**ELDER ROLE**

**In the**

**AFCC COWBOY CHURCH MODEL**

**Purpose and Function**

1. Elders provide spiritual leadership and accountability to the church in accordance with scripture.

2. They provide a brotherhood of support and accountability for the pastor, assist the ministry teams with difficult issues, and serve as arbiters in matters of conflict.

3. They are responsible for administering church discipline and in general provide spiritual leadership, guidance, and assistance wherever and whenever appropriate.

4. The elder body is made up of three selected elders plus the pastor, who is the lead elder.

**Spiritual Leadership**

Elders model what it means to be Christ-like. Elders are an example for the congregation of how to live a Christian life, this includes how to relate to other Christians, how to relate to non-believers, how to be a godly man and have an active personal relationship with Jesus.

**Provide a Brotherhood of Support and Accountability for the Pastor**

1. Elders must be committed to the pastor.

2. Elders act as a buffer between the pastor and his critics; they also are an accountability group for the pastor, prayer partners for the pastor and friends of the pastor.

3. Elders are to meet with the pastor on a consistent regular basis for consultation, prayer and fellowship.

**Are a Limited Decision Making Body**

The only times when the elders become a decision making body are:

1) They are called on by the pastor to help him make a decision.

2) When a ministry team cannot reach consensus on an issue or asks for the elders’ help.

3) When the functional structure does not exist or breaks down.

4) In matters of church discipline.

**Have Limited Visible Involvement**

1. Elders do not have ongoing roles in the worship service and are not overly involved in the various ministry teams.

2. Elders are not an oversight body for the finances, personnel or pastor unless it is determined that unbiblical, immoral or unethical behavior has occurred.

3. They can be enlisted by the pastor, personnel team or the audit team if it is deemed necessary by any of these.

**Dual Roles**

Elders should not have dual leadership roles. When a candidate for elder is nominated he must be willing to step down from any other role in leadership that he occupies. Other leadership roles include; lay pastor, team leader, and team member, paid staff or band leader.

**Confidentiality**

1. All discussions between the elders are strictly confidential; this includes not discussing elder issues with the spouses of elders or other church members.

2. Breaking confidentiality is grounds for removal.

3. Elders do not meet without all the elders present including the pastor if this is possible and absolutely never meet to discuss problems about the pastor or another elder without them present.

4. The Pastor-Elder and Elder-Elder relationships must be 100% transparent.

**Common Myths about the Elder Role**

Myth #1- Elders rule the church*.*

Myth #2- Elders are to make sure the pastor is doing his job.

Myth #3- The elders are the complaint department.

Myth #4- The elders need to be involved in everything that is going on.

**Elder Intervention Using Matthew 18:15-17**

**Step one**: Never intervene in a matter until you are sure the first step given in verse 15 has been completed. The offender and the offended must first talk one on one just between them to try and resolve the problem. There are exceptions; when it involves a minor and an adult or when criminal behavior has taken place and an unsupervised meeting could be harmful or dangerous, use your God given judgment.

**Step two**: If the offender and the offended cannot work it out or after someone has been confronted about unbiblical or immoral behavior and they are unrepentant or unwilling to be held accountable the next step is to arrange a meeting with the elders and the involved parties. When there is a problem between two individuals the elders are to read appropriate scriptures that pertain to the situation then observe the two try to resolve their issues without much intervention. Remember at this point you are just witnesses as stated in verse 16.

**Step three**: After the elders have witnessed the parties try and resolve their issues and have enough information to form an opinion, if intervention is needed now is the time. Using scripture as their guide the elders need to make clear the expectations that must be followed in order to resolve the issue. Some limited time should be allowed to give an individual the opportunity to repent and respond to the Holy Spirit.

**Step four**: Titus 3:10-11. If the matter is not resolved and the elders conclude that an individual refuses to be held accountable and is unrepentant and unwilling to acknowledge their sin then it is the elders’ duty according to God's word to remove that individual from the fellowship of believers until they repent as stated in verse 17.

**Things to remember**: God hates those who sow discord in a body of believers Proverbs 6:19. Gossip, fault finding, unfounded criticism and not following Matthew 18 in daily life will destroy unity in the church and it is the elders’ duty to preserve unity in the church. If you are truly following God's word there will come a time when you must stand firm and follow all of the steps of Matthew 18 to their conclusion. Never skip a step or you will exclude the Holy Spirit from the process and always follow the steps in love with the hope of repentance and reconciliation.