) is fully responsible and accountable to his/her Parliamentary Party; the Parliamentary Party is fully responsible and accountable to the Parliament; and the Parliament is fully responsible and accountable to the people through general elections every three to five years.

The **second** great model is the United States Federal governmental system where power is widely diffused at national level between the President, Congress and Supreme Court; and at regional level by State, County, City and Town government systems. Australia's government system is a mixture of both the British Westminster and the American federal models with some features from Switzerland. The British, American and Swiss government structures have evolved over hundreds of years and are the safest in regard to the avoidance of the accumulation of too much power in the hands of one person or one group of people. They are also founded on Christian pre-suppositions such as the inherent corruption of the human heart and the tendency of abuse by those in power. Christians have had a huge role in their creation and gradual modification over the centuries, especially since the Protestant reformation and the Enlightenment era from the 16th Century onwards.

Nation States overseen by totally responsible and fully accountable government systems produce liberal democratic societies that are relatively free, are harmonious, live in peace and have an impartial non-politicised judiciary, police and defence forces. They also ensure the majority who govern respect and protect the rights of all minorities within the rule of law. How blessed I am to live

in a freedom-loving and socially cohesive country like Australia.

I think these secular governmental models exemplify the Plurality of Leaders concept of the New Testament church as it relates to Ministry and Government. There are lessons we can learn from our secular governmental processes and procedures in matters where the New Testament is silent, as long as these do not contravene clearly-defined and widely-accepted Biblical principles and truths.

3. **LEAD MINISTERS ARE TO LEAD THEIR ELDERSHIP BOARDS AND THEIR CHURCHES**

The Lead Minister should be able to grow as big as God has called and gifted them to become. Those whom the risen Christ calls into leadership of his church (Ephesians 4:11-12) must be allowed to **flow** and **flourish** and be as **fruitful** as possible for God's glory.

They should be fully released to outwork at least the following key tasks

- cast the long-term strategic vision of the Church
- set the short-term spiritual directions and goals for the Church
- personify the core values and the ministry style of the Church
- recommend the appointment of new Elders to the Board
- be the main teacher/preacher of the Word
- develop new ministry leaders in the church

THE ROLE OF THE LEAD PASTOR

“Consistent with the New Testament concept of spiritual gifts, the Lead pastor, like any member of the body, is uniquely gifted and should seek to minister primarily within their gift area.

In addition to their pastoring role as an elder, the Lead pastor is primarily responsible **to be a teacher of the Word of God and to provide strategic leadership and vision to the body.** Their goal is to help mature believers through insightful and accurate presentations of biblical truth, equipping them to be the true “ministers” in the body. They must strive to teach and lead by word

and example, and must stress both the understanding and the application of God's truth.

Lead pastors should not be responsible to consistently minister in areas unrelated to their primary function and giftedness. To burden them with other roles (administration, counselling, visitation, etc.) is to rob them of **planning time, study time, and devotion to the Word**. This can lead to **watered down, inaccurate teaching or ineffective leadership**, both of which in turn weaken the body. As shepherds of the church, the Elders are responsible to appoint other leaders with complementary gifts to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that cannot be filled by the Lead pastor.

Teaching within the body should not be limited to the Lead pastor. The New Testament emphasises the need for teaching Elders and/or the utilisation of other members who are gifted in this area, thereby providing a variety of input and role models.”⁵

It is imperative all spiritual leaders (and particularly Lead Ministers and their Eldership Boards) be **constant learners**. This involves really learning the lessons that come from experience; and even more importantly, learning the lessons that come from **other people's experiences**. This is why great books and timely in-service seminars and leadership courses with a **practical orientation** are priceless.

All Lead Ministers and Elders need to be personally growing in their leadership capacity and skills by inculcating **new learning** from excellent Leaders/Authors. It's also good practice for Eldership and Ministry Staff to work through some key books that will really be helpful in their important team roles.

I have listed some Christian/non-Christian recommended authors and their book titles in the recommended reading list at the end of the book. We can so easily avoid coming to grief on so many issues if we are humble and teachable enough to be **life-long learners**. There is nothing new under the sun, so it's imperative

⁵ Broudak, P. (1997), *Church leader's handbook*, Willow Creek Association, pgs.9-10

all spiritual leaders be exposed to other leaders who are **older, wiser and more experienced** than them.

The Eldership team should allow the leader to fully express his/her leadership gifts and to become as big as God wants them to be.

Every team has to have a leader and therefore team members need to:

- sublimate their own personal leadership ambitions
- work under their leader and assist and support them in their leadership role
- cover the leaders' lacks and weaknesses and never expose their nakedness.

This does not preclude individual members of the team from openly sharing with the leader about his/her deficiencies, but it must be done in a constructive way that aims to help the Lead Minister become a more effective spiritual leader. If the whole team is to do an evaluation of the Leader, this meeting needs to be pre-planned and at a set time (ie, once per year) and should never be a secret clandestine meeting of the Eldership Board without the knowledge and endorsement of the Lead Minister.

All properly constituted meetings should be called and chaired by the Lead Minister or a chairman appointed from the Board by the Lead Minister and need to occur at a time and place when all members of the Eldership Team can generally be present. This responsibility can be delegated by the Lead Minister/Chairman or to any Board Member.

4. LEADERS WISELY WORK RESPONSIBLY THROUGH THEIR TEAMS

Lead Ministers needs to learn to express their leadership through a team and avoid being a “one person” show.

Therefore, the leader needs to also allow the team members to grow as big as God wants them to grow in their personal ministry and leadership role within the church. Leaders should do all in their power to facilitate the full development of

their team's talents and gifts and coordinate their individual ministries into a purposeful and united team.

This is the balance to the previous section (Point 3) and should flow like a good marriage where a husband is to be a loving and responsible spiritual leader of his wife; and must never have a superiority mentality but a genuine servant attitude, emulating Jesus (Ephesians 5:21-33; Philippians 2:1-11, 1 Peter 3:7).

Good and effective leaders who are spiritually and emotionally secure will be loving and giving towards their team; and will be fully committed to influencing, facilitating and coordinating their many aptitudes for God's glory.

This is in marked contrast to poor and ineffective leaders who are spiritually and emotionally insecure, immature and unloving; and tend to only want to use their team to serve their own purpose. This is seen in their dominating, over-controlling, and manipulative leadership style. Any self-respecting team will react to this type of leader and unless there is real substantive change in the leader, there will be big trouble between the Leader and the team.

In my book, *The Leader I Can Be* (Chapter 2), I share about **Coordinator** verses **Commander** leadership styles. Both are valid but both need to avoid the temptation of becoming too **consensus** or **autocratic** in their approach. The Coordinator leader is the best model to follow and closest to the New Testament ideal.

