

Hello, and congratulations!

If you are receiving this letter and application, it is because you have been asked to consider taking on the position of an elder at the chapel. This is a very high calling that we do not take lightly and trust that you will not take lightly as well. Being an elder is not about running an organization, but rather it is about reaching the spiritual needs of the community by nurturing and training up other leaders to grow spiritually and reach out to others.

As we ask you to consider taking on this position, we want to know that you have the proper understanding of what all this means, and the expectations both ways: what you can expect from us, and what we are asking to be able to expect from you. We want to be sure that you have a thorough understanding of what we are asking of you, so that as you prayerfully consider this position you can factor in everything that this implies in your personal life, and especially how this may impact your family life and other current commitments.

As you consider this position, please read through the following article which we find to be beneficial in understanding the role of a Biblical Elder, which is followed by the Chapel's specific expectations, and the application for this position. If you would like to proceed with this opportunity, please fill out the application at the end, and the current elders will read through your responses to see how God will direct us. We look forward to seeing how God will lead us in this opportunity.

God Bless,

A Job Description for Lay Elders

You were humbled—and a little surprised—when the pastor asked you to serve as an elder. You prayed about it, talked to your wife, and got the input of a few trusted church members. With a mixture of trepidation and excitement you accepted the nomination, and a few weeks later you were voted into office.

Now you sit at your first elders' meeting, waiting for things to start. And a nagging thought arises: "Okay, I am an elder. *Now what do I do?*"

WELL-INTENTIONED BUT ILL-INFORMED

Lay elders are often godly, well-intentioned men who love the Lord and serve the church faithfully. But they sometimes lack a well-rounded understanding of the biblical job description for elders. Unfortunately, we paid pastors often share in their confusion!

As a result, lay elders sometimes fill the gaps of their understanding with their own life experiences. They assume being an elder is roughly equivalent to serving on a board of trustees for a non-profit organization, or leading a company, or managing a project, or commanding a warship, or supervising sub-contractors. While aspects of those skills and experiences will prove useful, none of them adequately approximates the elder task.

So what is a lay elder's job description? What are they supposed to do? Attend meetings? Approve budgets? Distribute communion?

SHEPHERD GOD'S FLOCK

Here's the short answer from the apostle Peter: "I exhort the elders among you: shepherd God's flock" (1 Pet. 5:2; see also Jn. 21:15-16 and Acts 20:28). Elders serve the Good Shepherd by providing his local flocks with spiritual oversight. Elders feed, lead, protect, and nurture church members like shepherds do with sheep.

Let's get even more specific. While shepherding is a powerful metaphor for framing an elder's job description, our new elder needs concrete instructions. He needs an answer to his question, "Now what do I do?" Fortunately, God's Word lists very specific duties that help elders put the shepherding imagery to work.

FOUR PRIMARY DUTIES

Here are four duties that are central to the elder's job description. While this list is not exhaustive, I believe if lay elders devoted themselves to these four things, they would excel as shepherds.

1. Teach

An elder must be “an able teacher” (1 Tim. 3:2; see 5:17). He must hold “to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and refute those who contradict it” (Tit. 1:9). Jesus’ under-shepherds feed Jesus’ sheep with Jesus’ word.

If you’re an elder, find venues for teaching the Bible regularly. Teach a Sunday school class, lead a home group, give a lesson to the youth group, or study Scripture with a member over coffee. And if you’re offered a chance to preach, take it.

Further, tune in to the church’s overall teaching ministry. Keep a finger on the pulse of what’s being taught through congregational singing or in the Sunday school curriculum. Listen closely when members talk about what they’re reading and be alert for rotten food in their spiritual diet.

Finally, remember that teaching includes training others to perpetuate the church’s teaching ministry. As Paul said to Timothy, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). So bring along an apprentice teacher whenever you can.

2. Lead

Just as shepherds lead their flocks, so elders lead local congregations. The biblical writers also call elders “overseers,” a title that highlights their role as leaders (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:5, 7). Hebrews instructs Christians to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account” (Heb. 13:17).

Elders, be brave and lead your church. Don’t hide among the baggage like King Saul. When you see challenges in your church, face them proactively and plot a course forward.

Courageous leadership might involve reaching out to a frustrated member who’s stopped attending, or confronting an unrepentant member through church discipline. Or it could mean wrestling through staffing strategies, budget challenges, or important policies that affect the spiritual identity of the congregation.

As you lead, don’t lose sight of the destination. The goal isn’t to lead a church to become an efficient organization, as important as that may be. Rather, elders should lead church members toward maturity in Christ. Jesus gave teaching shepherds to the church “to build up the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness” (Eph. 4:12-13).

Elders bring the flock to green pastures and still waters when they help members know Jesus more and increasingly reflect his glory together.

