

Introduction

The leadership of West Edmonton Baptist Church (WEB) has been commissioned to reevaluate the leadership structure of our church. This process has not been initiated because there are some dire problems in our church leadership, nor because there have been significant complaints regarding our church leaders. Instead, it is because we believe our church is healthy that we feel the freedom to initiate this process. But although we believe WEB is healthy, that does not mean certain aspects of our leadership structure could not be refined or that certain practices would not benefit from being made more explicit and clear. Lines of accountability and responsibility could be made more evident and certain responsibilities could benefit from being decentralized.

Additionally, the general consensus over the past few years is that our church is on the cusp of transition. Whether we anticipate a church plant in our future, or whether we foresee our lead pastor stepping aside, it is clear WEB will experience some change in the not too distant future. So if there is anytime to refine how our shepherds lead our church, it would be now.

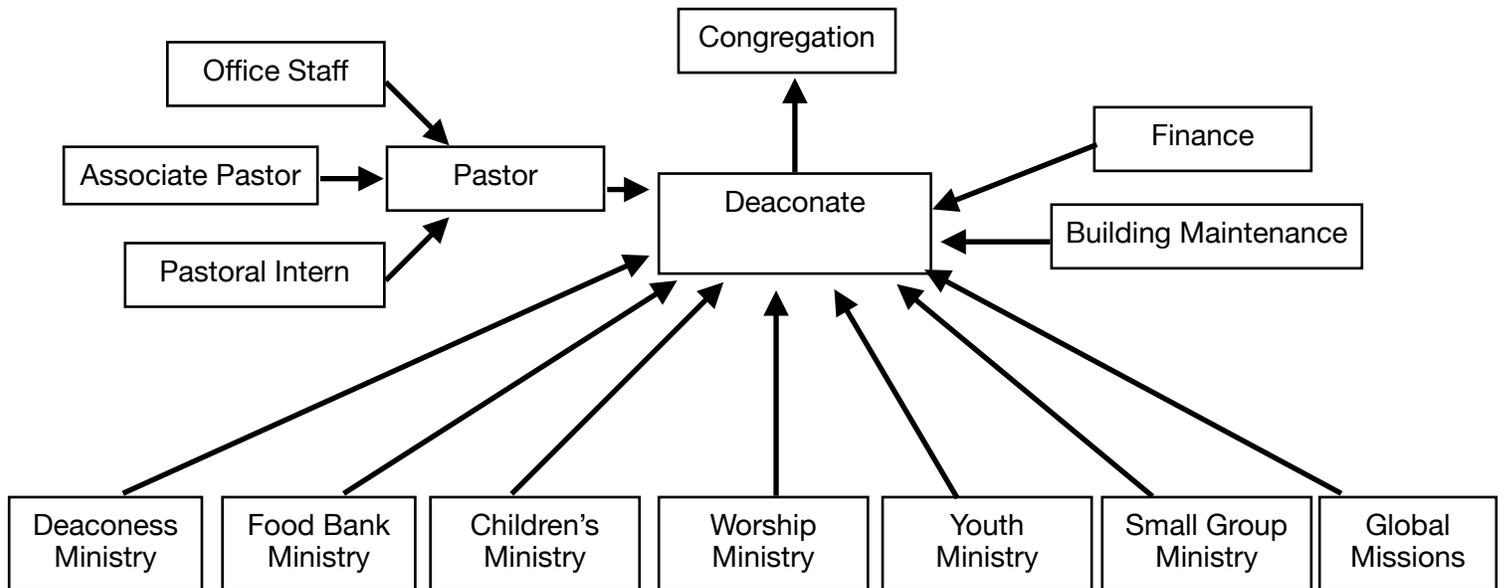
In essence, what this document seeks to achieve is the following:

- 1) A revised leadership structure that transitions from “a sole lead pastor and a deacons board” model to “an elders and deacons” model of church leadership.**
- 2) Clear descriptions of these revised roles to aid our church’s mission of spreading the kingdom of God.**

In undergoing this process, the deep desire of all involved in this process is to do no harm to what works so well in our church. This document will receive thorough vetting from the current deacons, church membership, and those who call WEB their church home. The final, affirmed version will serve as the template from which we will revise our bylaws.

