

Recommendation on Church Governance

DBC Ad-hoc Committee on Transition

June 11, 2023

Recommendation A1 from Ad-hoc Committee on Transition 5/30/2023

Primary Issue from Charter scope:

- A) Assure church organization, leadership structure and governance are biblical based and optimal for DBC.

Recommendation:

A1) Transition to congregational, elder-led governance per a plurality of elders comprised of men chosen from both lay members and pastoral staff.

Key Points:

- A) Ad-hoc committee on Transition believes the biblical references in Scriptures support that plurality of elders is the most sound governance model and is the most optimal for DBC.
- B) Recommendation provides the biblical-based framework for a plurality of elders.
- C) To build out the biblical-based framework into a full governance structure requires finalizing details not found in the Scriptures and these will be determined later.
- D) Summary of congregational, elder-led governance per a plurality of elders is found in Attachment 1.
- E) Framework of congregational, elder-led governance per a plurality of elders comprised of men chosen from both lay members and pastoral staff is found in Attachment 2.
- F) Per our current Bylaws, Denver Baptist Church has a congregational, elder-led governance per a single-elder (Lead Pastor).
- G) Scriptures allow for both the single elder-led model and plurality of elders-led model.

Biblical Principles and Justification:

Summary of biblical principles for elder-led with a plurality of elders comprised of men chosen from both lay members and pastoral staff is found in Attachment 3

Implementation Plan (after approval of recommendation by Bylaws Committee):

- 2023 Q3 – Education sessions on elder leadership governance for all DBC members
- 2023 Q4 – Ad-hoc committee would submit follow-up recommendation A2) documenting the details defining the elder leadership model and the related changes required to existing bylaws.
- 2024 Q1 - Congregational approval to change the DBC Bylaws to implement this elder leadership recommendation on church governance.
- 2024 Q4 - Congregational approval/confirmation of initial Elders.

Attachment 1

Summary of congregational, elder-led governance

- Congregational Governed
- Elder-Led per plurality of elders
- Deacon Served
- Committee Organized

Attachment 2

Framework of congregational, elder-led governance per a plurality of Elders comprised of men chosen from both lay members and pastoral staff.

- **Christ is head of the local church. Local church belongs to and lead by Christ.**
- **Congregational Governed**
 - Local church is autonomous and self-governing
 - Local Church body has the following authority and responsibilities:
 - Approval/confirmation of the Elders, Deacons, Pastoral staff & Committees
 - Holding Elders, Deacons, and Pastoral staff accountable
 - Final Discipline / dismissing of Church members
 - Restating membership
 - Approval of revisions to church bylaws
 - Following a discipleship path
- **Elder-led per plurality of elders**
 - Elder body has the following authority and responsibilities:
 - Shepherd
 - Teacher
 - Pastor
 - Overseer
 - Provide a discipleship path for church members
 - Elder body comprised of men chosen from both lay members and pastoral staff.
- **Deacon Served**
 - Deacons serve as directed by the Elders.
 - Deacons are assigned specific tasks by Elders but not governance authority.
- **Committee Organized**
 - Committees are formed when deemed necessary and appropriate by the Elders.
 - Committees serve as directed by the Elders.
 - Committees are assigned specific tasks but not governance authority.

Attachment 3

Summary of biblical principles for elder-led with a plurality of elders comprised of men chosen from both lay members & pastoral staff

Biblical Principles of Elder Leadership

Role of an Elder:

Shepherd / Pastor (emphasizing actual work of the role)

Teacher (emphasizing doctrinal maturity required by the role)

Elder (emphasizing spiritual maturity required by the role)

Overseer (emphasizing responsibilities assigned to the role)

Scripture Reference:

John 10:11,14 John 21:16 Acts 20:28

Acts 20:20 Titus 1:9

Titus 1:8 Heb 13:7 John 10:15 1 Tim 3:6

Acts 20:28 Titus 1:7

Duties of an Elder:

To be alert for and protect the Church from false teaching

To teach / provide spiritual nourishment and wise counsel /
feed the flock

To seek The Lord's direction for the Church

To develop deep, personal relationships with members /
watch over souls

To prepare & disciple future Elders

To hold fellow elders and church members accountable

To encourage and refute through sound doctrine

To apply church discipline when required

To be devoted to prayer for church, sick and souls

To shepherd the congregation spiritually

To tend, protect, nurture, and care for them

To shepherd and oversee willingly and eagerly from the heart
and not for dishonest gain

To serve as an example to the congregation

To not rule/lord over the congregation

To be accountable to Christ, The Chief Shepherd

To direct the affairs of & take care of The Church

Scripture Reference:

John 10:11 John 21:16 Acts 15:1-2
Acts 20:28-31

John 21:15-17 Acts 20:17,20,32
1 Peter 1:4 1 Peter 5:1-5

John 21:16 Acts 20:27

John 10:14 Heb 13:17

Acts 20: 24

Acts 20: 28-31

Acts 6: 2-4 Titus 1: 9 1 Thess 5:12

1 Thess 5:11

Acts 6: 2-4 James 5: 14

1 Peter 5: 1-5

1 Peter 5: 1-5 James 5:14

1 Peter 5: 1-5

1 Peter 5: 1-5 Heb 13:7

1 Peter 5: 1-5

1 Peter 5: 1-5 1 Cor 4:2 Heb 13:17

1 Tim 3:5 1 Tim 5:17

**Summary of biblical principles for
elder-led with a plurality of elders
comprised of men chosen from both lay members & pastoral staff**

Characteristics of an Elder:

Passionate for the ministry duties of an elder

Maintains growing, deep, personal relationship with The Lord

Willing sacrifices self (time and energy) for Church body

Humble in understanding that God transforms lives not him

Motivated by service to God and not for material or personal gain

Able to teach, mentor, disciple, and counsel

Above reproach and criticism/ Blameless/ Holy

Self-controlled/ Temperate/ Gentle/ Peaceable/ Not quarrelsome/
Not overbearing/ Not succumbing to outsiders

Upright/ Loving what is good/ Disciplined/ Just/Wise and discerning

Not given to drunkenness or abuses

Husband of one wife/ Faithful to wife

Manages family well/ Has obedient and respectful children in the home

Hospitable to all

Free from love of money/ Not motivated by personal or greedy gain

Mature in his faith and discipling

Respected outside the church

Scripture Reference:

1 Timothy 3: 1-7 Titus 1:6-9
Romans 12:8

John 10:15 Acts 20:18-32

John 10:11,15,18 Acts 20:24

Acts 20:32 Romans 21:3

John 10:12,13 Acts 20:33-35

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

1 Tim 3: 1-7 / Titus 1: 6-9

Organizational Structure of Elder Leadership:

Plurality of Elders comprised of men chosen from both members and pastoral staff.

Scripture Reference:

Proverbs 15:22 Acts 11:30 lay
Acts 14:23 Acts 15:2-4, 22,23
Acts 16:4 Acts 20:17 & 28
James 5:14 1 Peter 5:1-2
Phil 1:1 1 Thess 5:12-13
Heb 13:7,17,24 Titus 1:5

Frequency Asked Questions

Related to

Recommendation on Church Governance

DBC Ad-hoc Committee on Transition

June 11, 2023

Frequently Asked Questions – Church Governance Recommendation V1

Q1: What is church governance?

A1: Church governance is the organizational structure and hierarchy of the church that guides its leadership, decision making, stewardship, role, and responsibilities. In some cases, the word “polity” is used but it tends more to organizational structure. In a Baptist Church, the ultimate authority is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Q2: Biblically, who are leaders of the local church?

A2: Christ has Lordship over his church with elders leading the local church. Per the Scriptures, elders are appointed to lead the local church as shepherds, pastors, teachers, and overseers. There is no biblical difference in elder, pastor, teacher, shepherd, and overseer. We would recommend that you study Attachment 3 in Recommendation A1 as it provides the scripture references for the biblical principles of elder leadership.

Q3: What is an elder?

A3: An elder is an appointed position of leadership in the church, whose qualifications are Biblically based, whose focus is on the spiritual health of the church, discipleship, mentorship, and oversight. They are responsible for the spiritual well-being of the church. Elders may be pastoral or lay. We would recommend that you study Attachment 3 in Recommendation A1 as it provides the scripture references for the biblical principles of elder leadership.

Q4: What is a deacon?

A4: A deacon is an appointed servant in the church, whose qualifications are Biblically based, whose focus is to serve the physical and material needs of the church and its members. They serve the congregation and the elders. We would recommend that you study the scripture references to deacons in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3.

Q5: What is the difference between a deacon and an elder?

A5: Simply put, elders are given authority to lead the church with focus on spiritual needs and the deacons serve the church with focus on physical and material needs of the church. For the relationship between Elders and Deacons in our recommended governance model, see attachment 2 of Recommendation A1.

Q6: What will the role and focus of an elder at Denver Baptist be?

A6: The role of elders is clearly defined in Scriptures as shepherds, pastors, teachers, and overseers. Within our recommended church governance model for Denver Baptist, the elder's primary focus and majority of their time (80%+) would be on shepherding, pastoring, and teaching the church members. A much lower focus and amount of time would be allocated to overseeing the business affairs and operation of the church. We would recommend that you study Attachment 3 in Recommendation A1 as it provides the scripture references for the biblical principles of elder leadership.

