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Leadership and Vision: Moving From a Patriarchal Model to a Plurality of Elders

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LEADERSHIP AND VISION: MOVING FROM A PATRIARCHAL MODEL TO A
PLURALITY OF ELDERS

Written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

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LEADERSHIP AND VISION: MOVING FROM A PATRIARCHAL MODEL TO A PLURALITY OF ELDERS

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OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

RAYMOND C.W. SEETOH
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ABSTRACT

Leadership and Vision: Moving from a Patriarchal Model to a Plurality of Elders
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Doctor of Ministry
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2018

The goal of this project is to establish a new leadership structure for Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church in Vancouver, Canada. Currently, Cornerstone is led by the founding pastor, and as he approaches retirement, a new structure needs to be put in place. The thesis argues that a plurality of leaders, versus a single patriarchal leader, is a healthier form of governance. This process needs to be carefully studied and implemented with special consideration of Confucius ideology, which influences many Chinese churches. A plurality of leaders serving alongside a pastor will help discern and articulate a clear purpose and vision for the church.

Through an examination of Scripture, church leadership has always been done in a group or a team. There are clear distinctions between elders, deacons, and full-time staff. The goal for Cornerstone is to create a structure that utilizes and empowers each group for effective service. This is a five-year process of training and reorganizing. Most of the training occurs at the annual leaders’ retreat. Specific workshops have been developed for discovering Cornerstone’s purpose, addressing conflict resolution, building the leadership team, setting goals, and creating a vision statement and strategy plan. This process concludes with a congregational vote to amend the bylaws to reflect the changes to the leadership structure of the church. The board of directors and the senior pastor will lead this new structure and serve as the spiritual leaders of the church.

Content Reader: Dr. Ken Fong

Words: 236
To Denise Wong (1960 – 2009), thank you for believing in me.

To my wife Rhema and children, Abigail and Sarah. You will always be my greatest gift and highest achievement.

To Jennifer Cheng, I am grateful for all your help.
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PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
INTRODUCTION

At the 2007 Leadership Summit, Bill Hybels\(^1\), senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, boldly said “Vision is the most powerful weapon in the leader’s arsenal... People who own a vision will pray for it, work for it, sacrifice for it, and even die for it.”\(^2\) There is tremendous power and potential behind a vision. Vision gives purpose to an organization by unifying the sum of its parts around a singular goal. As such, having an appropriate methodology to obtain and articulate that vision is vital. The premise of this project is to determine where vision comes from and how to create an effective one.

Over the years, the Chinese church in Canada has grown in size and affluence. According to immigration patterns, particularly in cities like Toronto and Vancouver, there is a great need for churches that cater to immigrants. At the same time, there is a growing concern among subsequent generations of Chinese-Canadians. These generations feel confined by the traditions of the Chinese church and long for more diversity. For the Chinese church to continue its mission in the world, a clear and embracing vision must be set. This must be accompanied by an effective methodology for discernment and maintained by a healthy model of governance.

Both the Chinese culture and church are heavily influenced by Confucian values. Confucius was a Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 to 479 B.C.E. during a period

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\(^1\) In 2018, numerous allegations have emerged surrounding the now-retired Bill Hybels and Willowcreek Community Church. I have decided to keep Hybels’ references because of the quality of his material and, as evident in the paper, to further emphasize the need to build proper structures of accountability around a gifted individual.

\(^2\) Bill Hybels, “A Vision to Die for,” 2007 Leadership Summit at Willow Creek Church.
of political decline and social chaos. At that time, China was divided into many feudal states that were constantly battling for power and control. Confucius aimed to bring peace and order by promoting the pursuit of jen – humanity, benevolence, and virtue. His ideals transformed the very fabric of Chinese culture and the Chinese view on leadership. Gary Choong writes that according to Confucian values, “Power and influence is seen and understood in terms of status residing in a person who is associated with a virtuous character.” This project explores the implications of Confucian leadership and how traditional Chinese leadership is tied to a person rather than an office.

Confucian values explain why, in many Chinese churches, the task for developing a vision for the church falls on the senior pastor. Often, the senior pastor exemplifies the virtues of jen, especially in the areas of leadership and governance. A leader of virtue will bring peace and stability to the organization. Choong writes,

The bedrock of Confucian philosophy is founded upon humane government—the true king, who rules through moral example. The country is based upon a patriarchal foundation, with the family serving as the basis for state rule. Authority and obedience are necessary to the existence of political order… Confucius means justice or virtue consisting of benevolent activities that will secure the greatest social harmony.

In short, the leader is to be jen and the followers are to be obedient to the leader. This is done for the sake of preserving unity and harmony within a unit, whether a family or a

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 112.
7 Ibid., 308.
church. This is a simplified yet accurate description of most Chinese churches.

In the context of Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church, a multi-site Chinese church, the founder, Reverend Chanson Lau, has led the church through many years of growth. He has championed the vision and ministry philosophies for every Cornerstone Church in the United States, Canada, Singapore, and New Zealand. In return, each Cornerstone church has organized themselves around the person—not the office—of the founder.

After almost fifty years of full-time ministry, Lau is approaching retirement. In the coming years, there will be a need to redefine the position of the founder and how that position relates to the other churches. The purpose of this project is to help Cornerstone in Vancouver transition from a patriarchal model to a model led by a plurality of elders. Part of this process involves the task of visioning, whereby the vision for the church is carefully discerned, communicated, and executed by a plurality of elders.

The first part of the paper examines the history of the Chinese church in Canada and the history of Cornerstone in Vancouver. A special emphasis is placed on how Confucian values compare to Western styles of leadership, and on the role of the founder within the current leadership structure. The second part of the paper argues for a holistic view of leadership through the model of biblical eldership. The roles and functions of elders, both men and women, are supported by our denomination (North American Baptist), where the church is governed by a plurality of elders alongside the pastor. It is within this framework of leadership, with shared giftings and mutual accountability, that a collective vision for the church is best discerned and implemented.
After Cornerstone has established the theological basis for eldership, it can move on to a series of visioning exercises. The first exercise focuses on the past, asking questions about where the church has been and why did God start the church. Sometimes the best way forward is to look back and identify traces of God’s providential hand. The next exercise deals with conflicts that create distrust among the leadership group. Conflict can be useful and can help a group clarify its vision and purpose. Further, organizational harmony and stability can be achieved through open communication, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. The last exercise focuses on the future by anticipating trends, accessing strengths, and analyzing ministry potential. This series of exercises occurs at the annual leaders’ retreat. At the same time, the church will begin equipping current leaders in their new roles as elders. The project concludes with a revision to the church’s constitution, thus affirming the new leadership structure and the vision of the church.
CHAPTER 1:
THE HISTORY OF THE CHINESE CHURCH IN CANADA

Before examining the Chinese church, the following terms must be defined for clarity.¹ First generation (G1) are those who immigrated to Canada as adults and 1.5 generation (G1.5) are children of G1 who came to Canada between the ages of eleven and sixteen. They are bilingual and bi-cultural. Second generation (G2) are children of G1, born either in Canada or elsewhere, who came to Canada when they were six or younger. Third generation (G3) are children of G2, born and raised in Canada, who have typically lost the Chinese language and most of the Chinese tradition.

Immigration Patterns

The influx of Chinese immigrants to Canada began in 1858, with the first wave of immigrants arriving in British Columbia to work in the gold mines.² From 1880 to 1885, fifteen thousand Chinese workers came to Canada to work on the Canadian Pacific


Railway project.³ After the railway project was completed, the Canadian government imposed a controversial tax on Chinese immigrants, commonly known as the “Chinese Head Tax.”⁴ Many were forced to work long hours in factories and restaurants and faced social discrimination.

In 1962, the Canadian government adopted an open immigrant policy based on points rather than ethnicity. This resulted in a new wave of Chinese immigration. The Chinese church catered to this new immigrant population, the majority of whom came from Hong Kong. Most of the Chinese churches planted during this period used Cantonese as their main language for worship. These churches deliberately chose to retain much of their traditions and cultural values. Paul Wang wrote in his doctoral dissertation about people attending Chinese churches in Canada, “While most join the Chinese churches because they came to this country already as Christians, and some might attend for reason of assimilation, the majority join the Chinese church because of their conversion experiences and for a community orientation that fosters conservative moral values which are very much similar to the Confucian moral traditions.”⁵ In some sense, the Chinese church became a home away from home for these immigrant believers.


In the past twenty years, due to economic growth in China, there has been a growing number of Mandarin-speaking Chinese working, studying, and living in Canada. According to the 2011 Canadian census, approximately 21 percent of the population in Canada were immigrants. In 2011, immigrants from China totaled 545,535, making the Chinese the second largest foreign-born group in Canada. The majority (around 95 percent) of Canada's foreign-born population lived in four provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Alberta, with 63.4 percent of these immigrants settled in the major cities of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. The continual wave of G1 immigration has fueled the growth of the Chinese church, particularly in these major cities. Statistics Canada projects that in the next twenty-five years, the number of immigrants will continue to rise from 20 to 30 percent of the overall population.