Revised Leadership Structure

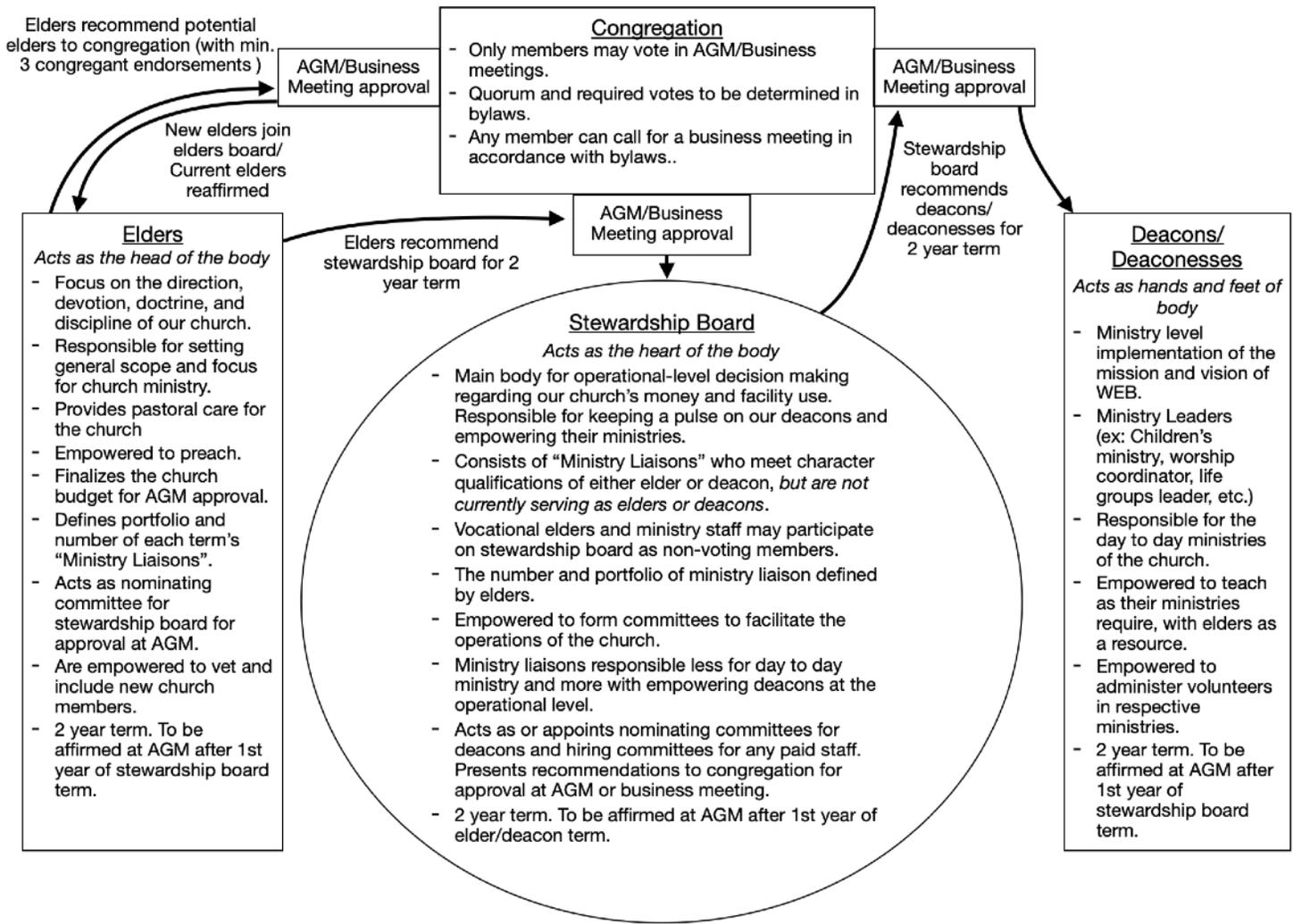
Our *current* leadership structure is roughly designed as follows:



This approach has its benefits, and it clearly satisfies what the Canadian government requires for non-profit charities, where the lead pastor acts as a non-voting member on a board of elected directors (The Deaconate). This structure also has, in principle, very clear lines of accountability. The centralized structure also, in principle, makes decision making quick and efficient.