3. Model

Most importantly, elders lead by example. Shepherd the church “not [by] lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3). Not surprisingly, the

New Testament lists of elder qualifications focus predominantly on character (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). An elder's most basic job is to say "Imitate me as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

The mandate to model maturity carries two critical implications. First, modeling means you must guard your godliness: "Pay close attention to your life and your teaching" (1 Tim. 4:16). Continue to live close to the Lord, nurture your wife and children well, resist sin, and love people. Open your life to the loving accountability of the other elders. Modeling maturity is a team project.

That leads to a second implication: modeling requires elders to *be among* the people. It only works if people see you up close. So open your life to church members. Invite them into your home, your hobbies, and your ministry. People need a firsthand experience of how you handle stress, relate to your wife, respond to difficult people, and humbly admit when you blow it.

4. Pray

Finally, elders should take up the apostolic shepherding mantle and say, "we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the preaching ministry" (Acts 6:4). Ultimately elders are powerless in themselves to mature anyone in Christ; only the Holy Spirit can do that through God's Word. The sooner an elder realizes this, the sooner he will hit his knees and plead for a continual work of grace among church members, as well as in his own life.

So, if you're a lay elder (or a paid elder!), strive to be a man of prayer. Build regular prayer into your daily rhythms. Pray over your church's membership rolls during the commute or while you're walking the dog. Carve out time as an elder board for concerted prayer. And when you're talking to a church member, be sure to stop and pray for her right then and there.

SHEPHERD LIKE JESUS

Maybe we could sum up an elder's job description this way: shepherd the church members like Jesus shepherds his disciples.

Like Jesus, make teaching central to your ministry, and make Jesus and the gospel the primary content of your teaching. In every decision, lead your people toward knowing and trusting Jesus. Let them see the character of Jesus exemplified in your life. And just as Jesus often turned aside to pray, so you as an elder should join Jesus in interceding for his people.

The under-shepherds of Jesus are at their best when they reflect Jesus, the Chief Shepherd...

The Elder Role at the Huntington Chapel

Delegation

As we consider now what an elder is at the Huntington Chapel we must first break off some of the presumptions that many hold for such a position of church leadership. Unlike leaders of a company, the primary responsibility of elders is not in creating budgets, managing projects, etc... but rather it is the spiritual shepharding and oversight of the people and ministries within the church. Though, they do have the ultimate responsibility for projects, and budgets, they are charged, like the disciples, to delegate out those responsibilities to trusted members to accomplish those ends so that the elders can fully devote themselves to the work of teaching, shepharding, leading, and praying for God's work. The goal in delegating these responsibilities to others is to free the elders to shephard the body while empowering members with these skills to carry out those jobs and do the bulk of the work, while the elders provide simple oversight and input as needed.

Top Priority

The position of elder is one of the highest callings within the local body, and therefore, its responsibilities must take top priority. It may be permitted for elders to have other leadership positions within the church ministry, however it is only permitted if that position does not interfere with eldership responsibilities. If it is recognized that another commitment may interfere with the eldership responsibilities, the elder/potential elder may be asked to be released from that commitment to be able to more fully commit to the needs of being an elder. Though there are always plenty of needs within the church, those needs should never supersede the needs of the elder responsibilities. This means that elders are expected to see this role as their top priority, and it also means that they should be protected from external expectations to be overinvolved in meeting other needs of the church outside of the responsibilities of an elder.

The Operation

The policies and procedures which cover the authority structure, decision making process, term limits, etc.. are described in the **Constitution** and **By-Laws** of the church. All elders are expected to read through these documents and sign a form agreeing to operate within these established guidelines.

Time Commitment

Due to the high calling and needs of this position, the Pastor must be able to expect elders to be able to make a commitment of 1-2 days per week, but must not expect more than 3 days, so as to safeguard their personal and family lives. All elders are welcome to spend more days doing the work of God, but must be free from overburdening expectations.

Term Commitment

Consistency is important in this position, so we ask for all potential elders to be willing to make a 2-year commitment when they sign on. This may change based on circumstances, but we simply ask that all potential elders consider this position for the long term.

Job Description: Specific Responsibilities

As the scope and focus of ministry changes at the church, the specific details of how the elders operate may adjust. However, the following responsibilities are the requirements that all elders should be carrying out in various forms.