Along with G1 immigration, the emergence of G2 and G3 has had a significant impact on the Chinese church. Many of those categorized as G2 or G3 have lost most, if not all, of their language, cultural values, and traditions. The emergence of the G2 and G3 has forced the Chinese church to embrace the English language and, to a lesser degree, the Western way of life. In short, both the Mandarin-speaking and the English-speaking elements have forced the Chinese church to move from monolingual (Cantonese) to

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7 Ibid.


multilingual (Cantonese, Mandarin, and English), and from monoculture (G1 immigrants) to multicultural (G1.5, G2, and G3).

The Emergence of G2 Ministries

As the Chinese church continues to flourish in Canada, an entire generation of G2 believers has begun to emerge. These are children of immigrant parents, who were either born in Canada or immigrated to Canada at a young age. They attended school in Canada and grew up in a Western society with remote memories of their past and traditions.

G2 believers attend the Chinese church along with their parents. In the early days, they had to sit through services in Cantonese. Later, side-by-side translation was used and, eventually, English services were offered. With the emergence of the English worship service, the Chinese church began to hire more English-speaking ministers and staff.

As time went on, these G2 grew into adults. They graduated from school, began careers, got married, and started their own families. The English ministries at Chinese churches grew to cater to the G2’s various life stages. In addition, about 15 percent of the Chinese population in North America intermarried with other ethnic backgrounds.10 Marriages with partners from other ethnicities, such as Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, and Caucasian, adds further diversity to the Chinese church.

Unfortunately, the traditional Chinese church has done very little to help these

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couples integrate into the church. Samuel Ling writes, “For many Chinese parents they cannot entertain such a possibility [as intermarriage].”¹¹ But with the increasing number of intermarriages, which will further increase among the G3, the Chinese church needs to re-evaluate its mission and purpose.

Increasing diversity has had a profound impact on the leadership of the Chinese church. At present, there are more English-speaking ministers than ever before. In addition, more G2 are finding themselves in positions of leadership within Chinese churches. The Chinese church faces an imminent need to restructure and re-evaluate its ways of governance. Even though the congregation of the Chinese church may seem similar in appearance and ethnicity, there are significant cultural differences between the G1 and G2. Ling highlights some subtle yet significant differences between the G1 and G2.¹²

The Individual Versus the Group

Family plays a significant role in the Chinese culture. In many instances, the family influences the choices of the individual. Parents influence, and sometimes even determine, the academic path and careers of their children. Almost all Chinese parents want their children to be successful, which is usually determined by income. In very traditional families, parents even have a say in their child’s choice of a life partner. It is common within the Chinese culture to view someone as part of the larger collective. For

¹¹ Samuel Ling, The Chinese Way of Doing Things (Vancouver: Horizon Ministries, 1999), 120.

¹² Ibid., 141-160.
example, one’s identity is based on being the son or daughter of one’s parents, and the family/last name often comes before the first name. The G2, on the other hand, have grown up in an individualistic Western culture. They want to have the right to be heard and the right to make their own decisions. Conflicts often arise in the church when the G2 react against the G1’s patriarchal leadership.

Theory Versus Relationships

The G2 are educated in the West and think like Westerners; the Western way of thinking tends to be more theoretical than relational. When there is a need in the church, the G2 drafts a proposal and analyzes the organizational structures, job descriptions, evaluations, and objectives. On the other hand, the G1 looks at the social and relational aspects of things. Instead of taking a direct approach, the G1 tries to solve the problem without upsetting the current status quo and without offending anyone while trying to save face. While this often results in making less effective decisions, it is nevertheless effective in preserving harmony or the appearance of harmony within the organization.

Differences Versus Equality

The G1 holds people in leadership in high regard. Similarly, G1 leaders expect to be treated with respect. The G2 treat their leaders as equals—often even as friends. Some G2 are on a first-name basis with their leaders. Due to the nature of their relationship, or how they view relationships, it is common for a G2 to approach G1 leaders and question their decisions, hoping to initiate dialogue and discussion. From the perspective of the G1 leaders, however, such actions are often viewed as disrespectful, and can put the G1 in a
defensive mindset.

Self-Confidence Versus Humility

Canadianized or Americanized G2 are not afraid to talk about their strengths and accomplishments. They were taught to be confident and vocal. Conversely, the G1 tend to hide their strengths and prefer to portray a face of humility. The G1 expects loyalty from followers and associates loyalty with obedience. In a church setting, the G1 might misinterpret the G2 as being rebellious and arrogant, whereas the G2 see their actions as simply standing up for what they think is right.

Leadership: Credentials Versus Service Records

The G2 have a different view on leadership. The G2 prefer to look at a person’s credentials and qualifications, whereas the G1 only accepts the leader after they have proven their worth through years of faithful service. In the Chinese social order, age is highly honoured as it is closely linked with wisdom. Unfortunately, this has resulted in many godly, faithful G1 in positions of leaderships for which they may not be qualified. On the other hand, an increasing number of G2 ministers are treating ministry as a career. This affects the longevity of their tenure, and without sufficient time to earn the trust of the people, the G2 minister may find it hard to make lasting changes.

Spiritual Gifts Versus Secular Credentials

Ironically, the G1 place a high emphasis on secular success and consider the status of wealth important. Often, someone who is perceived to be successful in the
secular world, usually measured by one’s income, would be given more prominence in the church. Therefore, in many Chinese churches, many successful people are chosen to be in positions of leadership. The G2, who may not have the economic success of their parents, might have a more holistic view on leadership. Leaders are often recognized on the basis of their spiritual giftedness rather than their secular success.

Conflict Management

The G2 takes a more direct verbal approach to conflict management. They choose to go straight to the person involved. In terms of conflict management, the G1 respects the chain of command and tries to abide by the leadership structure. This process takes a longer time and the original message often becomes distorted. In addition, the G1 leader is generally more receptive to the message if it comes from the right channel—usually from someone higher—rather than directly from the disgruntled person. Therefore, the Western method of conflict resolution often leads to more frustration in the Chinese church.

These are some of the differences between the G1 and G2. It is unfair to say that one generation’s approach is better than the other. Philip Slater writes, “America stresses competition, individualism, independence and tradition. Asian cultures, on the other hand, tend to stress cooperation, community, interdependence and tradition.” In the end, it is simply a different way of thinking, shaped by many factors including how long

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immigrants have been in Canada, their occupations, their education levels, their early experiences of church, and other such factors.

The main issue is that the G1 does not assimilate into the host society; rather, they acculturate. Without overgeneralizing, the G1 typically try to keep as much of their Chinese heritage as possible, but they recognize the need to learn new skills in order to survive in the new society. For example, while most G1 immigrants acquire a high level of English competency to work or study in their new country, most of them choose to speak in their native tongue at home. The G2, on the other hand, face a massive identity crisis. The G2 may either identify more with Chinese culture or with Western culture, or they may be caught in between, reacting against or rejecting certain aspects of each culture. For example, a G2 might adopt a Western management style at work but adopt a Chinese leadership style at home or at the church. The emergence of the G3 poses a different challenge for the Chinese church. A G3 identifies themselves as Canadian before they identify themselves as Chinese. There will be a greater erosion of Chinese values and culture, but a residual tie will always remain.

All these factors add to the complexity of the Chinese church. It is a multilingual, multiethnic, multigenerational congregation, with everyone fighting for their voice to be heard. This complexity makes it easy to understand why someone who grew up in the Western culture becomes attracted to Western values of individualism and autonomy. Regrettably, the Chinese church has not been managing this situation well and it has

14 Song, Patterns of Religious Participation among the Second-Generation Koreans in Toronto, 18.

resulted in the disappearance of the G2 from the Chinese church—otherwise known as the silent exodus.

The Silent Exodus

In 1996, Helen Lee wrote an article entitled “Silent Exodus” to describe the movement of the G2 out of the immigrant church.\(^{16}\) In a doctoral research project among G2 believers, Matthew Todd writes, “The fastest growing North American churches (church plants) are Chinese and Asian, yet some of the highest dropout rates are found in Chinese and Asian churches’ English ministries.”\(^{17}\) According to Todd, 75 to 90 percent of the G2 population in a Chinese church will leave, compared to 51 to 77 percent of G2 church attendees in other European and multicultural Canadian churches.\(^{18}\) In a different survey among G2 Koreans, Minho Song outlines the five reasons behind the silent exodus: G1’s overemphasis on ethnicity, unclear mission and direction of the church, frustration with the G1 leadership, unhappy experiences of church fights and splits, secularism and postmodern influences.\(^{19}\) According to Song, only 10 percent of the G2 who leave the ethnic church will join a mainstream church; but even if they do, their


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 282.

\(^{19}\) Song, Patterns of Religious Participation among the Second-Generation Koreans, 48.
participation will likely be nominal. Further, only 32 percent of those who remain in the church will be active members.

Therefore, it is not surprising that there has been an increasing number of independent G2 churches, which are often the result of church conflicts. At the center of many of these conflicts is the issue of vision. On one hand, the G2 want to pursue a multiethnic vision for the church. On the other hand, the G1 want to preserve as much of their culture as possible. Without a clear vision for the future, conflicts will continue to plague the Chinese church. Some scholars, such as Matthew Todd, advocate for a model called, “Associated Parallel Independent English Congregation.” Associated refers to the fact that the congregations are linked by family, cultural heritage, a sense of affinity, intentional voluntary joint ministries and relationships. Parallel refers to the English congregation sharing a facility or meeting place with the Chinese congregation. Independent refers to the English congregation being registered as a separate legal entity with full autonomy in all matters of governance, operations, finances, structures, and ministries. This model aims for an independent structure for the G2 within a Chinese church.