However, a major drawback to this structure is the lack of explicit eldership over the church. An examination of Paul's letters indicates that two offices, that of elder and deacon, have been established by the apostles for the church. Our current structure does not clearly delineate the roles of elders and deacons, and as a result pastoral care concerns have inordinately fallen on the lead pastor to carry. Additionally, with the current structure, the sheer volume of information passing through the deacon's board makes efficient use of time and resources difficult to manage. What we make up for in centralization and control, we lack in focus, efficiency and effectiveness.

To modify this structure, the following structure is proposed:



Proposed Leadership Structure Overview

In essence, many things remain the same in this new model. The membership of the church will continue to exercise its overall role in guiding our church through the AGM and other business meetings. As usual, only members are able to vote, though non-members are able to attend and have their voice be heard. Additionally, the various roles of ministry leaders will remain unchanged. However, instead of calling them ministry leaders, we will identify these

individuals as deacons. Our clarification of the role of deacon essentially makes them the same as what our current ministry leaders are doing. So, in this model, when you think of "head usher", "children's church coordinator", "worship team coordinator", or any other current ministry leader, think "deacon" or "deaconess". These people are essentially the *hands and feet* of our church, facilitating our ministries and the volunteers associated with them.

One of the most substantial changes will be in the creation of an elders board. Whereas we once had a singular deacons' board, where some pastoral/shepherding concerns, as well as vision and focus, were mixed with practical ministry and other operational concerns, now we add the office of elder. It will be composed of individuals whose qualifications for the office rise from 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Elders will be responsible for the doctrine, direction, discipline, and devotion of our church.

Additionally, these individuals will share the focus of pastoral care and visitation, which previously and unintentionally landed primarily on the shoulders of our sole lead pastor. By clarifying this role of elder, it is hoped that our church can exercise greater focus in caring for congregants, as this will be the main focus of elders. There may be a vocational elder in this capacity who takes a significant portion of these pastoral concerns or primarily shapes the preaching/teaching calendar of our church (roughly equivalent to our current lead pastor), but he will be supported by and augmented by a team of non-vocational elders who will perform the same functions according to their capacity. A vocational elder may take on more quantity of ministry, but qualitatively all elders perform the same basic functions. By sharing the load and clarifying the focus, it is hoped that our church will be better equipped to care for the needs of

our congregation without overburdening a sole lead pastor. Whereas deacons function as the *hand and feet* of our church, elders will act as the *head*, guiding and shepherding our church.

Another big change in this proposed leadership structure is the creation of a stewardship board. In essence, this board will function like our deacons' board has done in the past by keeping a regular pulse on the activities of our church, including finances, maintenance, and other operational realities. In essence, this stewardship board functions as a middle manager of sorts. Whereas the elders are the *head* of the church and deacons are the *hands and feet*, this stewardship board will function as the *heart*, keeping a pulse on the various ministries of our church as led by the deacons and, like a heart, empowering them in accordance with the guidelines set by the elders.

Now, it may be asked who comprises this operational-level stewardship board. Is this a mixed board of elders and deacons, where *currently serving* elders and ministry leaders/deacons meet together? Though in principle this is a good idea, there is a risk that such a board becomes a cumbersome hinderance to the life of our church. For example, having the stewardship board comprised of currently serving elders would practically require elders to engage in both regular meetings with the other elders *and* in regular meetings with the stewardship board. The idea of balancing two regular board level meetings with an already busy life outside of church has the potential of overburdening elders and potentially burning them out. Same with deacons. In addition to committing to lead the various ministries in our church, such deacons and deaconesses would need to also commit to monthly operational concerns beyond their regular commitments. In both cases, the potential for over-extension is great.

