

**LIVING STONES CHURCH**  
Elders



# ELDERS

## *Elders: Office and Authority*

### **Elders**

Jesus is the chief Shepherd of the church<sup>1</sup>. The church belongs to Him because He obtained her with His own blood<sup>2</sup>. He is the head, and the church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all<sup>3</sup>. To care for His church, the Holy Spirit has appointed Elders (or overseers) to shepherd local congregations of elect worshippers known as local churches<sup>4</sup>. Elders are to exercise oversight over these souls as stewards who will have to give an account to God for them at the end of time<sup>5</sup>.

At Living Stones the term "Elder" and "Pastor" are used interchangeably. This is because Elders are commanded to *shepherd* and the Latin word for shepherd is "pastor." *Elder* is a title for the office, while *Pastor* describes the function of the office.

### **Qualification of Elders**

An Elder must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, hospitable, able to teach, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined, and well thought of by outsiders.

An Elder must not be a drunkard, violent, quarrelsome, quick tempered, a lover of money, greedy for gain, arrogant, a recent convert, or have children that are open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

An Elder must hold fast to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. He must also manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-5)

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 5:1-5

<sup>2</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:23

<sup>4</sup> Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 13:17

## Official Duties of Elders

Elders are to:

- Teach and pray for God's people (Acts 6:4)
- Administer the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:42)
- Provide governing oversight and leadership (1 Peter 5:2, 1 Timothy 5:17)
- Train and empower leaders to teach and preach the gospel (1 Timothy 2:2)
- Equip church members to use their gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12)
- Conduct worship in an orderly fashion (1 Corinthians 14:26-33)
- Pray for the sick (James 5:14)
- Provide ongoing care for church members through counsel, admonishment, and encouragement. (Acts 20:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- Do the work of evangelism (2 Timothy 4:5)
- Protect the church from division and false doctrine (Titus 3:9-11, Acts 20:29-31, Titus 1:9)
- Lead by example (1 Peter 5:3)
- Enact church discipline and restoration (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:8)

These duties are to be conducted willingly and eagerly in a way that does not domineer over the flock or seek shameful gain. (1 Peter 5:1-5)

## Types of Elders and Their Basic Assignments at Local LS Churches

**Lead Pastor** - The Lead Pastor is the lead Elder of the Local Elder board. His job is to build a fruitful ministry. His role on the Elder Board is to set direction, develop healthy team dynamics, call and manage meetings, and guide decision making processes. Most of the time the Lead Pastor is the church's primary Preaching Elder. The Lead Pastor also serves on the LS Family Board of Elders.

**Executive Elders** - Executive Elders assist the Lead Pastor in the management and operation of the church as an organization. This includes budget and staff supervision as well as directional leadership for the Elder team.

**Preaching Elders** - Preaching Elders are gifted by the Holy Spirit to preach and teach the Word of God with clarity and conviction in a sound manner that leads God's elect into worship. Preaching Elders serve by preaching on Sundays, midweek services, and teaching classes. Teaching Elders are commissioned by the LS Family Elders to fill any Living Stones pulpit upon request of a Lead Pastor or Elder Board.

**Staff Elders** - Staff Elders are paid by the tithes of congregation to offer shepherding oversight in a particular ministry. They serve in Associate and Director roles. This includes but is not limited to: music and liturgy, Community Groups, university campus ministry, mission to the city, leadership development, Soul Care, family ministry, and student ministry.

**Lay Elders** - Lay Elders are unpaid Elders who participate on the local governing board as well as offer pastoral care to the congregation through prayer, counsel, teaching, discipline, and various forms of oversight.

### **Elder Requirements**

- All LS Elders must complete the LS Elder In Training Process before being commissioned as an Elder (Exceptions may be made for new Elders who are already Acts 29 assessed and approved).
- Lead Pastors must complete and pass the Acts 29 assessment within two years of their commissioning.
- Teaching Elders must complete and pass the LS Teaching Elder assessment.

## **Voting Authority on Local Elder Boards**

Living Stones Elders seek to make as many decisions in unanimous Elder agreement as possible. Some decisions, however, will need to go to a vote. Two-thirds vote is needed on a Local Elder Board to pass a decision. Further, in efforts to pursue wise and ethical decision making, every Elder will not have voting authority on every decision. Voting authority for the Local Elder Board is as follows:

### **Full Local Elder Board has has voting authority on:**

- Direction of the local church
- Doctrinal issues
- Member care
- Member discipline and restoration
- Ministry obstacles
- The appointment of Deacons

### **Lay Elders have voting authority on:**

- Staff compensation ranges (determined by Lay Elders from all LS churches)
- Final approval of Lead Pastor's and Executive Elder's salaries
- Lay Elders + Lead Pastor and Executive Elder(s) have voting authority on:
  - Annual budget approval
  - Staff compensation that is outside the pre-approved range
  - The hiring, firing, and transitioning of church staff, including Staff Elders.