David Chan, a professor at Alliance Bible Seminary in Hong Kong, uses a creative illustration to describe the various stages of G2 ministries. When the Chinese

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20 Ibid., 86.
21 Ibid, 197.
22 Todd, English Ministry Crisis in Chinese Canadian Churches, 133.
church started, it was like a private residence—the G1 lived there and only one language was used. When the G2 children and youth programs were developed, it was like having rooms in the house to rent out. The next stage was like a hotel; each congregation (G1 and G2) would have their own rooms. Then came the townhouse or duplex model, where two churches shared the same roof yet were totally separated from one another. Finally, the G2 would move out and find their own place.

Given the high emphasis on harmony and the family unit, it is easy to see why many G2 congregations never reach the stage of independence or even the stage of codependence. Therefore, both the traditional Chinese church and the younger G2 church need to rethink leadership in response to the teachings of Confucius. There are many values within Confucianism that are in line with the teachings of Scripture. For example, honouring your parents and putting others above yourself (Lev 19:2-3, Phil 2:3), but there are other values within Confucianism that contradict the teachings of Scripture. Paul Tokunaga describes it this way, “Confucius was attempting to set down rules for a stable and orderly society for the entire country. He was speaking to a chaotic social situation. The message of Jesus on the other hand, was for his ‘new society’ of followers, who would live out their faith in the midst of an unbelieving world. He was not setting up a ‘new world order’ for all.”24 The church is the new society of Christ followers. As we follow Christ into the world, we bring his message of good news to all people, calling them into faith and obedience, not to an individual or a collective group, but to the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Choong writes, “The praxis of leadership is largely influenced by the culture to which one belongs… There is no one best way or style in the exercise of leadership in any one culture or across cultures.”²⁵ There is nothing wrong with culture, but our culture shapes who we as individuals and every culture needs to be examined by the truth of God’s word.

Ultimately, there is only one church; there is no such thing as a Chinese church or Caucasian church, but one church of which Christ is the head. The temptation for many church leaders is to copy the model used by other successful churches. The Chinese church is a complex organization. Hoover Wong warns that the solution is not a new model for church or leadership.²⁶ There is not just one way to operate the church; what works for one church may not work for another. Wong explains that the model of the church exists to serve the mission.²⁷ I would add that the mission of the church is defined by its vision of the future.

I salute the many G2 pastors who had or are currently serving in traditional Chinese churches. Each day, they lead with hope for a new missional vision and they wrestle with cultural powers that hold them back. Some will be called to plant healthy G2 churches, whereas others have been called to stay and lead their churches through a period of deep change. Robert Quinn defines deep change as a major change in scope—

²⁵ Choong, *Counter-Cultural Paradigmatic Leadership*, 246.


²⁷ Ibid.
discontinuous with the past and irreversible. These men and women of courage who have been called to stay are the unsung heroes of faith. They choose to stay, take great risks, and push for a new future. One of these stories is the story of Cornerstone: a Chinese church that cultivated a new vision of the future.

The Story of Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church

This section examines the history and formation of Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church in both San Francisco and Vancouver. Both histories are intricately tied to its founding pastor, Reverend Dr. Chanson Lau. Lau was born and raised in Hong Kong. In 1965, he moved to San Francisco and attended Golden Gate Theological Seminary. Upon graduation, he served as an associate pastor at Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church, located in the heart of Chinatown. Lau was not a typical Chinese pastor. He could communicate effectively in both Cantonese and English. Later, Lau even taught himself to preach in Mandarin. It was at Cumberland that Lau developed a passion to reach the G2. At that time, little was being done to meet the needs of this ever-growing population. Lau began an English service and used music, the arts, and sports for outreach and discipleship. The English-speaking congregation began to grow.

Lau at Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church

In 1975, Lau started Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church. Cornerstone continued its mission to reach the next generation through music, arts, and sports. It grew

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from a handful of young people to a church with over a thousand members. Currently, it has multiple services in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Indonesian, and Cambodian. Cornerstone has planted churches in Canada, Singapore, and New Zealand. As part of a larger discipleship strategy, Cornerstone Christian Academy was formed to provide biblical Christian education. At present, Cornerstone Christian Academy is serving the city of San Francisco and has over a thousand students ranging from kindergarten to high school. In addition, Cornerstone ventured into television and radio broadcasting and operates its own senior housing facility.

Music, arts, and sports remain a strong emphasis in Cornerstone. In the 1970s, the Cornerstone Singers were formed and began touring the country, using music to communicate the good news of Jesus. Drama, musicals, and concerts are regular events at Cornerstone. Even though Cornerstone has grown over the years, the uniqueness of Cornerstone remains the same. Lau’s vision for outreach, his use of technology and the arts, his faith and his drive are still very much alive in Cornerstone.

The Story of Cornerstone Vancouver
Lau took a basketball team to Vancouver, Canada in 1972. They ministered to the G2 at Christ Church of China in Chinatown. In subsequent years, Lau brought the Cornerstone Singers to Vancouver and hosted several evangelistic events. Lau wanted to assist the local church to reach the next generation of Chinese immigrants. During one of his trips, Lau met a young deacon at Christ Church named Steven. Steven was a typical G1 believer, but after witnessing the work and fruits of Lau, Steven was convicted of the need to reach the G2 for Christ.
Steven, along with a few likeminded Christians, petitioned Christ Church to start an English service in 1974 but received very little support. At that time, the leadership did not feel the need for an English ministry. They assumed that the G2 believers would be like their parents and embrace the Chinese way. Steven, along with six other adults, felt the call to plant a church that would reach the G2 in the city of Vancouver.

On June 25, 1978, Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church in Vancouver was formed. Lau spoke at the first worship service. He provided leadership and oversight to the church. Each month, Lau would fly to Vancouver to preach and chair the monthly leaders’ meeting. In later years, Lau sent his associate pastors to train the church in various summer programs, sports ministries, and workshops. It is with support from Lau that Cornerstone Vancouver began to grow. It was not long before Cornerstone outgrew its facilities and began its search for a larger venue.

In 1985, an opportunity presented itself to purchase seven acres of land along No. 5 Road in Richmond, British Columbia. This was an exciting time for the young church; they mustered their resources and placed a deposit on the land. It was an undeveloped piece of farmland that would have to go through the process of rezoning before a church could be built on it. In September, Lau flew in to finalize the details. As he entered the site, he noticed that the neighboring piece of land was also for sale. It was thirteen acres and sat at the corner of an intersection. Lau suggested that the corner lot was a better piece of property. Thankfully, both pieces of land were owned by the same person, who allowed the deposit to be transferred. The new church of forty members, comprised mostly of youth and young adults, acquired thirteen acres of land in the city of Richmond.
For the next two years, the church applied for rezoning and building permits. In 1990, the building work began. Being a young and small church, the church could not secure a loan to finance a multimillion-dollar building. Once again, Lau stepped in. He applied for a loan with the church denomination, the North American Baptist Association. Given the growth and stability of Cornerstone in San Francisco, the loan was quickly approved. Due to issues of cross-border monetary transfers, the loan was later transferred over and borne by Cornerstone San Francisco.

Over the years, Cornerstone San Francisco supported the salaries of the pastors ministering in Vancouver. Lau selected and commissioned pastors to Vancouver. Many of the pastors sent were Lau’s acquaintances and were approaching retirement. More recently, they have been home-grown pastors from San Francisco. Each pastor had a direct connection with Lau and reported to him.

In April 1996, the church building was completed. Cornerstone had its first service in a new twenty thousand square foot facility. Part of the vision for the building was the formation of Cornerstone Christian Academy (CCA). Like the model used in San Francisco, the school was part of a larger strategy to reach the next generation. In 1997, CCA started with just seven students. In the past twenty years, it has grown to two hundred and fifty students and operates classes from preschool through seventh grade. It has earned a stellar reputation in the community and there is currently a growing wait list.

The future is exciting for both the church and the school. Cornerstone has been blessed by many outstanding individuals who have contributed their time, energy, and money. At the heart of it is the vision of Lau. He has been instrumental in Cornerstone’s growth. His vision and personality have pushed a small congregation to dream big
dreams. As Cornerstone Vancouver grew, it became less dependent on the San Francisco church in terms of both finances and leadership.

The Leadership Structure

This section looks at the organizational structure of Cornerstone in accordance with its current bylaws. Cornerstone adopts a pastor-centric model of ministry. Currently, Lau is the chairman of the Ministerial Cabinet, also known as the Board of Regents, that oversees all Cornerstone churches. The Cabinet is made up of the senior pastors of each Cornerstone church. According to the church bylaws, each senior pastor is appointed by the Ministerial Cabinet and serves as the spiritual leader of the congregation. The senior pastor of each local church has the authority to appoint and dismiss any of the pastoral staff and is the ex-officio member of the board of directors and the working committee.

The pastoral staff of each local church is appointed by the senior pastor and they are the decision-making body of the church. The working committee is made up of department heads. Members of the working committee are appointed by the senior pastor, and they chair various ministries and assist the pastoral staff in the day-to-day operations of the church.

The board of directors is appointed by the senior pastor and they are tasked to look after the property, the finances including staff salaries and benefits, and the official church records. Members of the board of directors are officially registered with various

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29 At the time of this writing, no other pastors apart from Reverend Lau sits in the Ministerial Cabinet.