Plurality of Leadership is the way of the New Testament and never forget every leader needs a team as much as every team needs a leader.

Eldership Teams only work well, however, when they sincerely and loyally submit to good leaders and respect the Christ-given call upon the Lead Minister's life.

If a team member cannot operate like this, they need to step aside at the most appropriate time, to ensure that unity and love prevail and the Church is protected.

Submission does not mean team members should have an unhealthy and slavish unthinking devotion to a leader's every opinion and whim. Loyalty to a leader can operate within an environment where rigorous discussion, debate and even disagreements can take place before a decision. It is more than permissible for team members to agree-to-disagree agreeably from time to time.

5. LEADERS AND ELDERSHIP BOARDS NEED TO BE FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TO EACH OTHER AND TO THEIR DENOMINATIONAL FAMILY OR SOME OUTSIDE BODY

My denominational family CRC Churches International reaffirms the ministerial credentials of all its ministers on a yearly basis, as we believe the New Testament teaches all ministry positions (Lead Minister, Associate Minister, Assistant Minister and Elder) should only continue based on a **functioning and fruitful ministry**.

This is the best way for a local Church to operate with real spiritual effectiveness and genuine integrity.

The Eldership Board should only over-rule the leader or terminate their leadership of the church if they wilfully violate clearly defined standards in five crucial areas:

- Morality – Wilfully violating accepted sexual purity standards
- Money – Wilfully violating accepted financial purity standards
- Ministry – Wilfully violating accepted relational purity standards
- Doctrine – Wilfully violating accepted Biblical purity standards
- The law – Wilfully violating accepted civic/legal purity standards

My CRC movement has a *Code of Conduct* for all its ordained ministers and a *Discipline and Restoration* guideline if a minister falls. There is always a redemptive way forward when genuine contrition and repentance is evident.⁶

⁶ These two documents can be downloaded from the CRC Churches website: www.crcchurches.org

Spiritual leaders who exemplify great personal integrity, exhort the men and women being trained for ministry to watch out for the 3 G's. ie ... the Girls, (or Guys) the Gold and the Glory. I believe it is the Glory or **spiritual pride** that is the most dangerous and opens the door for the other two to entrap and destroy us. A leader's fall can be traced to a gradual spiritual declension that is interlinked with complex webs of self-deception, long before they wilfully violate in any of the above five areas of entrapment. We must be willing to do all in our power to prevent this decline and this is where real accountability comes in.

Loving correction is in order for all who are in leadership positions if they stray from the character qualities outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 (Refer to pages 26-31). The level of personal scrutiny and accountability needs to be of the highest order for all who are given this level of responsibility and trust in Jesus' church. The Primary Qualities we look for and the proposed Character Check for Leaders (refer to pages 31-33) are a good guide of Christian holiness and commitment for all church leaders. We have a solemn duty to watch our own lives carefully, and the lives of our fellow Elders, and to be courageous in confronting aspects of our lives that fail to measure up to this spiritual standard. This should be done on a person-to-person basis, and from time to time when we meet as a group to do a personal spiritual audit of our individual lives and our collective working as a team. It also needs to be said that accusations of inappropriate behaviour must be handled very wisely, lovingly and in a Biblically-mandated manner.

The following two statements by the Apostle Paul are so wise, balanced and fair:

1 Timothy 5:19-20 *"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning."*

Galatians 6:1-5 *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each*

one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load."

6. APPOINTMENT AND DISMISSAL POWERS OF ALL CHURCH OFFICERS

This is an extremely sensitive matter and potentially the most destabilising and dangerous period in the life of a church. Therefore, it must be handled with great care and with some extra safeguards like outside consultation by people who are older, wiser and more experienced in Christian ministry (Refer to page Controversy and Conflict, page 20-21).

Leader Ministers should be able to recommend changes to the team over time, particularly if a team is already in place when they commence ministry in a church. This needs to be outworked with great sensitivity and should normally take place at the yearly review period that usually precedes the Annual General or Progress Meeting of partnering members and supportive attendees.

This expectation must be clearly understood by both parties before a new Lead Minister is appointed. It is imperative that a prospective new leader and the existing Eldership Board really get to know each other and not rush the appointment process. They both need to appreciate their particular histories, the unique culture of the new leader's previous church; and the vision and values and present climate of the church the new Lead Minister is joining.

The concurrence by at least a 2/3 or 3/4 majority of the Eldership Board should occur, which provides a check and a balance on the Lead Minister's appointments prerogative. This will ensure that responsible and accountable decision making in this crucial area is always maintained.

An Eldership Board should endeavour to consist of at least 3 people for a simple majority or a 2/3 majority decision to be possible. When an Eldership Board is enlarged its better to expand by two people at a time (ie. 5, 7, 9) as the odd number ensures a simple majority and 2/3 majority basis for decisions can be maintained. I also recommended that small churches (ie. under 100 people) stick with a team of three, churches between 100-300 - a five person team. Growing 300 plus churches could have a team of seven, but that should be the

ceiling for most churches. Some really large churches of 500 plus have teams of up to eleven people but this is getting to the unwieldy stage. The ideal team, in a growing and healthy church that facilitates good decision making, is an Eldership Team of seven or nine members.

This provision ensures that the Eldership Board cannot be sacked en-masse by a leader who develops a **papal infallibility complex**. The Eldership Board should however be able to dismiss the Lead Minister if they have lost the confidence of the Board because of serious trouble as defined in the five crucial areas listed earlier (pages 13-14).

This most serious of decisions should be made in consultation with their denominational executive or an outside body and be discussed fully with them, long before such drastic action is taken. This also prevents the Eldership Board from developing a **college of cardinals infallibility complex**.

CFC Churches have a constituted Advisory Council of 5 ordained CRC Lead Pastors who are experienced leaders. This team is authorised to help the Board to decide on intractable, unresolvable issues, and to endorse any constitutional changes and the appointment, termination or correction of the Senior Minister. (See Appendix 2). It is imperative that all who exercise responsible authority (ie, Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards) should also be held accountable to guard against an abuse of authority and power.

7. REVIEW OF ELDERS' FUNCTIONALITY

The Scriptures give no fixed term for Elders and therefore I recommend no specific fixed term of office. Instead, every elder upon appointment should be asked for a long term commitment, though this needs to be subject to an annual review by the Lead Minister, and a fresh recommitment by each Elder. It must be recognised that as a church grows, some Elders who function well when say a congregation is around 50-70, may not have the capabilities to handle a church of 150-200 or 400 plus. It is important that new Elders with specific skill sets be brought onto the team at key strategic times to help facilitate the church's continual growth and development.