### **Lead Pastors + Executive Elder(s) have voting authority on:**

- Staff compensation within pre-approved ranges by the Lay Elders
- Staff Elders + Lead Pastor and Executive Elder(s) have voting authority on:
  - Day to day ministry decisions and operations (ie. liturgy planning, curriculum decisions, volunteer management, etc.). For day to day ministry decisions, a tied vote goes to the Lead Pastor.

If an Elder team gets stuck with a split vote, they may appeal to the Living Stones Family Elders to decide the direction forward.

## Types of Elder Boards at Living Stones

- **Local Elder Boards** - A church's Local Elder Board consists of all the Elders, paid and unpaid, commissioned at that local church. Each Local Elder Board gathers on a monthly basis for the sake of governing and care of the church. Local Elder Boards are Led by the Lead Pastor.
- **Full Council Of Elders** - The Full Council Of Elders consists of every Elder, paid and unpaid from all Living Stones Churches. The Full Council gathers once a year for an annual meeting of encouragement and worship. It may be called to convene for other meetings regarding doctrinal and character matters that affect all Living Stones churches.
- **LS Family Elder Board** - LS Family Elders consists of the Lead Pastors from each church. It is led by the LS Network Director. This team gathers weekly and monthly to make ministry decisions regarding the collaborative operation and advancement of LS Churches. They are responsible for decisions regarding:
  - Corporate LS Budget approval and major financial decisions (ie. the purchase of a building for a local congregation, Missions donation approval)
  - Lead Pastor and Executive Elder Salaries for each local church
  - Preaching Elder assessments and approvals
  - The sending and planting of new churches
  - The hiring, firing and transitioning of Lead Pastors
  - Mediation and arbitration for major member, staff, Deacon, or Elder conflict that has appealed to this level.

## *Elder in Training Process*

Each Lead Pastor is responsible for the development and empowerment of Elders. As the Scripture says, "Entrust these things to faithful men who are able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2) The Lead Pastor and his Elder board must identify faithful men who love God, are filled with the Spirit, have godly character, and show pastoral calling to invite into the Elder In Training (EIT) process. The EIT process lasts between one and two years. It is the same for all Living Stones churches.

Suppose a local Elder board wants to substitute content in the process. In that case, they may do so upon approval from the LS Family Elders. Living Stones only commissions Biblically qualified men who complete the EIT process. In some cases, the LS Family Elders will approve an alternate program for an EIT (i.e., seminary or a residency).

## *Elder Commitments & Covenant*

*"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with His own blood." Acts 20:28*

The above passage was a commission from the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian Elders, and it stands as commission to every Elder of God's universal church. The commission clearly states that the church belongs to God. He purchased it with His own blood, and through His Holy Spirit, He has appointed Elders to be "overseers" that care for His flock.

When a purchase is made and entrusted to the care of another, the purchaser always expects the one entrusted to exercise careful stewardship. The more expensive the purchase, the higher the expectation of care. In this case, God has purchased His people with the infinite expense of His own blood. The church is God's prized treasure for whom He left everything in heaven, and gave up everything on earth to obtain. For this reason it is vital that the Elders of God's church "pay careful attention to themselves, and to all the flock." The office of Elder should not be taken lightly, and it would be wise for Elders to continuously evaluate their care and motives in their oversight of God's precious people.

This passage also calls the church God's "flock." They are the sheep of His pasture. He is the Chief Shepherd and intends that His church gets spiritual guidance, care, food, protection and healing correction. He has appointed local Elders to be "under-shepherds" and provide this in every local church. The latin word for shepherd is "pastor" which describes the role and responsibility of elders and overseers. For this reason, Living Stones uses the terms "Elder," "Overseer," and "Pastor," synonymously. "Elder" and "Overseer" describe the office, while "Pastor" describes the function of shepherding God's people.

This document is a way for each Living Stones Elder to annually reevaluate his call to the office of Elder according to the Biblical qualifications of the office. It is a chance for all of the Elders as a whole to "pay careful attention to themselves, and to all the flock." Below are the expectations for what it means to be an Elder at Living Stones Churches.