30 Currently at Cornerstone Vancouver, we have departments for Worship, Hospitality, Children, Fellowship, Christian Education and Special Events.
government agencies but are only required to meet twice a year to review church finances and other property-related issues. Ministry matters are handled entirely by the pastoral staff and by the members of the working committee.

In short, Lau appoints the senior pastor of each church, who in turn forms his or her own pastoral team. Members of the church are selected to serve in either ministry-related departments (working committee) or in administrative roles (board of directors). They report to the pastoral staff, who in turn reports to the senior pastor, who ultimately reports to Lau. However, there is no formal system of reporting from each local Cornerstone church. Lau has a great level of trust for each church and allows them to operate with a high degree of autonomy.

As previously mentioned, the current leadership structure in Cornerstone is pastor-centric. Most of the decision-making power resides in the upper levels and decisions are made by full-time ministers. The biblical model of kingship is used to justify this model. God called and appointed certain individuals, like David and Solomon, to rule and represent his reign on earth or in the church. Similarly, pastors are like these servants of God and are called by God to serve in the church. Hence, the mandate of leadership is given to these pastors to lead and govern.

This means that the health of the church is often dependent on the health of its pastors. Just like the way a good king would bring peace and prosperity to the people, a good pastor will bring growth and maturity to the church. But even the best kings, such as David and Solomon, had their moments of weakness and defeat. In those moments, the integrity of the church is vulnerable. Perhaps there a better way to maintain accountability and faithfulness.
Regarding the vision of the church, the core questions are who understands the vision and who decides what it should be. It is apparent that God has placed within Lau’s heart the mandate to reach the next generation of Asian immigrants. To his credit, Lau has faithfully and sacrificially pursued this vision. Today, a vibrant church and school exist in the city of San Francisco. Lau’s vision has inspired Cornerstone Vancouver to pursue a similar vision for its community. Yet there are obvious differences between the two cities. An identical vision may not be transplanted successfully from one country and culture to another. More significantly, if power and influence reside simply in a person as is fitting with Confucian thinking, then Lau is the one responsible to drive this vision of Cornerstone to all its affiliates.

The major benefit behind the pastor-centric model lies with the unity of vision. One key factor of growth for Cornerstone Vancouver is its ability to model after Cornerstone San Francisco and to draw from its resources and expertise. The success of Cornerstone Christian Academy would not be possible if it did not receive help and training from San Francisco. Like the school in San Francisco, CCA in Vancouver is able to generate revenue which can then be redirected to other church ministries. One can even conclude that Cornerstone Vancouver is a smaller replicate of Cornerstone San Francisco. Another reason for Cornerstone Vancouver’s growth lies in its focus. Through its forty years of history, Cornerstone Vancouver has had a clear vision—even if that vision came from San Francisco. Lau was the figurehead of that vision and because of his presence and leadership, Cornerstone Vancouver stayed on course. Everyone in the congregation knew its mission to reach the next generation. Everyone supported the
strategy to build a Christian school. Cornerstone Vancouver has had its share of struggles and conflicts, but it was always clear on its identity.

On the other hand, there were several ministry initiatives that did not work in Vancouver. Some, like the softball ministry, were due to cultural differences between America and Canada. Since Cornerstone had a pastor-centric model, Lau provided the energy and drive for many of the church’s ministries. But due to increased demands from San Francisco, and because of his age and health, Lau began to scale down his personal involvement with each local church. Each local church was given autonomy to self-manage and govern. While many would consider this progress, the reality was that the entire organization was not set up for autonomy. For example, Lau still maintained oversight and control. Also, lay leaders in the local churches were not trained to take on more spiritual responsibilities. Spiritual responsibilities were reserved for the pastoral staff.

Nevertheless, since the local senior pastors are still there, the churches continue to function, but cracks are beginning to form. Ultimately power still resides in one person and without a proper system of empowerment, each local church is stuck maintaining the status quo. A new vision cannot be developed. In other cases, where the original local senior pastor has left, the opposite is happening. Pastors who are not familiar with or who are new to Cornerstone may be inclined to pursue their own vision for the church. This may lead to a change in vision that sets each Cornerstone campus apart from the others. Cornerstone was successful when it was first established because it was a church for its time. It filled an unmet need; that is, to reach out to the next generation of Asian believers. It developed a strategy to reach them through the school, the arts, and sports.
Cornerstone needs to rethink and recast its vision for the future and this vision must be in line with its context and calling. The original vision to reach the next generation of Asian believers may still be valid, but it may need to adjust the scope of that vision to be more encompassing to other ethnic groups. The challenge will be to communicate vision to the next generation of believers who are not part of Lau’s impact. To accomplish this goal, Cornerstone needs to develop a system of leadership that will take the place of Lau. The goal of this project is to create a vision via a plurality of leaders instead of by one individual. It is time to empower each local church to discern that vision and develop strategies for a new generation. In this way, the vision of the church will not be altered even with the changing of pastors. The rest of the project argues for the reinstallation of elders who, in turn, work with the pastors to discern and implement the vision of the church. However, there are some cultural issues that could hinder such a transition.

**Cultural Barriers to a New Vision**

This section takes a closer look at the forces that shape the traditional Chinese view of leadership, focusing particularly on the influence of Confucianism. In a general sense, vision is not about a destination but rather about a journey. Getting to the destination together in unity and harmony is more significant than the location or the mode of travel. Therefore, some of the cultural barriers need to be addressed before developing a holistic and effective way of discernment.
Understanding the Old (Confucius) Way of Doing Things

The values of *jen*—humanity, benevolence, and virtue—forms a basis for leadership in a Chinese context. This section will further develop these concepts. The foundation of Confucian philosophy is built upon the idea of a humane, patriarchal government within a country. The king or leader is to rule by example and to rule with the qualities of *jen*, thus securing the well-being and harmony of the people.

The first rule of the benevolent government is the rule of virtue. Confucius believed that it was through modelling virtue that the king would win the respect of the people. This could explain the G1’s emphasis on things like modesty and having a strong work ethic. For example, many G1 pastors drive modest vehicles, not because they cannot afford something better, but because they would rather portray an image of humility and sacrifice. This is not an issue of right or wrong but an issue of choice. The G1 feels the obligation to set an example for others. There can be no denying that many G1 have made tremendous sacrifices in terms of time and money for the sake of the church. These are qualities that are worth amplifying and that are lacking in a consumeristic, Western culture.

The second requirement of a benevolent government is the rule of love. The king or leader needs to care about the well-being of his people and to look after their needs. The king or leader is a father figure who is always available and ready to help. Therefore in response, the people are like his children who follows and submits to him.

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 320.
There is no doubt about the sincerity of many G1 leaders. Often, they devote their entire lives to one church. Typically they do not complain about their salaries and make do with what they have. When one family decides to leave the church, it hits them on a personal and emotional level. The next generation of leaders may not share this value. For this next generation of leaders, the concept of calling can turn into the concept of career and they may adopt a fight or flight mentality. They may fight for resources at the expense of others or leave when things do not go their way. This is not always the case, but many emerging leaders do not share a similar commitment to a local church. This is not to say that they do not love their congregants nor that they are unfit for ministry. The rule of love is not only a Confucius value but also a kingdom value, and much can be learned from the G1 leaders.

The second part of Confucius’ teaching is *li*: rules of propriety and proper conduct.\(^{34}\) *Li* refers to etiquette and behaviours. While *jen* is best understood as internal qualities of character and virtue, *li* is about external qualities and social order. According to Confucius, without *li* one cannot maintain a proper structure to govern social behaviours and harmony cannot be achieved.\(^{35}\) There is a certain social order and structure in Confucianism that pertains to the five major relationships: father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, older friend and younger friend, and ruler and subject. An emphasis is given to age and loyalty. The younger must always look up to and respect the older. Likewise, there is an unwritten rule about loyalty. The

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 408.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 420.
collective always comes before the individual. Therefore, it is hard for a G1 to accept when a G2 talks back to them or when a G2 chooses to preach in casual clothing. Again, this is not an issue of right or wrong but rather of choice. It is against the Confucius social order. There is a certain way to do things in a Chinese culture. For example, we do not challenge our elders in a public setting. Perhaps more significantly, *li* may be the reason why it is hard to achieve equality and interdependence between the two congregations as the G1 will always believe there is a social order and hierarchy. In the Confucius way, the younger must always submit to the older.

The pinnacle of Confucian leadership is to strive to become the superior man — the *jun zhi*. A *jun zhi* exemplifies all the qualities of *jen* and *li* and becomes an example to all. As Choong writes, “The virtues of a superior man are benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, trustworthiness, filial piety and ritual propriety.” As *jun zhi*, a leader leads and brings unity to his people and the people submit to his rule and leadership. In terms of visioning, the destination becomes a secondary concern. The primary concern is the type of leader in power. Once leadership is established, vision and the direction of the church can then be carried out. It does not matter where the church is going or how it gets there because the group places its trust in the *jun zhi*, a leader who exemplifies both *jen* and *li*.