Additionally, this regrettably blurs the focus of both groups, as they will need to sacrifice their specific emphasis for operational level concerns. When a board is overextended like this, a vocational pastor will regrettably take on more responsibility than he should, as each member of the board only has a certain bandwidth of focus to give to operational level concerns. By contrast, the vocational pastor is paid to have more time to commit to these concerns, and thus regrettably fills the void. This has been one of the main issues with our current form of leadership, and a mixed board of currently serving elders and deacons will not fix this issue.

Instead, the stewardship board of the proposed structure will be composed of individuals known as “ministry liaisons”. Although such liaisons must meet the character qualifications of an elder or deacon, *they are not currently serving as an elder or deacon*. Instead, these are individuals who are given a defined arc of focus for how they can facilitate and better empower deacons at an operational level. A vocational elder, having been given the time to extend their focus, can participate in this board as a non-voting member, providing a bridge between them and the elders. But the rest of the board *will not be composed of any currently serving elder or deacon*, so that the currently serving elders and deacons can remain focused on their specific mission.

These ministry liaisons are *not the leadership of the church*, as it is the elders who will provide their direction and portfolio of responsibility. Rather, they are *empowered to make decisions* that accord with the vision of the elders when it comes to the operations of the church. For example, the stewardship board will receive the approved budget from the elders, but will then be empowered to make decisions based off that broad yearly vision. They will also be

responsible for coordinating with any office staff regarding facility use or appointing specific committees for certain tasks (such as hiring new staff, etc.).

Additionally, they are *not responsible to manage deacons* as they conduct ministry. Rather, they are *responsible to maintain a general idea* of how things are going for deacons and *make decisions that empower them* to fulfill their ministries. Like a heart, they maintain the rhythm of the body and increase or decrease blood flow as required. For example, say the deacon of our worship teams (i.e. worship team coordinator) has expressed that a lack of equipment is hindering Sunday service, the stewardship board will be empowered to authorize the purchase of equipment in accordance with the budget approved by the elders. If issues arise beyond their scope, they can consult the elders. But in general, operational concerns will be handled by the stewardship board.

The benefit of having a stewardship board composed of no actively serving elder or deacon is that responsibility for the church is de-centralized. The hope will be, therefore, that the commitment required of elders, deacons, and the stewardship board is minimized, while the focus of each is intensified. Neither group takes on more than it can handle. Elders gain greater influence in the direction of and focus on the spiritual care for the church, while decreasing their control over the operational affairs of the church. Deacons are empowered to fulfill their areas of strength while not becoming distracted by operational-level concerns. The stewardship board is focused solely on empowering the ministries of our church at the operational level, not in managing deacons nor in providing “leadership”. Rather, their focus is on maintaining our church and empowering it to operate healthily.

To get a sense for how these various elements work together, here is an example for how a year would run at WEB. In June, WEB will have an AGM. At the AGM, elders, deacons, and ministry liaisons will be voted on by the congregation for 2 year terms. The vote for ministry liaisons and for deacons/elders will need to be staggered (ex: year 1: elders/deacons, year 2: liaisons, etc.).

Elders will plan the preaching calendar and a visitation schedule for church members. Throughout the year, they will meet for pastoral care concerns, teaching/preaching discussions, prayer, and matters related to church growth, among other items. They will also provide guidance on any issue presented to them by the stewardship board throughout the year. They will be responsible for approving and welcoming new members into our congregation. In preparation for the AGM, the elders will search for suitable candidates from the congregation to act as ministry liaisons and create for them specific areas of focus that accord with their strengths. These candidates and their portfolios will then be presented to the congregation for approval at the next AGM. Elders will also function as the nominating committee for future elders or for renewing existing elders, who will be presented for approval at the AGM. Any new elder must receive the explicit endorsement of at least 3 church members in order to be brought before the congregation at the AGM for voting, providing some level of balance to elder control over the church.