## *Personal Character: Who Elders Are*

### **Be a man who daily pursues the Lord**

Elders lead people to worship. They take the sheep to the Shepherd. This requires Elders to daily pursue God themselves. If they do not know the Shepherd's voice, how can they lead anybody else to Him? This requires Elders to daily practice the disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, silence-and-solitude, and other disciplines of the faith.

### **Be a man of character according to qualifications from 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1**

#### **Elders must be:**

- above reproach - cannot be accused of a disqualifying sin, or living in a pattern of unrepentant sin
- the husband of one wife - has eyes, heart, mind, and body dedicated to one woman, his wife.
- sober-minded - has the ability to be "level headed" and not overcome by substances or over-exaggerated feelings
- respectable
- hospitable - Hebrews defines this as welcoming to strangers (Heb. 13:2)
- able to teach (teachable) - can be translated both ways. Regardless, Elders ought to be both. Able to teach does not mean that preaching is the main gift, it simply means that if an opportunity to teach arises, Elders must be willing and able to do so.
- a lover of good
- self-controlled - as opposed to controlled by substances or sins
- upright - someone others can look up to
- holy - living a life that is "set apart" for honoring God
- disciplined - has control of his life and how he pursues God and loves others.
- well thought of by outsiders - by people outside the church

**Elders must NOT be:**

- a drunkard - living in a pattern of excessive drinking
- violent (he must be gentle) - in physical, emotional, or verbal confrontations
- quarrelsome - always looking to argue or fight
- quick tempered
- a lover of money or greedy for gain - including only pastoring for the salary
- open to charge of debauchery - excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures
- open to charge of insubordination - defiant to authority
- arrogant - thinking himself higher than others
- a recent convert

**Elders also must:**

- Hold fast to the trustworthy Word as taught - the Bible, the gospel, and Christian Orthodoxy as confirmed by the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasius Creeds
- Manage their own household well
  - - with all dignity, keeping his children submissive - children that respect and follow leadership of their fathers.
  - children are to be believers (faithful)
  - non-adult children are to be faithful to their father and in their participation in the Christian faith.

### **Be a man who is known in Biblical community within the local church**

“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire” (Proverbs 18:1)

God is a Triune God who created His people to be in community. This is no exception for Elders. This is why Paul calls Elders to “pay careful attention to themselves” (Acts 20:28). This can only happen within a community where an Elder allows himself to be known, and in which he strives to know others. To be known means to “allow others in” and to share your life. This would include things like day-to-day happenings, desires and dreams, struggles and sins. To know means to seek genuine interest in others and in their well-being. This does not mean that Elders are required to be in community with every person in their church. It simply means Elders are not to live in isolation from the community within their church. It will look different in each context.

### **Be a man who pursues and loves his wife and kids (if applicable)**

This is stated above in the “qualifications” section in terms of managing the household well. Ephesians 5:22-6:4 expands this a bit further to call all Christians to sacrificially pursue their spouse and children. If this is the call for all Christians, it certainly is the call for Elders. Elders’ wives and children need to know that they are loved. If asked, they ought to respond with specific ways in which their Husband/Father serves and cherishes them. It is vital for the Elder’s family to know and to feel that they are priority over the church.

### **Be a man of humility who repents of sin and treats all people with dignity**

1 Peter 5:5 calls Elders as well as all church members to “clothe themselves with humility toward one another.” Humility is a mark of Elders because they are under-shepherds of the Great Shepherd Jesus who clothed Himself with humility, even to the point of death. Elders also remain humble because they understand that their church is not really “theirs” but God’s, for Jesus purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). An Elder’s humility plays out in his willingness to repent of sin, be teachable, and in the ability to treat all people with dignity, for all people are image bearers of God.

## *Official Duties: What Elders Do*

### **Teach and pray for God's people**

Elders are to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. They are to teach right doctrine and correct false teachings of this world. (Acts 6:4, Titus 1:9, 1 Tim. 6:2b-3, 2 Tim. 4:1-2).

### **Govern God's people by providing oversight and leadership**

Shepherds provide oversight for their sheep. They make governing decisions to lead them to food, water, safety and places where the sheep will find health and flourishing. This is what Elders do for God's people (1 Tim. 3:1, 1 Peter 5:2, Hebrews 13:17).

### **Exemplify a life of worship for God's people**

Elders are not to domineer in their leadership but to lead by example. If the main task of the Elder is to lead the people to worship, this means that Elders must exemplify what a life of worship looks like. When the people ask, "What does it look like to worship God at church and in all of life?" They should think of their Elders (1 Peter 5:3).