**Issues that Arise from Confucian Culture**

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36 Ibid., 357.
The natural result from a benevolent and paternalistic form of leadership is loyalty from its followers. Choong writes, “Loyalties are to the person, not the system or other abstractions. The defining characteristic of personalism is the tendency to allow personal criteria and relationship to enter into the decision making and action.” There is nothing wrong with the virtue of loyalty. The disciples of Jesus, except for Judas, were loyal to Christ and his work and they gave their lives for the kingdom. The danger lies with the leader and his or her ability to exert influence. People are all fallen beings, so each can make bad decisions or harbor personal bias. Blind loyalty to one individual, regardless of his or her numerous virtues, is a dangerous proposition. There should be some form of accountability or a system of checks and balances.

However, challenging the Confucian leadership system is difficult given its deep cultural significance. Jao writes, “Influenced by Confucius’s teachings on filial piety and hierarchy, traditional Asian cultures value duty and obligation as the highest motive for making decisions.” Therefore Cornerstone may struggle to chart a new course or even make changes to the current one with Lau still in charge. After meeting Lau, I am convinced that with his heart and open mind, he would listen and support new initiatives. Nevertheless, to consider discerning a new vision or reorganizing the governance structure without him seems rebellious and contradictory to the Chinese way. The proper or li way is to wait for Lau to retire before making any drastic changes.

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37 Ibid., 518.

Saving Face and Managing Conflicts

Another issue that arises from a Confucius culture is the avoidance or minimization of conflict.\(^{39}\) With the Confucian culture that emphasizes hierarchy and harmony, along with the shame-based culture of saving face, the Chinese church has a hard time managing conflicts. From a cultural perspective, conflicts of any kind are viewed as negative. There is a tendency to avoid dealing with conflicts for fear of upsetting the social hierarchy and harmony.

The issue of saving face plays a large role in Chinese communities. Yeh describes the process of losing face, “Asian culture teaches individuals to worry about how others will react so that they can maintain face. Face includes the positive image, interpretations or social attributes that one claims for oneself or perceives others to have accorded one. If one does not fulfill expectations of the self, then one loses face…When one loses face, one feels tremendous shame.”\(^{40}\) The Chinese tend to handle conflicts indirectly. Direct confrontation or speaking out can be seen as disrespectful and a clear breach of the social etiquette of li. This issue is reinforced by the history of Asians in North America. Tokunaga adds that due to the shame that Asians have experienced in the past—such as when Chinese labourers worked on the railway or how the Japanese were viewed during the Second World War—Asian minorities have been conditioned by their environment to

\(^{39}\) Choong, *Counter-Cultural Paradigmatic Leadership*, 535.

\(^{40}\) Christine Yeh, “Healthy Leaders, Healthy Household,” in *Growing Healthy Asian American Churches*, Peter Cha, S. Steve Kang, and Helen Lee, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 66.
stay out of trouble, never complain, work hard, and lead exemplary lives.\textsuperscript{41} There is an underlying pressure for Asians in North America to avoid the shame of the past.

Yet conflict avoidance can create more conflicts and conflict is an inevitable fact of church life.\textsuperscript{42} Chinese churches usually respond to conflict either by ignoring the problem or trying to pray and preach it away. The Confucius way is to establish clear boundaries and instructions, and when the people are properly educated, conflict will cease. This is usually done through the pulpit and by the senior pastor. Paul Wang concludes in his dissertation on conflicts in Chinese churches that “The overarching conclusion of scripture is that conflict in the church can have positive results and can strengthen the church’s ministry when it is managed appropriately…in this manner, the early church leaders managed to turn potentially destructive conflict into greater of God’s will for the church and the discovery of new ministries to accomplish that will.”\textsuperscript{43} Wang cites the example found in Acts 15:36-39 of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. The conflict launched a new ministry for the apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

Part of this project will develop the relationship between conflict and vision. When a church gathers together, there will be different voices and opinions. Often, the people who love the church the most are the loudest voices when charting the church’s vision and mission. In a patriarchal model, those voices are suppressed as they submit to

\textsuperscript{41} Tokunaga, “Pressure, Perfection and Performance,” 262.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 1219.

\textsuperscript{43} Wang, \textit{A Study on Cross-Cultural Conflicts Patterns and Intervention}, 41.
the leadership of jun zhi. If the church is to mature and to discern its own future, it must learn how to manage conflict. Peter Cha writes, “A prerequisite for developing healthy churches is accepting conflict as a natural byproduct of working with people, embracing it and dealing proactively with it when it occurs.”44

The only way to move beyond a shame-based culture is to experience the grace of God’s unconditional and unearnable love.45 Only after believers have experienced the Lord’s saving grace can we extend such grace to others. As Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” By managing conflicts through the grace of God, people can draw closer to one another, break down the superficiality of saving face, develop authentic relationships, and sharpen our collective vision for the future. As with Paul and Barnabas, God can birth new visions through our conflicts with one another.

The Issue of Empowerment

Lastly, and perhaps the greatest issue, is that the paternalistic leader adopts a highly selective manner in the dispensing of information and resources.46 Sometimes this is deliberately done to protect his place in the organization. A humorous but true illustration reports that a Kung Fu master did not teach everything he knew to his disciple, fearing that one day his student would overpower him in combat and take his


45 Paul Tokunaga, Invitation to Lead (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 41.

46 Choong, Counter-Cultural Paradigmatic Leadership, 551.
place. A paternalistic leader has a close circle of trusted friends, but even within this group, the leader tends to withhold information. This manner of leadership not only places a heavy burden on the leader, but it also may hinder the effectiveness of the organization as the leader becomes the bottleneck for decision making. Therefore, one of the key issues facing the Chinese church is the issue of empowerment. The G1 must empower the G2 to reach its community even though the G2 will not be like the G1. The next logical step is to empower them to discern for themselves their own future, vision, and strategy. Timothy Tseng writes, “Empowerment is to facilitate people making decisions about their own destiny; identifying their own visions and needs and determining how best to meet those needs. Empowerment is the way of ensuring that barriers are removed and doors opened to persons traditionally denied access to power – to information, to resources, to opportunities.”

An issue that hindered Lau from reaching the next generation in 1975 could be the same one that hinders the Cornerstone churches from reaching their full potential. A vision and strategy that works for one city may not work for another. Likewise, a vision that has led the church for the last forty years may not be sufficient to lead the church for the next forty years. Therefore, the goal of this project is to propose a shift from a patriarchal leader to a plurality of leaders. A plurality of leaders can hold each other accountable and courageously manage conflict. Most of all, they are empowered to discern God’s vision for themselves.

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Summary: Opportunities for the Future

God has blessed Cornerstone and the ministry of Lau. The best way to honour Lau’s legacy is to ensure that Cornerstone remains true to its vision and mission to reach the next generation with the gospel of Christ. In anticipation of Lau’s retirement, Cornerstone needs to restructure itself into a self-leading and self-governing body. The leaders of the local church need to take on more spiritual responsibilities and work with the pastors to discern the next course of action. Darrell Guder writes,

Discernment is a process of sorting, distinguishing, evaluating and sifting among competing stimuli, demands, longings, desires, needs and influences, in order to determine which are of God and which are not. To discern is to prove or test ‘what is of the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect’ (Rom.12:2). Thus, the goal of discernment making in the church is not simply to discover the will of the community, but instead to discern together the will of God.48

The key word in the quote above is together. The best model of leadership for Cornerstone is a plurality of leaders, both full-time and lay, where each leader brings their own gifts and unique perspectives. These leaders must be dedicated to holding each other accountable and committed to carefully discerning the vision for the church.

Canada remains a top destination for overseas immigrants. The school is growing at an unprecedented rate and remains as an untapped mission field. The need for a G2 or G3 church is great and the future is bright for a church like Cornerstone.

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PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
The previous chapter examined the history and governance structure of Cornerstone. In addition, it explained how Confucianism impacts Cornerstone’s traditions and leadership philosophies. This chapter reviews works by several authors who address culture and the biblical model of eldership. These resources will form the basis for a plurality of elders as the main driving force for the vision and mission of the church.

**Understanding the Culture and Context of Confucianism**

Gary Choong observes a cultural challenge that is faced by many Asian churches influenced by Confucius ideology. In his book *Counter-Cultural Paradigmatic Leadership*, Choong summarizes the history and facets of Confucianism and its impact on the Asian culture. In terms of leadership, power and influence is seen and understood in terms of status residing in a person who is associated with a virtuous character.¹

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¹ Choong, *Counter-Cultural Paradigmatic Leadership*, 112.
Choong argues that Contemporary Confucian Leadership (CCL) needs to be held in check with the life and teachings of Jesus who promotes humility and servanthood.²

The teaching of Confucius is summed up by the rule of virtue, li, and the rule of love or benevolence, jen.³ For Confucius, the leader must be a superior man, referred to as jun zi, and a model for his followers.⁴ The character of the leader is essential to his leadership. The goal of leadership is to look after the needs of the people which results in earning the trust and loyalty of his followers.⁵ While these values are not contradictory to the teachings of Jesus, Choong thoroughly examines the Sermon on the Mount and argues that a Christian leader should lead by way of a grace-based relationship rather than a rule-based relationship.⁶ Choong cites the beatitudes as an example and argues that the beatitudes were not meant as imperatives to be followed. Rather, they are goals for every disciple of Jesus which are only achieved through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.⁷ Hence Jesus’ call to humility, to giving up authority and power, and to serving others is counter-cultural to the teachings of Confucius.⁸

Choong emphasizes that even Christians cannot escape the influences of our culture. The values Confucius promoted are deeply ingrained in Asian communities and

² Ibid., 192.
³ Ibid., 311.
⁴ Ibid., 351.
⁵ Ibid., 326, 450.
⁶ Ibid., 1756.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.
churches. After reading Choong’s section on Confucius values, I have developed a deeper understanding of the psyche of a G1 leader. In my experience, the law of virtue, either consciously or subconsciously, shapes many parts of a G1 pastor’s approach to ministry—for example, the need to keep office hours and the importance of ordination. In addition, the law of benevolence explains why G1 pastors feel betrayed or take it personally when a staff member resigns. In Confucianism, where harmony and unity are promoted, there is a culture of conflict avoidance and a tendency to adopt a posture of face-saving.\(^9\) In contrast, Choong argues that in order to cultivate change, a Christian leader must have the courage to exercise vulnerable authority.\(^10\) This is perhaps least evident in the nature of Chinese leadership.