This annual review of the Elder's functionality and continuing suitability should be initiated by the Lead Minister as part of his/her leadership responsibility.

There are instances when a team member's vision, values, priorities and capacity is becoming incompatible with the rest of the team, and its affecting how the team operates. Lead Ministers and the other Elders need to be patient with the respective team member and wait for the time when changes to the composition of the team will be more readily accepted by the church (ie, at the yearly review period as the church heads up to its Annual General Meeting or Progress Meeting).

If an Elder refuses to step down from the team when the Lead Minister recommends this as part of his/her review, the matter must be decided upon by the Eldership Board.

The church must be fully aware of this process of continual assessment of all ministry roles and church officers, so change of personnel is not viewed negatively but as a normal aspect of church life. Non-functioning and unfruitful leaders in all ministry areas of the church need to be wisely challenged and lovingly re-deployed in their church positions if they are not fulfilling the spiritual duties required of them. This also includes both the Lead Minister and the Eldership Board.

An Eldership position is not necessarily a life-time appointment!

We must be mature in this area, learn to disagree agreeably and ensure we are always governed by the law of love in this very sensitive matter of replacing Elders.

Educating and discipling Elders is crucial and it is wise to establish a training programme to acculturate all potential Elders about the Values, Vision, Mission and organisational processes of the church and their denomination before they are appointed as Elders. This book can be used for this important purpose!

Proactive and **preventative** measures will save a lot of time in the long term, as it will pre-empt the many potentially divisive issues some of us are called upon to make judgements about. Most times the damage has already been done, and it

is really difficult to retrieve a situation when disorder is the prevailing culture. James implores us to be wise and to close the door on the destructive works of satan, that flourish when **selfish ambition** and **bitter envy** take root in our interpersonal relationships, particularly amongst leadership.

James 3:13-18 "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."

8. FINANCE, PROPERTY AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Though the Lead Minister may be the chief initiator (ideas, visions, etc) he/she should only have one vote in finance, property and legal matters, as the entire Board is corporately responsible (according to the law) for the legal, business, property, financial affairs and debts of the Church.

The Eldership Board along with the Lead Minister as a member of the Board of Elders should have absolute and total power in all financial decisions by at least a simple majority or even by a 2/3 majority.

It is also wise and proper, if we believe in full accountability, to have an appropriately qualified and very experienced non-church member appointed as the financial auditor of the Church. The auditor should be duly empowered by the Board to bring correction on any matter that is not fully aligned with the spirit and letter of the law, or with acceptable accounting practices.

This does not mean we should limit the Lead Minister's faith and vision to think big or pursue innovative ideas and creative projects; but the full team have to own these major finance and property decisions with the utmost diligence. It is also the responsibility of the team to keep fully abreast of changes to the law and

how it relates to our local churches.

This encompasses Federal, State and Local government laws and regulations relating to such diverse areas as Work Health and Safety; Insurance/Professional Indemnity concerns; Duty of Care matters as they relate to ministry to minors; Counselling ethics; Building Development codes, etc.

9. SALARIES AND REMUNERATION MATTERS

Lead Ministers should not be involved in the process of setting their own salaries or of members of their family if they are on staff, though they can make suggestions regarding other staff members; (ie) bonuses, other encouragements, etc.

This ensures no conflict of interest can be levelled at leaders, who with their Eldership Boards, determine the spending priorities of the church on a year to year basis.

The Eldership Board should have absolute and total power in this area and preferably by a 2/3 majority. If an Elder has a family member as a salaried employee of the church, it is important for that Elder to be recused from any discussions and decision about that family member's remuneration.

This responsibility can be delegated to a sub-committee of appropriate people as long as no salaried employee or a close family member of an employee be on the committee. This team should follow the Salary Guidelines of the denomination. Christian Family Centre Churches follow the State Teacher's awards for its ordained Ministers and State Public Service awards for administrative staff.

By keeping the church informed of this arrangement it greatly helps in lifting the confidence of the people in their spiritual leaders. This totally transparent and very clean approach, is also a very positive witness to the unchurched community. It really does demonstrate a standard higher than how the "world" generally operates. We aim to not only be 'within the law'; but 'beyond reproach or blameless' in this very sensitive matter.

10. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The Lead Minister is often the initiator and proposer of constitutional changes, but he/she has only one vote as the Chair of the Eldership Board.

The Board must be in total agreement and have the endorsement of their denomination before presenting any proposed changes. If a church is constituted as an Association under State or Territory Law, the proposal is then presented to the members for their endorsement and decision by a 2/3 or 3/4 majority. Christian Family Centre Churches as a Not-for-Profit company limited by Guarantee, has a constituted Advisory Council who have to agree with the Board's recommendation to change their Constitution. This is a check on the potential abuse of power by the Board.

The power to change the Constitution of a local church should not reside totally in the hands of an Eldership Board, if they are the only members according to their constitutional arrangements. Any proposed changes to the constitution need to be endorsed and ratified by the denomination or an outside body. This ensures that Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards are fully transparent and accountable when this crucial governing document of the church is changed.

11. CONTROVERSY AND CONFLICT

Good and godly leaders will do all in their power to avoid a church split as it usually is a loss for all concerned (ie the Leader, the Board, the Congregation and our credibility before the community).

The Lead Minister and the Board should establish a 'judicial body' (Advisory Council) – comprising recognised leaders – to resolve intractable issues. The members of a church have to be protected against serious matters remaining unresolved, which can lead to the church becoming divided. In these circumstances, both Lead Ministers and Eldership Boards should be subject to the nominated Advisory Council.

The Eldership Board is to be involved, along with the Lead Minister, in establishing or nominating this judicial body or Advisory Council.

This selected group should have a credible track record of experience, stability and wisdom. A previously-endorsed group of highly experienced ministers who have relationship with the church, rather than an elected denominational Executive that changes every 2 to 4 years, is quite acceptable. This can safeguard against an Eldership objecting to their involvement because they did not vote that Executive in, or because they may not have full confidence in the capacity of some members of that Executive body.

The Christian Family Centre endorses its Advisory Council at its first official Eldership Board gathering each year and sends copies of its Board minutes to them so they are fully cognisant of the church's affairs at all times.

12. COLLEGIATE LEADERSHIP AND FAMILY ENTANGLEMENTS

The premise behind all the principles and practical pointers made so far in this book, is local churches should only ever have one person as its Lead Minister.