Deacons, as ministry leaders, will engage in the practical ministries of the church in the same manner as they currently operate at WEB. They will be encouraged to occasionally meet together with the stewardship board (whether formally or informally) to discuss how ministry is going and how they can be better empowered in their work. In preparation for the AGM, deacons

will submit ministry reports to the stewardship board outlining a yearly summary of their respective ministries. If they require an operational-level decision to be made to help facilitate their respective ministry, they will contact the chairman of the stewardship board or a relevant liaison.

The stewardship board will be required to meet regularly (perhaps once every 2-3 months). During these meetings, they will keep tabs on the finances of the church, resolve any facility issues, and make decisions based on their given area of focus as assigned by the elders. They are encouraged to facilitate occasional meetings with the deacons to discuss how things are going and how they can be better empowered. Vocational elders may also participate in the stewardship board as a non-voting member, who will then pass along relevant information to the elders board if elder decision is required in a specific issue. Other church staff (ex: Office Administrator) will also participate on the stewardship board as non-voting members.

In preparation for the AGM, the stewardship board will either act as the nominating committee for deacons and deaconesses, or will appoint other church members as a nominating committee. These candidates will then be presented to the congregation for approval at the AGM. The stewardship board will also be empowered to create other committees for the church (for example, a hiring committee for any paid staff, global missions team, maintenance committee, etc.). Relevant ministry liaisons will coordinate with these committees and represent their recommendations to the stewardship board, ensuring any recommendations that need congregational approval be presented at the AGM or an equivalent business meeting.

Description of Roles

For a revised structure of Church leadership to be successful, clear position descriptions are paramount. The following attempts to provide a clear outline for the roles and responsibilities of each position.

Church Members:

As priests of God, the congregation of WEB must exercise a pivotal role in the governance of the church. In fact, the responsibility of final authority for all decisions made in the church is vested in the congregation. Elders, deacons, and the stewardship board are empowered by the approval of the congregation to exercise appropriate leadership and decision-making, and all remain ultimately accountable to Jesus Christ and to the congregation for their conduct.

Although all who faithfully attend WEB and adhere to the Christian way of life make up the congregation of the church, only those who have covenantally committed themselves to WEB through church membership make up "the congregation" in the church's leadership structure. These individuals have covenantally obligated themselves to support one another in life and in death. Although it is acknowledged that non-member adherents can equally fulfill this vision of doing life together, the requirement for explicit membership safeguards the church from individuals of ill repute or those who desire to illegitimately influence our local church. However, non-member adherents are considered to be in the care of the elders and the mutual care of all who attend the church. They are encouraged to become members and are also encouraged to voice their opinions and attend business meetings.

The congregation of affirmed members exercise their ultimate authority in any AGM or business meeting. A sufficient quorum must be present for any business meeting to be valid, and any motion must be passed with sufficient votes (to be spelled out in church bylaws). Beyond expressing the biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers, restricting votes that binds our church to action to members only satisfies the legal requirements of the Canadian government. The congregation will vote to approve suggestions by the elders and stewardship board. Certain members will also be asked to provide explicit approval for elder-recommendations. They can also submit names of individuals for the elders and stewardship board to consider for nomination. Members are empowered to call business meetings in accordance with the bylaws of our church if they desire, and are strongly encouraged to ensure their voice is heard in the direction of our church.

As members, they also agree to submit to the leaders God has placed over them and whom they themselves have empowered to lead, provided the leaders of the church exercise legitimate and right leadership. This extends to the issue of church discipline, where congregants may lose their membership if they violate the trust of our community or willfully disregard the Christian way of life, with the elders exercising the responsibility of church discipline. However, if church leadership has transgressed their proper authority or mandate, the congregation must hold them to account, holding ultimate sway during the AGM or an equivalent business meeting that any member is permitted to convene.

