

Elders Governance Structure at All Nations Church v1.0

The purpose of this document is to outline the governance structure in place at All Nations Church in Sudbury, Ontario, CANADA, as of February, 2019.

1.0 Background

1.1 All Nations Church (ANC) has used an *elders governance structure* since its founding in 1953, although this structure was never documented in written form until 2019.

1.2 ANC is a non-democratic congregation, governed by elders, who have the final decision-making authority in matters pertaining to doctrine and governance.

1.3 ANC functions as a charitable non-profit organization similar to an organization like World Vision, where the donors are the members and the elders are the board that oversees the operations of the organization.

2.0 Governance Structure

“In all matters of governance, the application of grace shall be the foundational value.”

2.1 The *elder board* will strive to have five voting members when possible.

2.2 The *lead pastor* is considered an elder, ex-officio.

2.3 The *elders*, lead pastor, and *staff members* designated by the lead pastor, and approved by the elders, are considered to be the *leadership team* and are present at all leadership team meetings.

2.4 It is the goal of the governance structure to ensure elders and staff work together as a leadership team to ensure and promote healthy church structure, systems, and unity.

2.5 The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) requires minutes to be kept of all meetings (including motions and recorded votes). The leadership team designates a recording secretary to keep proper minutes.

2.6 For the purposes of good governance, staff members cannot vote. But for the purposes of good church governance the opinion of each person on the leadership team is given equal value. However, CRA regulations prohibit staff members from voting.

2.7 The elders appoint a *chair* from among themselves to oversee the board and leadership team meetings.

2.8 The chair and the lead pastor work together to ensure the smooth functioning of the leadership team.

2.9 Recorded votes are taken at each meeting as a requirement of the CRA; it is desirable that motions move forward by consensus.

2.10 If there is no consensus, time is taken to pray, gather additional necessary information, and further discussion takes place. This could give any one member the power of veto. However, it has been our elders' experience (over half a century) that when elders work together for the good of the local church, having its interests paramount, consensus can be reached, even if a decision takes a bit more time.

We believe that decisions by consensus has created great unity in this church.

3.0 The Elders are a Self-Perpetuating Board

“The process for becoming and remaining an elder is essentially a spiritual one.”

3.1 The entire elder appointment process begins with prayer, seeking God's wisdom and insight.

3.2 Nominations for *elder candidates* come from the board members.

3.3 Any elder can object to a candidate name without comment or explanation, and the name is withdrawn.

3.4 If an elder proposes a candidate that is not known to the other elders, and there is no objection, an opportunity is given by the nominating elder to explain why the nomination was put forward.

3.5 Potential candidates are prayerfully considered and discussed honestly and openly, seeking God's direction.

3.6 Candidates are evaluated according to perceived suitability. Final decisions, as to who should be invited, are made through discussion and prayer.

3.7 When a candidate's name has unanimous agreement from the board, the proposing elder makes contact with the candidate to discuss the possibility of eldership.

3.8 A page of exploratory questions (see questions for elder candidate document) is given to the candidate for consideration.

3.9 The elders are informed of a candidate's progress, and if willing, the candidate can be invited to experience elder meetings as a guest.

3.10 As a guest, the elder candidate is invited to participate fully in discussions at meetings, with the understanding that contributions are not necessarily part of the final decision. In other words, the candidate's vote is not officially counted and recorded in meeting minutes.

3.11 There is no set time limit for moving the candidate forward to becoming a full elder. The candidate's time as a guest is designed to explore the fit between the existing elders and the candidate(s).

3:12 At any time, the board or candidate may excuse themselves or revoke their candidacy from participation in any further proceedings leading to eldership.

3:13 When sufficient time has elapsed for both the candidate and the board to assess their suitability to serve together as an eldership team, the candidate is invited to become an elder.

3:14 The proposed elder and partner (if applicable) are to be presented to the congregation during a Sunday service.

3:15 The elders are the final authority on the strategic direction and priorities of ANC.

4.0 The Elders are the Final Authority in All Human Resource and Relationship Issues

“The foundational values are that the system should be as equitable and transparent as possible.”

4.1 Transparency is encouraged in all human resource and relationship matters.

4.2 The elders may delegate hiring to the staff members/departments, but they are the final decision-making authority related to all employees of ANC.

4.3 The elders may hold in-camera meetings, as required, with regards to moral and human resources matters. These in-camera meetings may exclude members of the leadership team.

4.4 Should any elder or staff member come under legal or moral investigation, the elders may act according to the risk management policy outlined in the *Safe Place* document.

4.5 In the event of a potential discipline or dismissal of any elder, including the lead pastor, in-camera session(s) may be called by the elder Chair or lead pastor, without the attendance of the implicated individual, while still notifying that individual of the session and its purpose.

5.0 The Elders are the Final Authority on the Budget

“ The elders are responsible for overseeing the financial welfare of the church.”

5.1 The elders may delegate the budget preparation to the finance team or an appointed ad-hoc team (ie: Capital Campaign); however, the elders make the final decision on the approval of the annual budget.

5.2 The elders ensure that the budget reflects the strategic and operational priorities of the church.

5.3 Staff and department leads are accountable and responsible for managing their budget in the context of the global budget. Any proposed expenditure that exceeds the authorised budget is brought to the elders for discussion and approval.

5.4 The elders review the financial operations of ANC at each meeting, using documents prepared by the financial team and book-keeper.

5.5 The elders direct the finance team to always strive to create a balanced budget.

5.6 The elders modify the approved budget, in the event of financial difficulties.

6.0 The Elders' Role Within the Congregation

“Elders strive to make themselves available and visible to the congregation and respond with transparency.”

6.1 The elders are actively involved in an All Nations Church ministry in addition to the role of elder.

6.2 The elders demonstrate leadership through financial generosity.

7.0 Congregational Conflict and Dispute Resolution

“The resolution of church conflict is biblically based.”

7.1 The role of the elders in dealing with any congregational conflict is to preserve the unity and integrity of the church, while valuing the individuality of the person through a thoughtful, prayerful, and measured approach.

7.2 The role of a member of the leadership team in conflict resolution is to first assess, on a case by case basis, and if required; and then develop a plan for resolution, which may or may not include raising the matter to the entire leadership team.

7.3 Resolution to cases requiring elder involvement will usually include dialogue with staff.

7.4 The leadership team is committed to work on unresolved cases as long as is necessary.

7.5 Media enquiries related to any issues are referred to the lead pastor. In the event that the lead pastor is unavailable or has a conflict of interest, the elders appoint a media liaison person.

8.0 Meeting Quorum

8.1 A meeting quorum is composed of a majority of elders, but not less than three, and this does not include the lead pastor.

9.0 Elders' Length of Service

9.1 The elders serve at the discretion of the board as a whole.

9.2 The elders commit to a continuous self evaluation.

9.3 The board will formally evaluate itself at least every 3 years.

9.4 Elder leave(s) of absence will be considered on a case by case basis.

9.5 Most elder resignations will be accepted with regret.