This person has to willingly accept the full responsibility of what leadership entails and be prepared to be fully accountable in the exercise of their leadership role to a designated Board of Elders and their denominational family.

The concept of dual leadership or co-Lead leadership (by a husband and wife team) where all have equal authority and the same rights; rather than having one leader as the first among equals within a team context, is extremely difficult to outwork and is mostly an unworkable model. The collegiate leadership model is inherently unstable, leads to periods of great insecurity and disorder; particularly over the important question of succession should something untoward happen to one of the Lead Ministers.

The various arguments for this type of leadership model pale into insignificance, when one considers there are no long-term viable examples from Biblical and Secular history. There are also no credible, tried and tested present day examples within the church world-wide, the governmental systems of all our world's Nation States, non-government organisations, businesses, trade unions; schools, universities, sporting bodies and community groups, etc.

When it comes to the church, Scripture unequivocally teaches that Jesus uniquely calls and graces individuals to exercise a particular ministry within His kingdom. Everyone in a local church is called and gifted to flow in a personally fulfilling and fruitful ministry role. The definite role of the Lead Minister of a local church developed within a generation of the Acts church.⁷ It needs to be stated that the role of Lead Minister, Lead Elder or Presiding Elder as the first among equals of a ruling Eldership Team is not clearly prescribed in the New Testament. It certainly is implied, when we examine the pre-eminent leadership role that James, Timothy and Titus played in the church at Jerusalem, Ephesus and the island of Crete. (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:8; 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5).

There also is a clear pattern of leaders or set apart individuals who take the lead, but work through Elders who assist and support them to lead the people of God. Whether they were **Patriarchs, Generals, Judges, Prophets, Kings** or **Apostles** they related closely to a team as responsible and accountable leaders. (Exodus 4:29; Joshua 7:6; 1 Samuel 15:30; Psalm 107:32; 1 Kings 8:1-3; 1 Chronicles 11:3; Acts 2:14; Acts 20:17-33; Acts 21:18; Revelation 5:6).

The pattern and procedures of the synagogue in New Testament times, certainly impacted how the first Jewish Christians organised themselves into congregations. The NIV Study note in Mark 5:22 sheds light on Mark's statement that Jairus was a local 'synagogue ruler'. "Synagogue Rulers. A ruler of the synagogue was a layman whose responsibilities were administrative and included such things as looking after the building and supervising the worship. Though there were exceptions (see Acts 13:15), most synagogues had only one ruler. Sometimes the title was honorary, with no administrative responsibilities assigned."⁸

However, we also have to admit that a plurality and equality of leadership in a team context is also implied in Acts 11:27-29, Philippians 1:1 and 1 Peter 5:1.

⁷ Staniforth, Maxwell (1968), *Early Christian Witness*, Penguin Classics. Ignatius, one of the Apostolic Fathers in the late 1st/early second Century AD writes about this new Leadership role.

⁸ NIV Study Bible, (1985), Zondervan

A person who outworks the ministry role of the Lead Minister is not to be viewed as superior or a more spiritual person to all the many ministry roles in the life of a church. However, we cannot minimise that Jesus raises up people with the 'gift of leadership' (Romans 12:8), and surely people with this gift are needed for the quite unique local church role of Lead Minister. I think Paul has this particular role in mind in Ephesians 4:11-16 when he says that it is the risen exalted Christ who gives "some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:11). Their job description involves them being the equipping coaches "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:12)

In arguing the case for one clearly defined leader of each local church, it does not preclude the Lead Minister's spouse, children, or other family members also being called and gifted to minister within the same local church. It is just they cannot have the **same authority and say** as the Lead Minister who is to be fully accountable to the Eldership Board of the church. A spouse, or family member, or personal friend, can influence like any member or leader in the church, but the full responsibility rests upon the designated Lead Minister, who has to give a full account of his or her leadership to the recognised team. I greatly value the opinions and advice of my wife and grown up children, but I'm not accountable to them in outworking my Leadership role.

Though I concede there are some examples of dual leadership and a co-equal team leadership can work for a period of time, but it rarely lasts beyond an experimental period. In fact, when there is a change of personnel, it usually comes to an end. This is because the unique personal and close relationship of the duo, or the team in the initial set-up of a church, government, school, business, etc. simply cannot be replicated.

The one area that undermines the fully responsible and accountable model of leadership and good governance, is when one's spouse, children, other family members are on the Eldership Board. This should be avoided for the following reasons:

It is difficult for a leader to be totally free to lead within the bounds of accountability to the team, if his or her family members are on the Board.

It is also very hard for a team to be totally objective and impartial, when it comes to the very serious and sensitive matter of bringing the leader to account on some issue, if a family member is on the Board.

There is no conflict of interest if a spouse, child or other family member is fully involved in some ministry role within the church; but it becomes a most serious conflict of interest when they are also members of the accountability Board of the church.

A spouse or family member can be recognised as an assistant Pastor, be on salaried staff, counsel, preach, teach, etc. They should not be prejudiced if Jesus has called and gifted them to flow in a ministry role within the same church; even though there will need to be some special adjustments in place if this occurs. However, to avoid messy family entanglements and the danger of nepotism, the Board of Elders who are the ultimate human authority in the church should not be connected to the Leader's personal family.

There are just too many examples of couples who affirm they are both the Lead Pastors, yet when the obvious Leader steps down or needs to be brought to account by their overseeing Board, the spouse also steps down, as they are treated as one unit (even when on salary). This phenomenon clearly reveals there can only be one Lead Pastor in reality and the Eldership Board and the Ministry Leaders of the church innately know who it is.

In the start-up phase of a church - when it is a designated outreach and under the authority and supervision of a mother church or a denominational Executive - it may be necessary, if there are no appropriate candidates, for a spouse or family member to be on the interim leadership team. If it is necessary for a family member to be on the initial team, the mother church or denomination mentoring them should take a direct supervisory role in the sensitive matters like salaries, disputes, etc. This is not the ideal, and it should only occur in the rarest of circumstances, and the family member should step down from the interim leadership team as soon as an appropriately qualified person becomes available to serve on the team.

An important sign that a new church is ready to be recognised as an autonomous local church, is when it has at least two other spiritually mature members who are suitable to join with the Lead Minister to become the initial Eldership Board.

If a family member is on the Eldership Team for a longer period than the start-up phase of a church, there must be enough non-family members on the Team to be able to out-vote and over-rule the Lead Minister and his/her family members. For full accountability to be preserved, family members must be excluded from Board discussions and decisions to do with remuneration matters, or if the Lead Minister is to be corrected, disciplined or dismissed from office.