- Regularly attend the Sunday service, and be involved in the lives of the church members and visitors.
- Attend the church's monthly elder meetings where spiritual decisions are made
- Prayerfully assist the pastor in seeking God's direction and directives for the church including the spiritual emphasis, priorities in scheduling, and regular decisions that need to be made.
- Model a life of personal prayer, fasting, worship, and faith.
- Prayerfully assist the pastor in filling staff positions with the person of God's choice as needed
- Cultivate relationships with ministry leaders to ensure their spiritual, physical, and mental well-being, through regularly scheduled and non-scheduled meetings. Healthy leaders create healthy ministries, therefore, elders are charged to intentionally speak life and hope into leaders and establish good lines of communication with them, so as to represent the whole of chapel ministries to all elder board meetings.
- Protect the purity of the gospel by communicating with and overseeing the curriculum and messages of the ministries
- Preach and teach the gospel by covering the needs of filling the pulpit or other ministry positions as the needs arises. All elders should have a lifestyle of teaching within regular conversations, and should look for opportunities to speak at ministries within or without of the church.
- Raise up future elders, and ministry leaders by mentoring others and training them in spiritual disciplines and leadership principles.
- Interview and approve applicants for church membership, and on the contrary gracefully bring correction to members living outside of God's principles, and determine termination of membership as needed.
- Receive suggestions, grievances, and recommendations from church members and/or other organizations and consider their input.
- Delegate teams and/or individuals to carry out the physical/logistical needs of the chapel

Application for Eldership

Name: (First, Last): _____

Email address: _____

Phone Number: _____ **Date:** _____

* In order to allow for enough room for responses, we recommend using a digital version and typing out your responses. Otherwise, feel free to write an extra sheets of paper where more room is needed for more thorough responses.

Personal Questions:

Please describe your story on how you began a relationship with the Lord:

Describe your relationship with God now:

What churches have you previously attended and how do you evaluate those experiences:

Describe your previous experiences of serving in the local church:

What are your spiritual gifts, and how did you determine them? How are you stewarding them now?

Who are you discipling and what does that look like?

Describe the commitments that you have put into your life to keep yourself above reproach in the areas of your past sin struggles?

Are you aware of any relational problems that would hinder your service to the church? At the elder level? At the staff level? At the membership level? Within the body of Christ at large?

Family Questions

Describe your marital status and history. If married, can you tell us the condition and quality of relationship with your spouse at the present time?

Is your spouse supportive of your involvement at the level of leadership at the church and does she believe you are a good fit for this role? If so, why?

Describe your relationship to your children. If grown, do you know of any hesitancies they would have about your serving the church in this capacity?

How would you describe your overall attitude towards the Huntington Chapel and the Senior Pastor? How would you describe your spouse's attitude?

What is the state of your finances at the current time and what is your position on giving to the local church?

Doctrinal Questions

Based on your understanding of scriptures, what are the primary roles of an elder?

Do you have any hesitations on the Chapel's statement of faith or vision statement? If so, what are they?

How would you describe your knowledge of scriptures and its teachings?

What, if any, are the areas of Biblical teaching that you feel less informed about?

Have you read, and are in agreement of the Chapel's Constitution and By-laws?

Commitment Questions

What do you consider to be the major commitments in your life?

What are your long-term plans in terms of living in this area?

How would you describe the importance of modeling attendance at Sunday services, and other discipleship ministries?

What do you think it means to be a team player? How would you see that impacting the eldership team?

Have you read the previously described expectations of an elder? Do you have the capacity to be involved in the local church at this level of commitment?

Practical Questions

Do you understand the difference between Biblical convictions and personal preferences? How do you see this distinction affecting the office of pastor or elder?

How do you tend to respond when disagreements or conflicts arise?

How do you respond to criticism? What do you do if things do not go your way?

What do you have in your life that tells you the truth even when it is difficult to hear? How do you respond to them?

How do you tend to handle stress or pressure? Give an example:

As applied to an elder team, what is your understanding of “plurality of leadership” and “consensus in decision making”?

What do you see as the largest need in our local church today? How would you like to see this need addressed?

Why do you desire to serve the church as an elder?

Family (Please have your spouse fill this out)

Describe your marital history? What is the condition and quality of the relationship with your spouse now?

Do you believe that your spouse is a good fit for the role of elder? If so, why?

How would you plan to support your spouse if agreed to be an elder? How would you actively walk alongside your spouse in this role?

How would you describe your overall attitude towards the Huntington Chapel and the Senior Pastor? How would you describe your spouse's attitude?

What is the state of your finances at the current time and what is your position on giving to the local church?

Elder Agreement:

I have read through

- ☐ 1: the previous information
- ☐ 2: the Constitution
- ☐ 3: The Bylaws
- ☐ 4: The Core Values for Ministry Leaders,

and, if accepted for the elder position,

- ☐ I agree to operate within the guidelines and purposes established in all these documents.

Name: (Print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

- If accepted, you will be asked to submit a digital photo of yourself that the church can use for recognition on the website, bulletin boards, flyers to identify church leaders.
Thank you.