Elders:

Elders are the *heads* of the church that are charged with leading our church, being responsible for the doctrine, discipline, devotion and direction of the church. They are

responsible for setting the general scope and focus for church ministry, exerting an influence over every aspect of church life (though not exerting *control* over every aspect). As shepherds, they are responsible to ensure our church remains healthy and protected. In essence, the job of an elder is to ensure the congregation lives and dies well. They are affirmed for a two year term at the AGM, concurrent with deacons and staggered from the election of the stewardship board. Current elders will nominate potential elders with the explicit endorsement of at least three members each and present their nominations to the AGM for approval. Currently serving elders who are willing to let their name stand for additional terms do not require explicit endorsement, but still require AGM approval.

As a complementarian church existing within the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada, the office of elder will be restricted to men who fit the qualifications seen in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. It is understood that such a limitation seems unfair toward woman, who hold equal competency and dignity to men. It is also understood that the various biblical passages used to support the complementarian position are more complex and are perhaps emendable to different interpretations. However, as one of the stated goals of this revised leadership structure is to do no harm to our church, it seems wise to abide by the decisions made by our denomination and to retain our complementarian distinctives that have guided our church throughout its history. If changes are made at the denominational level, our church will be able to adapt as required. It is hoped the addition of women to the stewardship board will provide an ample voice for the women of our church to be heard and to help steward our church, which is a clear benefit of the decentralized revision of the leadership structure outlined in this document. Regardless, in this revised structure, the office of elder will be

restricted to qualified men, avoiding any denominational complications that would otherwise arise.

Elders has been approved and empowered to preach by the congregation. When it comes to preaching on Sunday, only those who are recognized as elders (from our church or others), or who potentially meet the qualification of being an elder at WEB (i.e. a person whom the elders want to provide an opportunity to preach to test their gifting, a person qualified to be an elder but who is not currently serving as an official elder, etc.) are empowered to preach. Preaching is restricted in this manner because it is our church's public and authoritative opportunity to teach and exhort all who attend church according to the truths of Scripture. Unlike teaching in the context of a small group or Bible study, where teachers are primarily *facilitators* and welcome interaction and mutual feedback, preaching allows no feedback as it is happening, since it is essentially a monologue. As authoritative proclamation, those elders who have been empowered by the congregation to guide the whole church will exercise this role. Feedback following a sermon is welcomed and even necessary, but since during the act it depends on the authority vested in such individuals, it will be restricted to those who have been empowered by the congregation to lead our church as elders.

Elders are responsible for the integrity of the doctrine of our church. Yet, as noted above, since teaching is more about facilitating an atmosphere of learning in an interactive manner rather than depending on authoritative proclamation, teaching will not be restricted to elders. Elders may be involved in some form of teaching ministry, but teaching is not exclusively restricted to the elders. Instead, elders will be responsible for exerting an influence over Sunday school teachers, small group leaders, and the like (who are functionally deacons), but they will

not “control” or micro-manage such individuals. Instead, elders will empower those ministry leaders who are involved in teaching ministry, being a resource and guide for them as they exercise their respective ministries. If a deacon grievously transgresses our church’s accepted statement of faith, elders are responsible for providing correction and oversight to keep our church on the right path.

Beyond preaching and teaching, elders primarily engage in pastoral care. Elders will devote themselves to prayer for their church and the world, and will engage in meaningful interaction with the congregants of the church through visitations, social interaction, ministry, and other ways of doing life together. They will take an active role during major life events in the church, including weddings and funerals, and will endeavour to prepare our church to live and die well. Elders will also be responsible for the discipline of the church. An elder can also function as a life group leader, as well as participating within a life group facilitated by a deacon. Elders will also be responsible for Acts 4:32 distributions as part of their role providing pastoral care.