PART 2 – RELATIONAL HEALTH

... ITS AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY FOR THERE TO BE EXCELLENT RELATIONAL HEALTH BETWEEN LEAD MINISTERS AND THEIR CHURCH ELDERSHIP BOARDS

A good and very sound relationship should exist before the lead minister recommends someone for appointment.

If it is not there prior to their appointment, it will most likely disintegrate once they are appointed; and this can spell big trouble for the Lead Minister and the church.

They must be 'well known to' and 'keenly observed by' the Lead Minister over several years and never just several months.

- 1. Never compromise 1 Timothy. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, where Paul tells us what specific characteristics potential candidates should be displaying before they are recognised and appointed as elders.**

The only spiritual gifts/natural aptitudes/abilities/competencies that seem to get a mention are (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:4) "able to teach" and the "ability to govern/manage" (1 Timothy 3:5, Titus 1:7). Interestingly, all the rest have to do with sound Christian character traits. The most important personal life arenas mentioned and which are readily observable involve our **family** and **work** life (1 Timothy 3:4,7; Titus 1:7). Therefore, their marriage/family needs to be in good order and they also need to have a good reputation in the world regarding employment record and community/civic relationships.

Potential Elders should be thoroughly tested by being placed in various ministry, leadership and administrative-related roles and positions prior to considering them for Eldership. The Lead Minister and existing Elders need to watch them very closely over several years as they outwork the various ministry tasks assigned to them. The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to "test" potential

leaders before appointing them to office. If this principle applies to a church position like a Deacon, with less responsibility, we must be doubly sure when it comes to the appointment of new elders. *“Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons”* 1 Timothy 3:10 (NLT). Paul reiterates this by reminding Timothy not to be “hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Timothy 5:22). The NIV study notes say *“Paul is speaking of the ordination of an elder, which should not be performed until the candidate has time to prove himself.”*⁹

Their personal suitability as a potential elder also needs to be rigorously assessed by having them sit in as an observer or trainee Elder for at least a 12 month period. **Character** is of first importance, but **competency** is also a significant factor, particularly if the Eldership Board need the skills of new members to enhance their functionality as a team. This trainee period will also determine whether the potential new Elder will fit into the team or has the right **chemistry** and really appreciates and understands the **culture** of the church and its Eldership Board.¹⁰ During this time they need to have completed some in-service training for aspiring new Elders.

Lead Ministers who are pressured to appoint people who have attitudinal and behavioural problems, or who are not totally loyal, are making a serious mistake. Such appointments are never satisfactory, and will harm the Lead Minister, the Board and the Church.

2. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

The NIV Study Bible lists down 24 specific qualifications for Elders and Deacons.

Self-controlled - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8

Hospitable - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8

Able to teach - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9

Not violent but gentle - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7

Not quarrelsome - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:3

Not a lover of money - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:3

⁹ NIV Study Bible (1985) Zondervan

¹⁰ In Chapter 2 of my book *The Leader I Can Be*, I share in detail about these C's.

Not a recent convert - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:6
 Has a good reputation - Elder - 1 Timothy 3:7
 Not overbearing - Elder - Titus 1:7
 Not quick-tempered - Elder - Titus 1:7
 Lover of what is good - Elder - Titus 1:8
 Upright, holy - Elder - Titus 1:8
 Disciplined - Elder - Titus 1:8
 Above reproach (Blameless)- Elder/Deacon - 1 Timothy 3:2; 3:9, Titus 1:6,
 Husband of one wife - Elder/Deacon - 1 Timothy 3:2; 3:12, Titus 1:6
 Temperate - Elder/Deacon - 1 Timothy 3:2; 3:8, Titus 1:7
 Respectable - Elder/Deacon - 1 Timothy 3:2; 3:8
 Not given to drunkenness - Elder/Deacon - 1 Timothy 3:3,8; Titus 1:7
 Manages his own family well - Elder/deacon - 1 Timothy 3:4; 3:12
 Sees that his children obey him - Elder/deacon - 1 Timothy 3:4-5,12; Titus 1:6
 Does not pursue dishonest gain - Elder/Deacon 1 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:7;
 Holds to the truth - Elder/deacon - 1 Timothy 3:9, Titus 1:9
 Sincere - Deacon - 1 Timothy 3:8
 Tested - Deacon - 1 Timothy 3:10

Here is a list of 19 qualifications (based only on, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) stated in a clear and contemporary manner.

1. **Above reproach** – Elders must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free of patterns of sin.
2. **Husband of one wife** – Elders, if married, must be devoted spouses.
3. **Temperate** – Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.
4. **Prudent** – Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgement, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
5. **Respectable** – Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and honourable behaviour.
6. **Hospitable** – Elders must be unselfish with their personal resources. They must be willing to share blessings with others.
7. **Able to teach** – Elders must be able to communicate truth and sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way.

8. **Not addicted to wine** – Elders must be free from addictions and willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
9. **Not pugnacious or quick tempered** – Elders must be gentle, patient, and able to exercise self-control in difficult situations.
10. **Uncontentious** – Elders must not be given to quarrelling or selfish argumentation.
11. **Free from the love of money** – Elders must not be stingy, greedy, out for sordid gain, or preoccupied with amassing material things.
12. **Manage own household** – Elders must have a well-ordered household and a healthy family life.
13. **Not a new convert** – Elders must not be new believers. They must have been Christians for long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of their spirituality.
14. **Good reputation with outsiders** – Elders must be well-respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.
15. **Not self-willed** – Elders must not be stubborn, prone to force opinions on other, or abuse authority. They must be servants.
16. **Loving what is good** – Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.
17. **Just** – Elders must desire to be fair and impartial. Their judgements must be based on scriptural principles.
18. **Devout** – Elders must be devoted Christ followers seeking to be conformed to His image. They must be committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their own walk.
19. **Holding fast the faithful Word** – Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.¹¹

3. SOME KEY BIBLICAL VALUES AND CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDES.

...How aligned are you to these values and attitudes?