Q7: What is congregational?

A7: Christ is the head of the local church. The local church is autonomous and self-governing. A form of church governance where the entire church body has the final authority under God's Word in major matters of doctrine (and by implication, choosing leaders, pastors), discipline (and by implication, choosing members), budget, and major financial matters. See definition of Congregational Governed in Recommendation A1.

Q8: What is the current governance model of Denver Baptist per our Bylaws?

A8: Congregational, elder-led governance per a single-elder (Lead Pastor)

Q9: Are both single-elder and plurality of elders governance models biblical?

A9: Per our study, Scriptures allow for both the single elder-led model and plurality of elders-led model. The Scriptures provide very sound direction on church governance. We believe the biblical references in Scriptures support that plurality of elders is the most sound governance model. We would recommend that you study Attachment 3 in Recommendation A1 as it provides the scripture references for the biblical principles for plurality of elders.

Q10: If our current church governance model is biblical then why did you recommend changing to plurality of elders?

A10: The advantages and disadvantages of different biblical church governance models were studied and discussed in detail. The following are the primary reasons that the recommended governance model was deemed optimal for Denver Baptist. First, the Scriptures provide very sound direction on church governance. We believe the biblical references in Scriptures support that plurality of elders is the most sound governance model. Second, it shares the shepherding load across multiple elders. Shepherding a large church requires multiple elders (shepherds) to accomplish properly. Third, it improves accountability and decision making within church leadership. Fourth, it provides continuity of leadership when the lead pastor role is vacant or absent. There are many others reasons that were discussed.

Q11: Will there be opportunities to learn more about this transition in church governance and elder leadership?

A11: Church-wide education sessions are planned to be conducted this fall for all members. More details will be coming on education sessions. However, the most current and detailed information will always be on our web site. Plus, you can author a question and receive an answer as well as see all Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the same site.

Q12: How will the church committees function in this new governance model?

A12: Over time, some of the roles and responsibilities of the existing committees may be transferred to the Elder Leadership. Committees will be formed as deemed necessary and appropriate by the elders and bylaws. Committees will serve assigned specific tasks as directed by the elders and the bylaws. Committee structure and responsibilities within the Elder Leadership model will change to some degree. See definition of Committee Organized in attachment 3 of Recommendation A1.

Q13: If the governance recommendation only provides the biblical framework, then what are details of the elder leadership governance model that have not yet been finalized?

A13: The Scriptures provide very sound direction on church governance and we developed those into a biblical-based framework that describes our church governance recommendation. To build out the biblical-based framework into a full governance structure requires finalizing details not found in the Scriptures and these will be determined later. The following is a list of some key details that will need to be finalized; number of elders, mix of elders (pastoral staff vs lay members), relationship of lead pastor to elder board, who nominates initial elder candidates, who nominates future elder candidates, how does the elder vetting process work, etc, etc.

Q14: The governance recommendation only provides the biblical-based framework of Elder Leadership. Why are the details not finalized now and when will the details be finalized?

A14: The Scriptures provide very sound direction on church governance and we developed those into a biblical-based framework that describes our church governance recommendation. To build out the biblical-based framework into a full governance structure requires finalizing details not found in the Scriptures and these will be determined later. The Ad-hoc committee's work on Discipleship path and Membership expectations/care have begun to be developed. The outcome of this work will provide the required insight on how the elder leadership should be structured around the biblical-based framework for DBC. Our expectation is that these details will not be finalized until the end of this year.

Q15: What is the expected timeframe for this decision on church governance to be finalized and the bylaw changes approved by the Denver Baptist congregation?

A15: This is a major and critical issue for the future health of Denver Baptist. This decision should not be rushed and we must assure that the leaders and congregation have spent the appropriate amount of time in discussion, in prayer and in the Scriptures while seeking The Lord's will for Denver Baptist. Church-wide education sessions are planned for the fall of 2023. With that stated, we would not expect a formal vote on the bylaws change to occur before 2024.

Q16: Will the church council exist after elder leadership model is established?

A16: To be determined. Some or all of the roles and responsibilities of the church council will be transferred to the Elder leadership. The exact details will need to be determined when the bylaw changes are established.

Q17: What role will the new Lead Pastor have on the Ad hoc Committee?

A17: The details are to be finalized. The Lead Pastor will join our team as an additional full-time member or he will replace Pastor Patrick Lowman, a current full-time member. At a minimum, we expect his involvement and guidance.

