

# LifeChurch Panania Council



## **Biblical governance**

### **Jesus is the Head of our church**

'Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Saviour.' (Ephesians 5:23)

'The Son... is the head of the body; the church.' (Colossians 1:15-18)

Therefore we follow a Christ-centred Biblical model of leadership.

### **Every church member has equal spiritual capacity**

God's Holy Spirit indwells every believer equally and fully:

'You are a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you.' (1 Corinthians 3:16)

'The Holy Spirit dwells in us.' (2 Timothy 1:14)

Therefore our members are the decision makers for all matters regarding our church.

### **Every church has human leaders**

Every Biblical church had local leaders (Titus 1:5).

New Testament churches always had a plurality of leaders, or a team of leaders, (Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:5; James 5:14).

Therefore our church will have a team of leaders, from within our church.

# Leadership structure

## Titles of leaders

The church in Jerusalem was led by Apostles and Elders (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23).

Each church in Asia Minor was led by Elders (Acts 14:23).

The church in Ephesus was led by Elders / Overseers / Pastors (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 5:17, 20).

The church at Philippi was led by Overseers and Deacons (Philippians 1:1).

The churches in Crete were led by Elders and Overseers (Titus 1:5, 7).

Other leaders included Pastor-Teachers (Ephesians 4:11)

Leadership by Elders was the most common title (James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1).

Titles and tasks were used interchangeably. Elders are also Overseers and Pastors (Acts 20:17, 28).

Each church used a title for their leaders that suited their unique circumstances.

Jewish synagogues were led by Elders, the church frequently used that common title.

Therefore the church has the flexibility to use a title for leaders that suits our local circumstances. Our church is led by a team of leaders known as the church Council.

## Tasks of leaders

The work load of our Council is spread across the team of leaders. Not every leader is expected to be highly competent at every task, because each believer is gifted differently by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

The title (noun) of the leaders often express their tasks (verb).

They are Leaders who are to lead

They are Overseers who are to oversee and pastor (Acts 20:28)

They are Pastors who are to nurture and protect (Ephesians 4:11-12)

The duties of leaders also include these tasks.

The primary tasks are prayer and ministering God's Word (Acts 6:4)

They are to teach (1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Acts 20:28);

They are to guard (Acts 20:28-29; Titus 1:9-14);

They are to oversee (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3; Hebrews 13:7, 17);

They are to give counsel (Acts 21:23);

They are to shepherd Acts 20:28)

They are to handle disputes (Acts 15:2ff);

They are to visit and pray for the sick (James 5:14)

They are to supervise the distribution of money (Acts 11:30).

## Qualifications of leaders

Leaders are primarily chosen because of their spiritual maturity and focus on service (Acts 6:3).

Scripture also lays down extensive personal qualifications for the office of Elder and Deacon (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-3).

It is interesting to note that not even Jesus meets these qualifications to lead His own church! He was not the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2, 12, Titus 1:6), nor did He have well controlled children (1 Timothy 3:4, 12, Titus 1:6). Nor did He have a good reputation with those outside the church (1 Timothy 3:7).

Every candidate for leadership is a saved sinner, and has not met every qualification throughout her/his lifetime. Therefore we take these requirements as principles indicating the current condition of each leader.

## Appointment of leaders

In Biblical churches, there was no fixed pattern of appointment. In some locations, leaders appointed leaders:

‘Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.’ (Acts 14:23),

‘The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.’ (Titus 1:5)

Biblical leaders also instructed the church on how to choose their leaders

<sup>2</sup> The Twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. (Acts 6:2-6)

Therefore, the leaders actively recruit new leaders, although the church may participate in the nomination process.

## Responsibilities to leaders

Scripture makes it clear that we have obligations toward our elders.

We are to recognize them (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Corinthians 16:15-18)

We are to respect them (1 Thessalonians 5:13; 1 Timothy 5:1)

We are to protect them from unfounded allegations (1 Timothy 5:9)

We are to remember them and imitate them (Hebrews 13:7)

We are to obey them (Hebrews 13:17)

We are to remunerate them (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

## **Discipline of leaders**

All church members submit themselves to gracious and nurturing discipline (Matthew 18:15-20). Our leaders are subject to the same discipline procedures as all other church members (1 Timothy 5:20).

<sup>19</sup> Do not entertain an accusation against an elder, except on the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> But those who persist in sin should be rebuked in front of everyone, so that the others will stand in fear of sin. <sup>21</sup> I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to maintain these principles without bias, and to do nothing out of partiality. (1 Timothy 5:19-21)

## **Meetings of leaders**

Our leaders meet at such times, and in such locations, and in such forms, as allow them to efficiently and effectively fulfil their responsibilities.

Our leaders report to the church, and remain accountable to the church.

## **Difficulties between leaders**

Our leaders are expected to bring differing viewpoints and robust discussion to the issues they need to address.

However, they are all spiritually mature and competent to resolve any difficulties that arise between them. Any difficulties that escalate to conflict will be taken to the church for prayer and resolution. In the event of our church being unable to resolve any dispute, the Baptist Association will be requested to appoint a Moderator to guide our church to a resolution.