¹¹ Broudakis, P. (1997) *Church Leader's Handbook*, Willow Creek Association

1. Humble/Submissive – Towards God

- James 4:6, 10 *“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”*
- 1 Peter 5:6 *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”*

2. Teachable – Towards God's Word

- 2 Timothy 2:15 *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

3. Eagerly Desirous – Towards God's Service

- 1 Timothy 3:1 *“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.”*
- 1 Corinthians 14:1 *“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.”*

4. Loving Loyalty – Towards God's Church

- Proverbs 3:3-4 *“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.”*
- 1 Peter 5:1-4 *“To the Elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”*
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- Hebrews 13:17-18 *“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way.”*

5. Integrity – Towards God’s World

- 1 Timothy 3:7 *“He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*
- 1 Timothy 4:12 *“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”*
- Proverbs 11:3 *“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.”*

6. Surrendered – Towards Jesus Christ and the cause of Jesus’ Kingdom

- Matthew 6:9-10 *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*
- Matthew 6:33 *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*
- Matthew 28:19, 20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

4. A CHARACTER CHECK FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

The following very incisive questions for leaders are a good character check for all aspiring spiritual leaders, and in particular those men and women who desire to be Lead Ministers and Elders. The standard of holiness required for Lead Ministers and Elders has to be extremely high as they have to be top role models of **Love, Humility, Purity, Discipline** and **Integrity**.

Try rating yourself between 1-10. If you are below 5 there is some spiritual remedial work you will need to undertake to enhance your personal holiness quotient.

LOVE

- In your recent encounters with strangers or people you know, have you been consistently kind and compassionate?
- Is there any person against whom you are harbouring bitterness, resentment or jealousy?
- Are there groups of people whom you find yourself stereotyping or discounting?
- Do you have a complaining spirit, especially when others do not meet your expectations?
- Do you carry hidden anger against anyone?
- Do you speak unkindly concerning people when they are not present?
- Have you recently extended yourself toward the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, or the elderly?
- Are you intentionally building at least one friendship with a non-churched person?
- Are you a genuinely joyful person to be around these days?
- Do you intentionally create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation for those who follow your leadership?
- Do you use people for the achievement of your mission?

HUMILITY

- Do you put on a pretence of being something you are not?
- Are your conversations often self-serving or self-promotional?
- Are you controlling, often insisting on having your own way?
- Do you have a stubborn, critical, or unteachable spirit?
- Can you receive constructive criticism, without becoming overly defensive?
- Are you overly concerned with your title, your image, and your status in the organisation?
- If you are ruthlessly honest, do you consider yourself to be better than most other people, especially those you lead?
- Are you concerned about receiving credit for your ideas, your contribution, and your leadership role?
- Are you quick to genuinely celebrate the success of others, even when they accomplish “more” than you?

- Have you intentionally been performing any secret acts of service in recent days?
- Are you in any setting where you are a follower instead of a leader?

PURITY AND SELF-DISCIPLINE

- Have you allowed anything to gain mastery over you – food, television, pleasure, alcohol, drugs, sports, the Internet, etc?
- Do you listen to unwholesome radio or music, watch unwholesome television or movies, or indulge in any pornography?
- Do you allow impure thoughts about sex to stay in your mind?
- Are you engaging in any flirtatious activity or feasting on escapist thoughts with anyone who is not your spouse?
- Are you getting enough rest and practising regular Sunday worship?
- Is your life marked by too much noise or busyness, and are you always in a hurry?
- Do you neglect or give little time to personal prayer and solitude?

INTEGRITY

- Have you recently lied, exaggerated, or embellished the truth?
- Have you followed through on your promises – is your word to others completely reliable?
- Do you do your work “with all your heart,” or is it easy for you to coast along on your gifts and reputation?
- Do you have a thankful heart toward God, frequently acknowledging His goodness and blessings?
- Are you honouring God with your finances, both in your personal life and in your leadership capacity?
- Is there any area of your life you are hiding from others to protect your image or position?
- Are you seeking to live the kind of life you urge (or teach) others to live?
- Are you opening up your life in an accountable way to at least one other person (besides your spouse) who will speak truth to you?

- Are you obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit as best you can discern them?
- Are you as fully devoted to God as you can be?¹²

5. SOME DEVELOPMENTAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Key words: Availability, Ability, Reliability, Responsibility, Accountability, Flexibility (or Adaptability) and Authority.

Only available, **competent** people with appropriate **capabilities and competencies** who show top Christian **character** by being reliable, responsible, accountable and flexible in their personal and ministry lives, should be given authority in the church. Lead Ministers who give authority to unreliable, irresponsible, unaccountable and inflexible people, who may have great abilities, but cannot pass the 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 prescriptive character test for an Elder, are making the biggest ministry mistake possible.¹³

6. THE NEED FOR LEAD MINISTERS TO PERSONALLY SHEPHERD THE ELDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Be involved in the spiritual lives of the Elders and Elder's families without being unnecessarily intrusive

Always be available to help them in times of need.

Don't just be task-orientated or agenda-driven at Board meetings.

Make Eldership Board meetings a small relational group as well.

(ie) pray over personal needs, have open sharing times and allow caring to take place for up to 30 minutes each time a meeting is held. Enjoy a meal together if practical.

Do not delegate this to anyone else. - it must be seen as the Lead Minister's responsibility to facilitate.

This does not mean that Lead Ministers and their Elders live in each other's pockets.

Never "play favourites" as it can create envy in some team members, and all team members are to be loved equally.

¹² *Leadership Development Manual*, (2001) Willow Creek Association

¹³ I expand on this in chapter 2 of my book *The Leader I Can Be*

7. THE NEED TO BE “UP-FRONT” REGARDING THE EXPECTATIONS LEAD MINISTERS HAVE FOR THEIR ELDERS

How many committee meetings will there be each year (ie, weekly, fortnightly, monthly or bi-monthly) and what level of pre-committee work will be expected of them.

How much work is required of them individually and as a team? Work out beforehand the number of hours per week and remember they also have full-time jobs in most cases and a family to look after. What about weekly Church attendance? Does this involve 1, 2 or 3 Services per week and what about some other small group involvement, etc? Provide a role description for the entire team and as appropriate, for individual team members as well.

8. THE ELDER’S RELATIONSHIP TOWARD THEIR LEAD MINISTER

Allow the Lead Minister to lead

His/Her responsibilities are to:

- Lead and chair the Eldership Board and Ministry Staff meetings and be ex-officio on all church committees. Another Elder can chair the meetings, but the Lead Minister must be free to lead under God’s direction.
- Cast the strategic vision for the church.
- Develop the ministry style of the church.
- Set the spiritual direction and faith goals/targets over set periods of time (ie, 1 year – 3 years, etc.).
- Ensure all ministries are aligned to the accepted Values and Vision of the church.
- Minister the Word and oversee the other main Public Teachers.
- Ensure ministry development. (ie) Identifying, investing in and entrusting people for Ministry and Leadership roles in the church.

There can only be one leader of the church, therefore the Elders need to sublimate their own ambition in this area and be prepared to work under the Lead Minister so as to enhance his/her leadership of the church.

Some Elders, however, are potential Lead Ministers in training; and they need help to know when it is time to move out and become a Lead Minister in their own right.