Unfortunately, the major drawback of Choong’s book is its lack of addressing change or considering if change is even possible. His response to the question of what to do as leaders or in churches that are steeped in Confucius ideology is to adopt transformational leadership or servanthood leadership. While this is ideal, very little practical advice is given for the next generation of leaders who are currently in this cultural battle. Choong alludes to the hopelessness of the situation when he writes, “In the absence of a formal succession mechanism, any hint of a need for leadership change is perceived as rebellion and insubordination to ascribed authority.”\(^11\) It would appear then

\(^9\) Ibid., 547.
\(^10\) Ibid., 2066.
\(^11\) Ibid., 2390.
that the only proposed solution is to wait for a change in leadership. The fear of upsetting the status quo and loyalty to a leader cannot be used to justify inaction.

Understanding the Issues of the Second Generation

Matthew Todd is a former pastor of English ministries in a Chinese church in Vancouver, Canada. After almost forty years of pastoral work among Canadian-born Chinese, Todd noticed the alarming dropout rate among Canadian-born Chinese adults. The term “Silent Exodus” refers to the drop-out rate among the second-generation English-speaking young adults in Asian North American churches.\(^\text{12}\) While this problem is not exclusive to Asian or other immigrant churches, studies show that the drop out rate is higher among second-generation Chinese and Asian young adults, in contrast to young adults from Euro and multicultural churches.\(^\text{13}\)

In order to identify the problems that contribute to the silent exodus, Todd conducted a comprehensive survey among pastors, adults who remained with the Chinese church, and adults who left the Chinese church. This study involved interviews, a detailed questionnaire, and follow-up questions for one hundred participants. These are the top five reasons cited by Canadian-born Chinese for leaving the church:

1. Their life stage transition needs were not being met within a Chinese church.
2. The overemphasis on Chinese cultural identity and ethnocentrism.
3. Issues with church leadership, organizational structure, and programs.
4. Control issues concerning church power and politics.


\(^\text{13}\) Todd, English Ministry Crisis in Chinese Canadian Churches, 272.
5. Loneliness and the attempt to seek friends, fellowship, and relationships.\textsuperscript{14} It is important to note that the results differ slightly from the survey done among pastors and the members who remained in the Chinese church. The issues of overemphasizing Chinese culture, leadership, and control rank among the top five among all three groups. The issues surrounding the silent exodus is complex and it differs from church to church.

Todd gave a helpful overview of the development of the Chinese church in Canada. Like most immigrant churches, the Chinese church grew as it fulfilled a social and cultural need among first-generation immigrants.\textsuperscript{15} In the context of Canada, the growth was fuelled by waves of immigration from Hong Kong and China.\textsuperscript{16} These factors led to the exponential growth of the Chinese church. Tan concludes that some of the fastest growing North American churches (church plants) are Chinese.\textsuperscript{17} The problem facing the Chinese church is not with the first-generation immigrants, but rather with the retention of the second generation, who grew up in a Western culture and adopted a Western philosophy. In response to this challenge, the Chinese church created five different models for ministry.\textsuperscript{18} First is the Absorbing House Model, which maintains the Chinese language and culture. Second is the In-House Model, which is when a church offers a bilingual service. Third is the Separate House Model, where there is a separate

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 2914.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 1556.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 1660.


\textsuperscript{18} Todd, \textit{English Ministry Crisis in Chinese Canadian Churches}, 662.
English ministry but it is under one senior pastor or governing structure. Fourth is the Autonomous House Model, which is the coexistence of different congregations under one church with shared operations, finances, leadership, and vision. Fifth is the Mixed House Model, which aims to reach out to other culture groups within the community. Todd argues that none of these models can adequately address the issue of the silent exodus and proposes that each English ministry be regarded as associated, but parallel and independent. Todd’s model is that each English ministry be given the freedom to form its own mission and vision but maintain a relationship that enables the sharing of resources. In order for this to take place, the English ministry must be legally, structurally, and financially independent.19

There has not been much statistical research done among Canadian-born Chinese, so Todd’s contribution in this field has added clarity to this ongoing issue. The contributing factors did not come as a surprise since they are evident to those who have experience ministering in Chinese churches. Todd’s most significant contribution was his focus among Canadian-born Chinese in the Vancouver area, a major city in Canada that continues to experience an influx of immigration. Many of the churches cited in his book were local and deal with this issue on a daily basis.

The most glaring weakness to his study is the limited number of respondents. The questions asked were wide ranging and open ended. Unfortunately, as Todd himself pointed out, the issue surrounding the silent exodus is complex and hence a limited study done among one hundred participants may not be sufficient to draw any significant

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19 Ibid., 1042.
conclusions. Next, the model proposed by Todd requires a mature and healthy English ministry. Yet the problem of the silent exodus prevents most Chinese churches from reaching that level of stability. Some Chinese churches are ready to make this transition, but most are struggling with these issues and the associated parallel independent model is too lofty of a goal. Lastly, Helen Lee wrote a recent article entitled “The Boomerang Effect” in which she noticed another trend at work. Lee cites that many of these young adults who have left the church are returning as the first-generation leaders have learned to empower and work with the next generation. Therefore the silent exodus may indeed be a crisis among Chinese churches, or it may simply be a rite of passage for the next generation. Nevertheless, an adequate structure and leadership model must be in place for the next chapter of the Chinese church.

Recovering the Model of Biblical Eldership

In 2014, Phil Newton and Matt Schmucker updated their popular book *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership*. This book provides both scriptural and practical insights on eldership with a special focus on the Baptist tradition and history. This book makes the case for a plurality of elders as seen in the following verses: Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; and 1 Peter 5:1. In each of these

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references, the church was mentioned in the singular whereas the references for elders was made in the plural. With a plurality of elders, each elder brings into the group different gifts and abilities, resulting in the strengthening of the entire body.\textsuperscript{22} At the same time, the plurality of elders promotes accountability and prevent the abuse of power.\textsuperscript{23} Hence, the church is best governed not by a single individual but rather by a qualified group of elders who share the burden of ministry and safeguard the flock.

The duties of an elder are summarized into four categories: doctrine, discipline, direction, and distinction.\textsuperscript{24} The primary task of an elder is to faithfully teach the word of God and protect the body from heresies. Next is the matter of discipline, which involves corrections and admonishments. These are essential for a healthy congregation. Direction refers to planning, decision-making, and setting long-term strategies. Finally, distinction is the modelling of the Christian life and leadership. Elders are not called to rule over their sheep but to serve and protect them with integrity and humility.

In the second part of the book, Newton and Schmucker examine four key passages: Acts 20:17-31, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Hebrews 13:17-19, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. These passages form the biblical basis for eldership in the local church. I appreciated these chapters because they are coupled with real pastoral stories of change. My previous scriptural knowledge of elders was mainly about the qualifications of an elder. These chapters go beyond that and remind the reader that elders are leaders—leaders of the

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 55-56.
church who care for their flock, model Christ-likeness, and serve with integrity. As the authors write, “The goal of the church should not be to establish plural eldership at any cost, but to elevate the standards of spiritual leadership at any cost.” These passages also speak about faithfulness, hard work, and accountability. This book is both practical and edifying.

Many examples were cited from Mark Dever’s church, such as the process of selecting an elder, the agenda of elders’ meetings, and the installation process. These were useful tips but it seemed to apply to large churches who have an established and mature base of members. Even so, the book was unclear about how the elder board interacts with the other levels of leadership. For example, deacons were tasked with handling the day-to-day operations of the ministries, but their communication back to the elders was left unclear. Furthermore, if the elders are removed from the operational side, it could affect their ability to make informed decisions.

The book mentions that transitioning to a system of elders requires between eighteen and thirty-six months, with a call for caution and the need to build trust. This seems far-fetched for a small church, especially for one that needs to develop and change traditions and mindsets. But the most contentious part is the inclusion of paid staff as elders. Newton and Schmucker believe that a combination of staff and non-staff members on the elder board provide the best blend for continuity. While I agree with their earlier point of having the senior pastor serve as the teaching elder, the inclusion of staff

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25 Ibid., 76.

26 Ibid., 207.
members changes the dynamics of the board, especially when it comes to issues like payroll and the direction of the church. Each area of ministry is personal to the respective staff member and objectivity could become an issue. Other issues like loyalty to the senior leader, office politics or even the reporting structure between the staff and the senior pastor might complicate the relationships among board members.