Elders will be required to meet regularly with one another to discuss various items pertinent to them from the stewardship board, as well as other church-life concerns that require pastoral care. They will meet to encourage, learn, pray and distribute pastoral care matters among one another, in addition to focusing on the direction, doctrine, discipline and devotion of our church as a whole. They will be responsible for finalizing the yearly church budget, upon consultation with the stewardship board and other relevant personnel. The yearly budget, by its very nature, sets the priorities and vision of the church, and provides the explicit guidelines for

the stewardship board to maintain a pulse for the church and to allocate funds as directed. The elders will present the finalized budget for approval at the AGM.

The elders are also responsible for nominating individuals to the stewardship board with AGM approval, with ministry liaisons and their portfolios standing for 2 year terms. If any modifications are required to ministry liaisons or their portfolios, a business meeting of the congregation is required for affirmation. Elders will engage in mutual conversation with such potential ministry liaisons to create a portfolio for them that plays to their strengths. This action increases the influence of the elders, while decreasing their control, as it allows elders to set priorities for the church, while also empowering others to make operational decisions instead of micro-managing the affairs of the church.

For example, say for the next two year term, the elders really want our church to focus on outreach. So they appoint a person as a ministry liaison with a portfolio to empower those deacons who have a passion for outreach. This person would then keep tabs on how our outreach programs are doing, ensuring the deacons in charge of evangelism, the global mission team, and others relevant ministries are adequately supported. Perhaps in the following two year period, the elders want our church to focus on church life, and so they replace the ministry liaison of outreach with another person with a passion and aptitude for church life. Such a process allows elders to direct our church, while not being bogged down with micro-management or operational concerns.

While the majority of elders will be unpaid volunteers, there may be vocational elders who are commissioned by the church to devote substantial time to the ministry of pastoral care. This elder would not be qualitatively different than any other elder, but the quantity of pastoral

care they can take on will be more. Such vocational elders, as they are compensated to have the time for ministry, may also participate as a non-voting member of the stewardship board, being a bridge between the elders and the ministry liaisons. Such an individual will also be the daily presence of our church for people looking for immediate pastoral care. This individual may also take the majority of the preaching requirement for the church. However, non-vocational elders still fulfill the same basic functions of a vocational elder, as the whole elder team holds the same level of authority and mutually supports each other in providing pastoral care and overseeing the preaching/teaching ministry. Direction and vision for our church will come from all the elders, not one lead pastor, even though various elders may be given specific areas of focus and responsibility.

Deacons/Deaconesses:

Deacons are the *hands and feet* of our church. The role of deacon is open and available to both men and women who meet the character qualifications set out by 1 Timothy 3. In essence, these are the ministry leaders who are engaged in facilitating the respective ministries of our church and the volunteers who participate within them. Most current ministry leaders function as deacons. Additional roles in our church may also be under the oversight of a deacon, such as our church's life groups. Also, some individuals may be recognized as deacons without distinct portfolios.

Deacons are affirmed for a two year term at the AGM, concurrent with elders and staggered from the election of the members of the stewardship board. They will be nominated either by the members of the stewardship board or by a committee empowered by the

stewardship board. There is no limit to how long a deacon/deaconess can serve, but they need to be renewed for additional terms by a vote at the AGM.

Although deacons are not empowered to preach, they are empowered to teach as they engage in the various aspects of church ministry. This includes various Bible studies, Sunday schools, small groups, evangelism efforts, and others. Teaching is about *facilitating* the learning of others, and though it requires expertise and accurate knowledge, it is not dependent upon authoritative proclamation in the same way as preaching. People can disagree with a teacher vocally and this does not necessarily interfere with the goal of teaching! Following the example of deacons in the New Testament, the role of the deacons is not limited to just “practical concerns”, but to the broad activities of the ministries of the church, of which teaching is a part. Deacons are encouraged to interact with the elders as they teach and minister.

Part of their role may include managing volunteers involved in their various ministries, mentoring and guiding those under their direction according to the vision set by the elders. They also have the stewardship board as their main ministry benefactors, facilitating the operation of their various ministries according to their needs. The deacons will submit ministry reports to the stewardship board for the congregation to review at the AGM, permitting the congregation to understand the various aspects of ministry our church is engaged in.