Free the Lead Minister to lead effectively

Take as much off his/her shoulders that is not indispensable to their main roles. (ie) Pastoral, Counselling and Administration duties; but the elders must have his/her permission for this to work smoothly.

Always be looking out for ways to release their time so they can concentrate energy on spiritual leadership concerns, prayer, study and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6). Be there when you are needed by them.

Provide care and support for the Lead Minister and their family

Appreciate the unique stresses they face, the burden of constant leadership and the relentless nature of weekly preaching/teaching. Relate lovingly to their spouse and children. Ensure their financial and material needs are looked after. Paul is very clear about how we should treat our leaders, particularly those who excel in leadership, preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 *"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."*

Therefore, reasonable and equitable salary packages are the order of the day.¹⁴ Be considerate of other needs and associated expenses. eg. conferences, study trips, books and magazines. Don't be shocked by the humanity of the Lead Minister and his/her family and always keep confidences particularly during the hard times.

¹⁴ Refer to CRC Churches International, *Salary Guidelines* – available at www.cfcchurches.org

IN CONCLUSION

This book is prefaced and grounded upon my strongly-held conviction that all Lead Pastors and Eldership Boards need to become far more **‘Interdependent’** at both a ministerial level and also at the local church level. I appreciate what Leo Harris, the founder of CRC Churches International wrote about this: *“Finally, God has given us the concept of revival in and through local churches. We have seen that the New Testament pattern for the Christian church is the establishment of local self-governing churches under a Scripturally qualified oversight. But the New Testament envisages these local Christian churches, while being autonomous, as functioning in the unity and love of the Spirit of God.*

*In other words, our concept is not of **independent** local churches, but of self-governing, **inter-dependent** local churches, and there is a vast difference between the two. We do not glory in our independence, but we strive to live up to the claims of inter-dependence, for we are all members of one body in Christ.”¹⁵*

I reject the extremes of both the **‘Independent’** and the **‘Dependent’** models and by the grace of God, I’m committed to outworking the ‘autonomous **Interdependent** model’ as the closest to the New Testament pattern.

I believe pursuing an **autonomous Interdependent model** is not only Biblical but in the best interests of our churches and their future viability.

Pastor Bill Vasilakis

May, 2025

¹⁵ Harris, L. (2006), *Legacy, (Vision – Concept and Challenge of the CRC and Operations Outreach)*, CRC Churches International Publications.

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APPENDIX 1 – Christian Family Centre

Churches, Leadership and Governance Structure

Our Decision Making Arrangements

BOARD OF ELDERS/DIRECTORS & SENIOR MINISTER (AUTHORITY)

The Senior Minister, together with the Board of Elders/Directors, are the governance/accountability body of the CFC. They handle the big picture areas of vision-casting, values clarification, leadership appointments, big property purchases and finances, including remuneration of salaried staff through its Salaries Sub-Committee members who are not employees of the church.

As a loyal and committed member of CRC Churches International, we outwork the presbyterian model of church government as stated in our CFC Constitution, and we follow the guidelines that our CRC movement has in place entitled *The Role and Authority of Senior Ministers and Church Eldership Boards*.

The Board is fully accountable to our Advisory Council in the event of an unresolvable matter that could threaten the unity and viability of CFC. They are authorised to resolve the matter in consultation with the Australian National Executive of our CRC denominational family. They receive all Board minutes, papers and offer counsel and support to the Board.

LOCAL LEAD PASTORS (LEADERSHIP)

They are responsible to provide spiritual and pastoral leadership for our local churches and outreaches in the Christian Family Centre way i.e. common vision, values, ministry purposes and style, governance structure and financial processes etc.

They outwork their leadership roles under the trust and delegated authority of the CFC Senior Minister and Board of Elders/Directors, and they are fully accountable to them and cooperate in a close fashion to outwork our multi-site church model.

MINISTRY/LEADERSHIP TEAM (MINISTRY)

This team is appointed by the local Lead Pastor to assist him/her to oversee and manage the various ministry departments and teams operating in the local church.

The local Lead Pastor is to follow the principles about appointments, team members, qualifications etc., of the CRC Senior Minister/Eldership Board guidelines (as it applies to our unique CFC governance context.)

The team members are to loyally function in clearly defined ministry roles under the local Lead Pastor's leadership to ensure the congregation is cared for and led in a way that results in spiritual health and growth. They are team builders, implementers, doers and have a different role to the local Lead Pastor.

They, like the Lead Pastors, serve under the overall spiritual direction/vision casting role of the Senior Minister/Eldership Board, and can call upon them for help when needed.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY BETWEEN THE THREE DECISION-MAKING BODIES IN THE CFC

	BOARD OF ELDERS/ DIRECTORS & SENIOR MINISTER (Authority)	LOCAL LEAD PASTOR (Leadership)	LOCAL LEADERSHIP MINISTRY TEAM (Ministry)
1.	Set the spiritual vision, mission, values, corporate ministry strategies and overall policies and directions of the CFC.	Provide Spirit-led leadership and prayerfully ensure the spiritual health and growth of the local church	Personally support the local Lead Pastor in the outworking of his/her leadership and ministry responsibilities and be committed to pray for him/her, the local church and the CFC.
2.	Monitor the spiritual health of our local churches and outreaches and be committed to praying for them.	Set the ministry direction and strategic plan of the local church.	Help the local church Lead Pastor in setting the ministry directions and strategic plan of the church
3.	Appoint the Senior Minister/Chairman of the Board with the Advisory Council's endorsement; and appoint the local church Lead Pastors and the Advisory Council.	Set the preaching and teaching menu of the local church.	Outwork the local ministry direction of the church under the supervision of the local Lead Pastor.
4.	Approve appointment of nominees for CRC ministry credentials.	Appoint the local leadership ministry team, salaried staff and departmental leaders. <i>*See footnote 1</i>	Oversee or run the various ministries and departments of the local church.
5.	Approve and monitor the budgets and strategic plans of all local churches and outreaches. Manage the CFC Churches Fund.	Develop a discipleship culture that equips people for ministry and mission.	Ensure that effective ministry teams are built throughout the church.