Newton and Schmucker also advise against a rotation system, citing reasons of continuity and quality of leaders.27 I agree that vision and momentum can be affected by the rotation of elders, but I believe new elders can bring fresh ideas. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in the book, eldership is hard work and a scheduled break can be beneficial. A rotation of elders ensures a healthy break, the continuity of vision, and serves as a safeguard against the abuse of power. Vision and philosophy of ministry should not be determined by any individual. The vision of the church should be made clear, and each elder is called to uphold that vision. Hence, the risk of hindering the growth and direction of the church is kept to a minimum. In addition, this prevents any individual from remaining in power for too long. The rotation system is a mode of checks and balances.

Elders in the Mission of the Church

J.R. Briggs and Bob Hyatt wrote a book about eldership through a missiological lens, describing how a healthy team of elders is key to the church’s vision and mission.28

27 Ibid., 210.

Both Briggs and Hyatt are church planters and share about their experiences planting a missional church with a team of mission-driven elders at its core. Much has been written about the missional church, with an emphasis on disciple making, incarnational living, Spirit leading, and so on. Ultimately, however, a missional church is still a church and as such needs a proper structure and ecclesiological framework. Briggs and Hyatt’s treatment of the leadership structure—including the basics of the roles, the qualifications of elders, team leadership, making difficult decisions, and the issue of women elders—is both practical and enlightening. As they eloquently write, “…having healthy elders does not guarantee a healthy church, but it does plant a local congregation in fertile soil.”

Briggs and Hyatt write in chapter five that “One of the most significant roles of leaders is to cultivate a culture that aligns with the church’s mission.” Vision and mission cannot be contained by words or statements. In every church, there is a distinctive culture or set of values and practices. This culture is best seen through the lives of the elders. This is quite a sobering thought for the elders of the church. When the elders invest in each other, sacrifice for the mission of the church, pray and wait upon the Lord, and hold each other accountable, they are defining and influencing the culture of the church. I used to think that only the pastor had such public influence whereas

29 Ibid., 25.
30 Ibid., 19.
31 Ibid., 69.
32 Ibid., 70.
elders lead from behind the scenes. But one person cannot embody the ethos of the group; a group of qualified elders are better suited to align the church’s mission to God’s vision.

Overall, this book is well grounded in Scripture and in practice, but I have a few concerns with its practical implications. For example, Briggs and Hyatt do not believe in term limits. They write, “…we believe the length an elder serves should be directed by the Spirit, not by set policies.”\(^{33}\) They believe that if an elder is qualified and focused on the church, they should have the ability to discern God’s will in their leadership.\(^ {34}\) In Briggs and Hyatt’s model, the elders themselves are involved in the discerning, interviewing, and selection process of possible candidates for eldership.\(^ {35}\)

Like the authors, I have seen the political games played during election season, where men and women who are popular are elected into positions of power. These elected individuals may not agree with the vision and mission of the church. Worse, they may desire to promote their own self-interest. It seems ironic then that missional churches place so much emphasis on the Spirit’s guidance yet are wary of allowing the Spirit to move among the people and guide the process of election. I agree with the authors that when the church is young and qualified leaders are hard to find, a rigid system of selection is required. This is and has been the process of Cornerstone. As the church grows and as the people mature in faith and in understanding of the mission of the church, the selection structure must allow for openness and transparency. The concept is that the people themselves, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, know who is best to

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 91.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 92.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 93.
lead them. This is the best way for the church to ensure the continuity of its vision and mission. Furthermore, the setting of terms enables weary elders to recharge and rest for the longer journey ahead.

The most controversial chapter of the book is on women as elders. Briggs and Hyatt approach this topic with sensitivity and affirm women as elders. Again, writing from a missiological perspective, they state the following: “If Paul did reserve eldership in the church to men only, we believe he did so primarily because women in leadership would be a stumbling block to the gospel message in that particular culture and context.”36 Their conclusion is that if having women in leadership was a hindrance to the gospel in the first century, not having women in leadership is often a hindrance to the gospel in the twenty-first century.37 This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the latter part of this paper. I feel that the missiological interpretation of the text gives the best alternative to the typical male-centered exegesis.

Elders and the Vision of the Church

The church needs to change for it to meet the needs of the world around it. Herrington and Bonem draw from years of experience helping local pastors embrace and lead change within their local churches. Most of their research originates from their time in the Union Baptist Association, when they aimed to help local pastors deal with the

36 Ibid., 166.
37 Ibid., 168.
widening gap between the growth of the church and the city.\footnote{Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James Furr, \textit{Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey} (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 3.} One of the assumptions in the book is that pastors are trained to be managers, not leaders.\footnote{Ibid., 11.} A typical pastor is trained at preaching, teaching, counselling, and other related skills, and is tasked to maintain the ministries of the church. In order to lead a church through a process of change, a pastor must acquire new skills and set up new structures. This book, \textit{Leading Congregational Change}, highlights the necessary steps to do so both on a theoretical and practical level. The book is divided into two parts. The first portion deals with the change process and the second deals with the disciplines needed to start and maintain this process of change.

The change process centers around the discernment and articulation of God’s vision for the church.\footnote{Ibid., 49.} The authors make an important distinction between vision and visionpath: “Vision is a clear, shared, and compelling picture of the preferred future to which God is calling the congregation” while visionpath is a detailed explanation of the vision, its meaning and implications, and the steps to get there.\footnote{Ibid., 50-51.} The result of this process is a vision statement, “a written description of God’s preferred future that is broad and exciting in its direction but clear and explicit in its detail.”\footnote{Ibid., 61.} But the change process does not end with a vision statement. The next crucial step is to communicate that
vision in a way that brings clarity and commitment from the congregation. Finally comes the stage of implementation, where a specific set of coordinated initiatives are put in place to move the congregation towards God’s vision. This process involves setting goals and action plans, evaluating the process, and aligning the various ministries of the church along the visionpath.

Vision is a very powerful tool. People give their lives for a compelling picture of the future. A helpful contribution of this book is the detailed description of the journey from the birth of the vision to its final implementation. Pastors are taught and expected to go on stage and cast a vision for the church. The problem has always been in determining whose vision pastors are casting and how to get people to commit to that vision. As highlighted in the summary above, the vision process has many stages. It starts with personal preparation, then moves on to the formation of a vision community. The next stages are working through the past mission and managing present-day conflicts. The following step is to formulate a clear vision statement and to communicate that statement. The final stages of the vision process are to empower the right leaders, create the right structures, and implement goals and evaluation. Vision formation is a multi-stage process and with each stage, different skill sets and personalities are required. Discerning God’s preferred future is not a one-person job. It requires a group of spiritual and mature members who invest their time and effort in prayer and discernment. It requires a detailed

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43 Ibid., 62.
44 Ibid., 78.
45 Ibid., 85.
action plan comprised of various ministries working in unison with one another. This is more than what one individual can accomplish. More importantly, by including others in the process, pastors can help their churches embrace change and cultivate commitment. Members are more likely to commit to a future that they are helping to create.46

One area of this book with which I disagree is in regard to the vision community. The authors argue that the vision community is a diverse group of key members who are tasked to discern and implement God’s vision for the church.47 The authors do not specify if these members are current leaders of the church or lay people. They do mention the members’ maturity, influence, and ability to work alongside the pastor.48 While I agree that the vision process cannot be left to one individual, neither should it be left to just any members of the church. The responsibility of discernment, making structural changes, empowering new leaders, communicating, and evaluation lies with its leadership. In the following chapters, I will argue that the elders of the church, along with the pastor as the teaching elder, should be involved in and accountable for the vision for the church. The elders should include others in the process and gather feedback along the way. They should utilize the various gifts from the congregation to maximize effectiveness. Ultimately, the group who is overseeing the church should and must be responsible for its protection and growth. Therefore, discerning, implementing, and guarding the vision of the church is the responsibility of the elders.

46 Ibid., 96.
47 Ibid., 41.
48 Ibid., 43.
The authors define vision as where the church sees themselves in three to five years.\(^4^9\) However, five years is a very short period. The process of congregational transformation will most likely take longer than five years. More importantly, a five-year vision seems more like a short-term goal rather than God’s preferred picture of the future. The authors contend that since we are living in a time of rapid change, the church needs to be able to adapt quickly. To use the terminology of the authors, I am more inclined to believe that vision must be long term and consistent, but the visionpath can have a shorter focus. The visionpath can be constantly modified to meet the changing needs of the society and creates strategic milestones towards the larger vision.

**Conclusion**

Some G1 leaders may feel threatened by the argument for a plurality of elders. Most of the G1 leaders I know are honourable men who have given their entire lives to the well-being of the church. The goal of this project is not to usurp their place or to circumvent their legacy. It is my opinion that the best way to honour their commitment and to repay their kindness is to ensure the continuation and health of the church—even when it means embracing change and dismantling cultural barriers.

\(^{4^9}\) Ibid., 49.
There are many forms of church governance, and how a church chooses to structure itself depends on its view of leadership. For example, the Roman Catholic church organizes itself around the authority of an individual, the Pope. The Anglican church, however, organizes itself into regions that are governed by regional bishops and archbishops. Meanwhile, the Baptist church is congregational, which means each church is independent and responsible for its own discipline and doctrine.\(^1\) This chapter focuses on the task of leadership from a congregational and Baptist perspective.