### **Equip and train leaders in the ministry of the gospel**

Elders are to entrust leadership and the gospel to faithful men who are able to teach others also. This is exemplified in the leadership of our Lord Jesus with His disciples. It is God's plan to reach the whole world with the good news of His grace. To be an Elder means to actively and continuously recruit, train, and send leaders to lead in God's church. This will look different for every Elder, but it must be done (2 Tim. 2:2).

### **Equip church members to use their gifts**

The church is a body with many members. God gives each of His people certain gifts to be used for the building up of the body of Christ. It is the Elder's responsibility to help the members identify gifts and use them in an edifying and evangelistic way (Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12).

### **Conduct worship in an orderly fashion**

"God is not a God of confusion but of peace." Therefore gathered worship should be an experience that does not breed confusion and chaos. This will be challenged at times, and it is the job of Elders to make sure things are done orderly (1 Cor. 14:26-40).

**Pursue and welcome outsiders**

The kingdom of God is a kingdom that seeks outsiders. This is to be exemplified by Elders pursuing and welcoming those outside the faith with the love of God. This hospitality should take place in daily life and any time the people of God are gathered (Hebrews 13:2, 1 Tim. 3:2).

**Pray for the sick**

As representatives of God and His people, Elders are to pray for the sick. God often will hear their prayer and grant healing (James 5:14).

**Provide ongoing care for members in good standing** (1 Peter 5:2) including:

- prayer (James 5:14, Acts 2:42, 1 Thess. 5:17)
- counsel and advice (1 Thess. 5:12)
- admonishment, encouragement, and help as needed (1 Thess. 5:14)

**Do the work of evangelism**

The kingdom of God advances through the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the job of Elders to commit their entire life to proclamation of the gospel in private and corporate settings (2 Tim. 4:5, Romans 10:14-17).

**Protect the church**

One of the main role of shepherds is to protect the sheep. Elders are to protect God's people from division, false teachers and people who want to harm the members (Titus 1:9-11, Titus 3:10).

**Enact church discipline when necessary**

As an act to provide protection from sin for the church, and restorative healing for a member in grievous, unrepentant sin, it is the job of an Elder to discipline members. This begins with confrontation and counsel and may end in excommunication. It is meant to be done in a loving way that is good for the church and for the person at fault (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:4-5).

**Official duties are to be conducted in a willing and eager manner that does not domineer over the flock or seek shameful gain.** (1 Peter 5:2-4)

## *Expectations at Worship Gatherings*

### **Whenever the people are gathered, be present with the people.**

This looks like:

- Being physically present at Worship Gatherings, events, & Living Stones functions
- Actively welcoming and including outsiders
- Continuously offering prayer, counsel, encouragement, exhortation to members
- Exemplifying what it looks like to worship God when His people are gathered.
- Actively participate in and engage in all the elements of worship  
This is not a time to show up late, hide in an office, mess around on your phone, talk to buddies, or keep to yourself.

### **Be a team player**

Living Stones is a complex organization with multiple Elder teams. Therefore it is vital that all Elders:

- Have unity of mind according to the Doctrine, Vision, Strategy, and Mission of Living Stones.
- Fulfill your role as assigned. Don't try to fulfill someone else's role on the Living Stones team. Do your job.
- Attend, be engaged, and contribute at ALL of your designated Elder meetings. Come prepared and be ready to offer positive input or constructive feedback. (If for some reason you are unable to attend, clear it with your elder team and Lead Pastor ahead of time.)
- Assume the best of your fellow elders. If you cannot, ask questions before you make assumptions or accusations.
- When conflict arises in your heart, handle it with the Elder(s) involved. Do not let bitterness or gossip fester.
- Be bought in financially to Living Stones demonstrated by your tithe (at least 10%). As the ones who get to see God at work on the front lines, it would make sense to see Elders continually striving to exceed 10% in their giving.
- Be committed to the local body and city God has called you to. Do not view this calling as a stepping stone to "greater things."

## *Closing Thoughts*

The writer of Hebrews says to the church,

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Hebrews 13:17

**Do not take this lightly**, for all Elders will stand before Almighty God to give an account of the souls He's entrusted to them. If you decide to fulfill this office, do it with joy, for you get to see God at work in His beloved treasure.

## *Elder Covenant*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, choose to fulfill the office of Elder at Living Stones \_\_\_\_\_ for the entire year from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. I agree to fulfill the above requirements to the best of my ability, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

If I fall short, I will be open to challenge and rebuke. If I begin to struggle in my character or in my official responsibilities as an Elder, I will seek to make it known to my fellow Elders. If for some reason, I become disqualified, I will step down from this position in whatever manner my local Elders decide is best for the church.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_