	BOARD OF ELDERS/ DIRECTORS & SENIOR MINISTER (Authority)	LOCAL LEAD PASTOR (Leadership)	LOCAL LEADERSHIP MINISTRY TEAM (Ministry)
6.	Approve property purchases/sales and building developments.	Determine the parameters for the yearly financial budget and ensure the proper management of the local church's finances, property and assets.	Prepare the yearly budget and manage 90% of the local church's finances, property and assets. <i>*See footnote 2</i>
7.	Establish remuneration/salaries for all paid staff through a Salaries Committee who are not employees of the CFC.	Outwork the established vision, values, corporate ministry strategy, policies, guidelines, insurance provisions, duty of care etc. in the local church, and be accountable to the Senior Minister and the Board of Elders/ Directors. <i>*See footnote 3</i>	Help align the church and its ministry leaders & teams to the CFC vision, values, corporate ministry and missions strategy, policy guidelines, duty of care, insurance provisions, governance and leadership framework.

8.	Arbitrate serious unresolvable disputes in local church ministry teams. Send Board minutes to the Advisory Council.	Meet regularly and work in cooperation with all our local Lead Pastors in collective ministry and mission initiatives, particularly in church planting and world missions. <i>*See footnote 1</i>	Care for the congregation and work diligently to develop and grow the church.
9.	Approve Constitutional amendments with the Advisory Council's endorsement.		Work in love and unity as a team under the Lead Pastor, with the right to appeal to the Senior Minister and Board if there is a serious unresolvable dispute.
10.	Ensure policies, guidelines, clear practices and insurance provisions etc., are in place for all our local church sites.		
11.	Receive minutes of all major local church		

	leadership ministry team decisions and directions. <i>*See footnotes 3 & 4</i>		
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1. In large churches with multiple full-time and part-time employees, and as the capacity and competency of staff grows through years of experience, it is envisaged some Senior staff will take on many of the tasks of the Lead Pastor. This is to be done under the Lead Pastor's direction and these leaders continue to be accountable to him/her.

2. All CFC Churches place 7% of their weekly tithes into our CFC Churches Fund, and 3% of their weekly income into our CRC Churches International denomination.

3. The CRC has already developed quite a few policies and processes and we simply adopt and adapt these to fit our CFC context... (i.e.) Senior Ministers/Eldership Board Guidelines; Duty of Care - Children; Duty of Care – Adults Ministerial Code of Ethics; Salary Guidelines; Employment and Policy Guidelines; Ministry Guidelines; Credential Pathways; Discipline and Restoration of Ministers; Sexual Harassment; Divorce and Remarriage etc.

4. The Board of Elders/Directors have a detailed role description and list of specific responsibilities along with an assessment schedule that ensures they are covering all the relevant governance issues under their oversight.

Appendix 2

CHRISTIAN FAMILY CENTRE CHURCHES ADVISORY COUNCIL

1. BACKGROUND

The legal governance of the Christian Family Centre Churches will be the responsibility of the duly appointed Board as stated in the Constitution and rules.

The Advisory Council are an advisory body who must be invited in to intervene in a dispute, by either:

1. The Senior Minister, or
2. The two-thirds (2/3rds) agreement of the Board.

1.1 General Counsel

The Advisory Council can provide general counsel and advice to the Senior Minister and/or the Board at any time.

1.2 Senior Minister / Governance Board relationship.

In relation to any employment related matters of the Senior Minister or any unresolved dispute that may arise, the Advisory Council must be consulted in order to determine and outcome. This includes the appointment, termination or discipline of the Senior Minister.

The Advisory Council, when officially appealed to, are the ultimate accountability point or matters relating to the Senior Minister and the Advisory Council's determinations are binding on both the Senior Minister and the Christian Family Centre Churches Board.

1.3 Advisory Council Appointment and Removal Process

The Advisory Council Members shall be recommended by the Senior Minister and ratified by the Board at the first Board Meeting in each calendar year.

To avoid an arbitrary abuse of power, the Board cannot remove all members of the Advisory Council at the same time.

The Advisory Council should have a minimum of 5 members.

A minimum of 3 members should be reappointed to the Advisory Council for continuity purposes.

Advisory Council members may make a recommendation to the Board in the event that one of the appointed Advisory Council members is no longer suitable for the role.

The endorsed Advisory Council Members at the time of incorporation of the Company are:

Xxxxxx

Xxxxxx

Xxxxxx

2. MANDATE

The Advisory Council is to provide advice to the Senior Minister and thereby to the Board.

The Oversight functional responsibility shall include:

- Spiritual input to the Senior Minister providing wisdom, encouragement and support;
- Resolution of disputes or conflicts involving the Senior Minister and the Board; and
- Appointment, dismissal and discipline of the Senior Minister.

3. RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

3.1 Unresolved Dispute

The Advisory Council are to be advised and involved in any unresolved conflict that occurs between the Senior Minister and the Board or vice versa. The model for resolution is outlined later in this document and is to be utilized prior to an invitation being made for the Advisory Council being consulted.

3.2 Dispute Resolution Process

Any dispute that may arise between Board Members is to be resolved using a Biblical model, recognizing that the ultimate accountability for CFC Churches remains with the Senior Minister. The resolution process to be followed is:

3.2.1 The two parties are to attempt to discuss the conflict with a view to resolution.

3.2.2 If a meeting cannot be mutually agreed upon or, the meeting does not lead to a satisfactory conclusion of the matter, then the Senior Minister or the Board by a three-fourths majority decision are able to contact a member of the Advisory Council requesting their involvement.

3.2.3 The Advisory Council Member is then to advise the remaining Advisory Council Members and formulate a process for reconciliation, keeping the Senior Minister and the Board up to date.

3.2.4 The Advisory Council can process the dispute by whatever means they feel necessary including remote consultation or an in-situ consultation. The decision of the Advisory Council is final and binding on both the Senior Minister and the Board, unless there is a legal process in place or required.

3.2.5 Any costs incurred by the Advisory Council and associated with the resolution process are to be borne by the Company.

4. EMPLOYMENT RELATED MATTERS

4.1 Appointment, Dismissal, Censuring or Discipline of the Senior Minister

Any matter relating to the appointment, dismissal, censuring or discipline of the Senior Minister must be referred to the Advisory Council prior to any action being taken.

4.2 Removal of the Senior Minister

In the event of the death, incapacitation, termination or proven misconduct (immorality, misappropriation of funds, and/or doctrine contradicting the adopted Articles of Faith of

the Church) of or by the Senior Minister, the Board shall be responsible for the immediate administration of the Company's affairs. Notification of the event and a request for assistance is to occur as soon as possible to the Advisory Council.

4.3 Appointment of New Senior Minister

The Board with the pre-approval of the Advisory Council shall have the power to nominate, approach and appoint a person of their choice to the position of Senior Minister.

4.4 Process for Appointment or Termination of the Senior Minister

Any appointment or termination of a Senior Minister by the Board shall be carried by a three-fourths majority of the Board, but only with the endorsement of the Advisory Council after they have consulted with the CRC National Executive.