Stewardship Board:

The stewardship board acts as the *heart* of the church. It is composed of individuals called ministry liaisons who meet the qualifications of elders and deacons, but who, apart from paid staff, *are not currently serving as active elders or deacons*. Vocational elders may participate on the board as a non-voting member. Ministry liaisons are affirmed for a two year

term at the AGM, staggered from the affirmation of elders and deacons. They are nominated by the elders and are approved by the congregation. The stewardship board will be encouraged to meet roughly once every 2-3 months.

Ministry liaisons are empowered to steward the money and space of our church at the operational level, making decisions based on the purview set by the elders. Each ministry liaison will be assigned a specific portfolio of focus by the elders to limit the scope of their responsibility and increase their focus. Depending on their specific portfolio, each ministry liaison will be charged with maintaining the pulse of our ministry leaders of our church, and thereby the ministries of our church, so they can better empower them. In addition to keeping a pulse on the ministries of our church, ministry liaisons are also empowered to make operational decisions regarding facility maintenance and use (primarily through interaction with the church office staff), as well as regarding church finances as they steward the budget finalized by the elders. As a result, our church finances and facility will always need to be accounted for under the portfolio of one or more liaisons.

Ministry liaisons are encouraged to establish committees with people outside the stewardship board. For example, a ministry liaison may be tasked with keeping a pulse on the finances of our church (roughly equivalent to our current treasurer role), but this person does not necessarily need to be the *sole* person in charge of the treasury. They can coordinate with a committee of individuals who help bear the burden of church finances and in formalizing a budget for the elders to finalize. The ministry liaison will be responsible for bringing the facts of their ad hoc committee to bear in making operational level decisions when the stewardship board meets, but they are not to be overtasked themselves. Same with facility maintenance. An

individual may be the ministry liaison that keeps a pulse on the needs of our facility, but they can coordinate with a committee of able congregants that help bear the load of facility maintenance, with the ministry liaison responsible to bring the facts of their committee to bear in making operational level decisions with the stewardship board. The stewardship board will also be empowered to act as the body responsible for hiring new staff or nominating deacons for the AGM, or they may wish to appoint specific committees for these tasks as well and represent the results of these committees to the stewardship board.

The size of the stewardship board will be determined by government requirements for charitable organizations, in addition to non-voting paid staff (church administrator, vocational elder, etc.) and any additional liaison roles assigned by the elders. One of the ministry liaisons will act as the chairman of the board. Meeting minutes will be made and submitted to the office for recording keeping purposes. A copy may also be sent to the elders to keep them informed regarding the operations of the church.

The key to understanding this position is that such individuals are not responsible so much for day-to-day ministry as they are in removing operational bureaucracy from the elders and deacons to keep them on task. It is more of a behind-the-scenes supportive role, stewarding the space and money of our church on an operational level to help empower the ministries of our church. In fact, this is the very point of having ministry liaisons not be currently serving elders or deacons. The hope is that the commitment and responsibility behind such a position is minimized and manageable. Such individuals need not feel like an overwhelming burden of responsibility has been placed upon their shoulders. They will receive a portfolio tailored to their strengths,

they will operate under the direction of the elders, they will be focused on empowering others, and they will be facilitated by others willing to help share the load of operational management.

As the heart of our church, ministry liaisons must themselves have a heart for seeing others empowered to fulfill their ministries. The board is not about fulfilling one's own vision for what WEB ought to be, but rather about stewarding WEB in accordance to the vision of the elders of our church who have been charged by the congregation with leading the church. Their role is necessary so that the distinct offices of elders and deacons can remain focused on their various duties and responsibilities.

Conclusion

The proposed leadership structure above functions as the basis for future discussions on this topic. Multiple revisions and fine tunings are expected. The hope throughout it all is that WEB will be empowered to continue its mission of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout Edmonton. WEB is our family and we wish to protect it as such. But as we have opportunity and as we are on the cusp of transition, it is hoped that this proposed revision enhances what makes our church a place of belonging, where we are all equipped to live and die well for Christ's glory.