

What is an elder? Peter writes, “I exhort the elders among you... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Pet 5:2; cf. John 21:15-16 and Acts 20:28). Elders are not responsible to do all the work of the ministry themselves, but rather to ensure that all the saints are fully equipped to do all the work to which God has called them (Eph 4:11–16). Elders serve as “under-shepherds” of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–18) by providing pastoral care and oversight in their local church. Men called as elders at Frontline Church must be qualified for the office (1 Tim 3:1–7, Titus 1:6–9; 1 Pet 5:1–4) and stand in agreement with Frontline’s mission, distinctives, and statement of faith. *Scripture lays out several broad pastoral duties for elders—provision, protection, guidance, and, summarily, care.*

Provision. Elders *feed* the Church. Throughout Scripture, God’s Word is described as food for the soul. Like spiritual fathers, the Elders ensure their people are well-fed, and constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of sound doctrine (1 Tim 4:6). Therefore, an elder must be “an able teacher” (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17) and must be committed to equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11). Jesus’ under-shepherds feed Jesus’ sheep with Jesus’ word. *What does this look like?*

- Pray the Word for those under your care.
- Preach the Word by taking responsibility for the preaching ministry of the church. (Not every elder preaches, but every elder does have responsibility to influence and support to the pulpit ministry.)
- Counsel the Word as you equip and care for members.
- Sing the Word so others can hear your joy in Christ, especially on Sundays.
- Live the Word among our people so others can see it on display in the everyday stuff of your life.

Protection. Elders *protect* the Church against false doctrine—not only from outside the walls of the church but also as it rises up from within the congregation to distort the truth (Acts 20:17, 28–31; 1 Tim 1:3). Elders are responsible for discerning between those who simply need to be “gently instructed” (2 Tim 2:25) versus those who are “savage wolves” (Acts 20:29). Elders must hold “to the faithful message as taught, so that they will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and refute those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Elders must be able to discern the difference between properly refuting false teaching and being drawn into “foolish and stupid arguments” which are “unprofitable and useless” (2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9). *What does this look like?*

- Guard your own heart by engaging in regular confession, repentance, and prayer with other elders and your gospel community.
- Lead member interviews within your hub (if applicable).
- Move towards and address false teaching within your hub (if applicable) and within the broader church.
- Provide patient, gentle, and firm church discipline when needed.

Guidance. Elders *lead* the Church. The biblical writers also refer to elders as “overseers,” a title that highlights their role as leaders (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:1; Titus 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). Theological acumen, depth of character, and alignment with our mission is not enough. Simply having a leadership title isn’t enough. Elders should serve as pacesetters in the church. *What does this look like?*

- Giving broad direction to our church through participation in elder meetings.
- Equip and empower leaders to advance the mission of Frontline Church by leading a hub (if applicable). A hub is a set of two to four community groups connected geographically for (1) more efficient mission (2) more effective pastoral care, and (3) more exact equipping.
- As margin allows, participate in facilitating development pathways for our future leaders.
- Regularly seek the Lord for the direction of our church on behalf of our people.

Care. Elders are summarily called to *care* for God’s Church. Real life in the church is messy and pastors are called to lead the people of God to fully believe and apply the gospel in the midst of the challenges and circumstances of everyday life (1 Thess 5:14). *What does this look like?*

- Be present among our people. Live an unhurried and uncluttered life so you will have margin to move towards our people and prayerfully listen to them without being ruled by compulsion, anger, or anxiety.
- Prayer is the chief work of pastoral care. Commit to regularly praying through the names of the members within your hub (if applicable). Pray for those who are sick and hurting by making hospital visits and visiting the elderly.
- God commands us to rest. Pastoral work is emotionally and spiritually stressful. To be an elder at Frontline you must guard your rest—sleep, Sabbath, play, and vacation.

This portion of the document is adapted, with gratitude, from a document created by the pastoral team at our sister church, Redeemer Fellowship, in Kansas City (redeemerkansascity.org).



Commitments

Foundational Values

- ▶ A healthy Christian
- ▶ A healthy husband
- ▶ A healthy father
- ▶ A healthy relationship to work and vocation

Minimum Elder Time Commitments

- ▶ Work with congregational lead pastor to write a job description that spells out how to uniquely commit to provide, protect, guide, and care for the flock
- ▶ Presence on the Lord's Day, as an elder in our church
- ▶ Presence at elder prayer, as your work allows
- ▶ Presence at your monthly congregational elder meeting
- ▶ Commitment to value and prioritize the relational framework of our eldership communion
 - Elders and wives nights
 - Annual elders and wives retreat
 - A commitment to meet once a month with two other elders for accountability and care

Based on gifting, passion, and margin—and in communication with your congregational lead pastor—you may decide to take on additional commitments. Because this personal approach is not “one-size-fits-all,” it will require you to continually cultivate a living relationship with the local church, your fellow elders, and your congregational lead pastor.

Whenever you experience a shift in season of life, gifting, or margin, you will probably need to revisit, clarify, and renegotiate your additional commitments. God draws the lines that mark the limitations of our humanity in each season of life. It is our work to discern where he has drawn those lines, and live wisely within them, even as we seek to respond to both the ever-present needs around us and the promptings and stirrings within us. It is our desire that every elder be jointly fitted to the body. It is a tragedy when a bivocational elder is overworked or under-supported, such that he burns out; it is also a tragedy when a bivocational elder is underutilized or mis-utilized such that he rusts out.