**Update Presentation on
Recommendation on Church Governance
DBC Ad-hoc Committee on Transition
June 11, 2023**

Ad-hoc Committee on Transition - Update

Recommendations Actively Being Worked On:

- **Assure church organization, leadership structure and governance are biblical based and optimal for DBC.**
- **Enhance expectations of church membership, member care and accountability.**
- **Establish a clear assimilation & discipleship path for all ages.**

Ad-hoc Committee on Transition - Update

Background on Church Governance Recommendation:

- **Finalized after much in-depth bible study and prayer**
- **Bylaws Committee approved on May 15**
- **Biblical-based framework from scriptures**
- **Details to build out the structure onto this biblical-based framework will be determined later**

[Ad-hoc Committee on Transition - Update](#)

Church Governance Recommendation:

Transition to congregational, elder-led governance per a plurality of elders comprised of men chosen from both lay members and pastoral staff

[Ad-hoc Committee on Transition - Update](#)

Church Governance Recommendation:

Transition to congregational, elder-led governance per a plurality of elders comprised of men chosen from both lay members and pastoral staff

**[Full information and FAQs are available at
Ad-hoc committee link on DBC website](#)**

Ad-hoc Committee on Transition - Update

Estimated Timeline on Church Governance Recommendation:

- June 12 – Information available on DBC website link
- Fall of 2023 – Church-wide education sessions
- End of 2023 – Build out structure onto biblical framework
- Early in 2024 – Congregational approval of bylaw changes
- Later in 2024 – Selection & approval of initial elders

Ad-hoc Committee on Transition - Update

Take-aways on Recommendation on Church Governance

- Biblical-based framework should be your focus
- Extended transition process over the next 18+ months
- Full information available at our link on DBC website

DBC Ad-hoc Committee on Transition

Charter

March 15, 2023

Charter for Ad-Hoc Committee on Transition Denver Baptist Church

2023

BACKGROUND

Ad-Hoc committee was recommended and approved by Church Council in 2022.

Ad-Hoc committee was commissioned and staffed by Nominating Committee in 2022.

Ad-Hoc Committee and Ad-Hoc Committee members nominated and approved in DBC Church business meeting on December 11, 2022.

Ad-Hoc Committee reports to the Nominating Committee and DBC Church Council.

PURPOSE

To develop recommendations related to the assigned, primary issues identified in the church assessment of Denver Baptist church compiled by Dr. John Ewart in 2022. To assure the recommendations are biblically based.

SCOPE

Primary issues from Dr. Ewart's church assessment assigned to Ad-Hoc committee:

- a) Assure church organization, leadership structure and governance are biblical based and optimal for DBC. (1)
- b) Assure church identity, mission and vision are well defined and understood. (2)
- c) Enhance expectations of church membership, member care and accountability. (3)
- d) Establish a clear assimilation and discipleship path for all ages. (4)
- e) Develop a consistent, personal evangelism and follow-up strategy. (6)
- f) Enhance and re-focus the comprehensive missions strategy. (8)
- g) Communicate with transparency to help build trust and unity. (9)

(*) – Number from Dr Ewart's church assessment

RESPONSIBILITIES

For each primary issue documented within the above scope:

- a) Determine the biblical based guidance.
- b) Determine current status of Denver Baptist church.
- c) Develop formal recommendations for Denver Baptist church.
- d) Outline implementation/transition plan for each recommendation.
- e) Submit the recommendation and implementation/transition plan to the appropriate DBC committee and DBC Church Council.
- f) Provide ample opportunities and means for DBC body obtain solid understanding of and full education on all approved recommendations.
- g) Create & maintain a communication plan of ongoing progress to DBC body, DBC Church Council and appropriate DBC committees.
- h) Upon their request, provide Pastor Search Committee with updates on our progress.

Charter for Ad-Hoc Committee on Transition Denver Baptist Church

2023

AUTHORITY

Limited to development of recommendations.

No authority to make formal changes to DBC bylaws, policies, or operating manual.

No authority to launch implementation/transition plans.

DELIVERABLES

For each primary issue documented within the above scope:

- a) Formal and detailed documentation for each recommendation that includes:
 - Biblical based guidance/foundation
 - Current status of Denver Baptist church
 - Proposed new direction (recommendation)
 - Proposed implementation plan
- b) At minimum, quarterly communication updates to church body.
- c) Update to DBC Church Council prior to each regularly scheduled church business meeting

ESTIMATED DURATION

January 2023 to January 2024.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bill Axline

Gary Cornelius

Wes Dellinger – Vice-Chair

Paul Hubacher - Chair

Patrick Lowman

Josh Quinn

Tom Robertson

Larry Deaton - Alternate