According to the Baptist tradition, the responsibility for maintaining all aspects of public worship of God belongs to the congregation, and it is the congregation that determines their church’s system of governance and leadership.\(^2\) Ultimately, each Baptist church is accountable to its members, but a new trend is emerging: “Churches have shifted the privileges and burdens of ministry to the ‘professional’ staff, while bypassing

\(^1\) Daniel Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 835.

\(^2\) Ibid., 795.
gifted leaders whom God has placed into their membership.”

This project argues the most effective church structure involves the union between the clergy (the professionals) and the laity (the volunteers).

There is not one single biblical text that provides all the necessary details for church leadership. Factors like history, culture, and the needs of the community all play a role in determining church structure. However, Scripture seems to indicate two clear offices or positions of leadership: the office of elders and the office of deacons. Grudem defines a church officer as “Someone who has been publicly recognized as having the right and responsibility to perform certain functions for the benefit of the whole church.”

These individuals are usually publicly affirmed by the congregation and empowered to carry out the vision and ministries of the church. While the majority of the project focuses on the office of an elder, it is beneficial to first examine the differences between an elder and a deacon.

The word deacon derives from the Greek word *diakonos*, which means “servant.” The Apostle Paul states in Romans 13:1-4 that believers are to submit to those in authority since they are God’s servants. Sometimes the word *diakonos* refers to “service” in general. In 1 Corinthians 12:5-7, Paul writes that when it comes to spiritual gifts, there

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3 Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 45.

4 Ibid.


6 Ibid., 918.

7 Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church*, 798.
are varieties of gifts and services given for the common good. The word deacon is also used to describe a position in the church that is distinct from the position of an elder or a bishop.\textsuperscript{8} In the New Living Translation, Philippians 1:1, “I am writing to all of God’s holy people in Philippi, including the elders and deacons.” The clearest example of the distinction between elders and deacons can be found in Acts 6:1-4:

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

According to Acts 6, there was a growing concern within the church in Jerusalem that the care of the widows was being neglected. Instead of meeting the physical needs of the widows themselves, the apostles appointed seven others to serve the widows. By creating these positions of service, the deacons, the apostles could focus on teaching and prayer. Hence, the position of the deacon is first and foremost a position of service. Deacons are called to meet the felt needs of the church. In today’s church, deacons’ activities range from coordinating worship services to helping in the children’s program. They play a vital role in the health of the church and without them, as seen in Acts 6, the needs of the people would go unmet.

The functions of the elders differ from the functions of the deacons, yet these two offices must work together to maximize the effectiveness of the church. Newton writes, “Each church must work out its own details of how elders and deacons function, but at

\textsuperscript{8} Grudem, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 918.
minimum, these two offices should seek to complement each other rather than to compete. Their duties might occasionally overlap, and in such times, they should communicate well with each other, realizing that their service together meets the leadership needs in the church.”

9 Due to the influence of Confucius, specifically the values of jen and li, the Chinese church tends to produce servants in the church who focus on getting things done. These men and women willingly and obediently serve the various needs of the congregation. They are hardworking, generous, and even sacrificial in their service. They easily fulfill the functions of the deacons. However, unless the church understands and utilizes the functions of the elders, the Chinese church will not reach its leadership potential.

**The Biblical Case for Eldership**

The definition of an elder can be derived from the way the word is used in Scripture. The word for elder is *presbeut* and it occurs seventy-five times in the New Testament. 10 Nine times it refers to someone’s age, four times it refers to Hebrew ancestry, twelve times it was used by John to refer to the heavenly beings, and twenty-nine times it refers to the Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin and synagogues. The remaining twenty refer to leaders in the church. 11 Other titles were often used to describe the office of an elder, such as pastor, bishop, and overseer. These titles were used interchangeably

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9 Newton, _Elders in the Life of the Church_, 208.

10 Akin, ed., _A Theology for the Church_, 800.

11 See Acts 11:30; 15:2,4; 6:22-23; 16:4; 21:18: 14:21,23; 20:17; Ti 1:5; 1 Tm 5:17,19; Jas 5:14; 1 Pt 5:1,5; 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1.
in the local church. For example, according to Acts 20:17, Paul met with the elders at Ephesus. Later in the same chapter (20:28), Paul referred to this group as overseers (or bishops) and admonished them to be shepherds (or pastors) of the church. Similarly in 1 Peter 5:1-2, Peter exhorted the elders to shepherd (or pastor) the flock of God. The most significant text can be found in Titus 1:5-7:

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain.

In this text, Paul wrote to Titus and asked him to appoint elders in every town. Halfway through his instructions, in verse 7, Paul replaced the word elder with the word overseer. Hence, the office of an elder is the same as the office of an overseer. These individuals are to oversee and shepherd the congregation. Merkle reinforces this position by stating that “If elder and overseer are two separate offices, then it would seem reasonable to expect Paul to give the necessary qualifications for each office.” Therefore, both elders and overseers hold the same office and function within the church. Merkle offers a helpful distinction by writing that an elder is a description of character whereas an overseer is a description of function. As a leader of the church, an elder is a

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12 Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church*, 801.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Benjamin Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2008), 80.
16 Ibid., 82.
man or woman who is mature, wise, and respected within the body (character) and whose job is to oversee the church and to care for its members (function).

Therefore, based on the text above, there is no higher authority in a local church than the authority of the elders. Elders are elected by and accountable to the congregation. The Baptist church rejects the idea of a regional bishop or an outsider with a higher or supreme authority. Opponents to this view cite the examples of the apostles and others like Timothy and Titus who seemed to possess authority over a region or a number of churches. The New Testament apostles had a unique authority over the early church. Grudem writes, the apostles had the authority to speak and write “words of God” in an absolute sense, and to disobey the apostles was to disobey God.\(^\text{17}\) Christians should not expect the office of the apostle to continue since Christians do not expect to add words into the Bible.\(^\text{18}\) The office of the apostle was unique and vital to the growth of the early church. As for Timothy and Titus, Merkle writes, they were apostolic delegates sent with Paul’s apostolic authority to deal with problems in the local churches.\(^\text{19}\) The office of the apostles in the early church and their delegates were unique and temporary. In the church today, with respect to other denominations and traditions, there are only two offices of leadership: the office of elders and the office of deacons.

In this case, the position of the full-time pastor and its relation to the office of elders must be delineated. The Greek word for pastor is \textit{poimen}, and it only occurs once

\(^{17}\) Grudem, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 906.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Merkle, \textit{40 Questions about Elders and Deacons}, 101.
in the Bible as a noun when Paul describes the gifts to the church in Ephesians 4:11—namely, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The inclusion of a conjunction is important. As Newton notes, the position is better translated as “teaching shepherds” or “pastor-teachers.” Psalm 23 and John 10 paint a picture of a shepherd who leads, restores, guides, protects, and even dies for his sheep. Christ himself used it in a verb form in John 21:16 when he commanded Peter to “tend my sheep.” The position of the full-time pastor is vague and should be considered a modern development. Elder appears to be the more dominant term for church leadership. As Newton writes, “Elder emphasizes the spiritual maturity required for this office; overseer implies the leadership and direction given to the church; pastor suggests feeding, nurturing, and protecting the flock.” In short, when Scripture talks about a pastor, most of the time it is not referring to a position but to the work of caring for and nurturing the church. This goes against the trend that ministry belongs to the professional clergy. The elders of the church do not hire a professional pastor to do the work of shepherding on their behalf. The work of shepherding and pastoring belongs to the office of the elders.

The Presbyterian model of church government acknowledges a helpful distinction between teaching elders and ruling elders, citing 1 Timothy 5:17 as an example. Paul

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20 Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 49.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons*, 84.
writes, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” Paul describes the elders in the church as those who rule well and those who teach and preach. Merkle distinguishes between the teaching elders and the ruling elders by time, talent, and type of teaching. First, there are elders who spend most of their time teaching and preaching. According to 1 Timothy 3:2, all elders must be able to teach; yet the practical issue of time limits how much an elder can and cannot do. This results in the need for a specific elder to devote a significant amount of time to the ministry of preaching and teaching. Next is talent; while all elders must be able to teach, some are more gifted than others. These elders are often called upon to lead the church by exercising their gifts for teaching. Lastly, Merkle suggests that Paul may be making a distinction between elders who teach and preach in a large gathering and those who teach in a private or home setting. Merkle concludes by stating, “Paul is simply acknowledging that some elders, because they have more time, talent or training, deserve to be compensated for their work in the church.”

Therefore, the full-time pastor is an elder and is an essential part of the team, especially as the main teacher and preacher for the church. Just as Baptists affirm that there is no higher authority than the elders, the authority of the pastor is not higher or greater than that of the elders. Yet it is beneficial to acknowledge and support the pastor

26 Ibid., 85.
27 Ibid., 86.
28 Ibid., 87.
29 Ibid., 88.
as he devotes his time to prayer and preaching. Four key passages for eldership are Acts 20:17-31, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Hebrews 13:17-19, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. These passages give a greater description of the roles and functions of an elder and how elders are essential to the health of the church. As Newton notes, “A biblical practice of elders strengthens the pastoral ministry of churches.”

During Paul’s second missionary journey, Paul planted a church in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was an important cultural and economic center for the region. It was also home to the temple of the Greek goddess Diana. Paul stayed in Ephesus for two years, teaching the word of God, and according to Acts 19:10, all the residents of Asia heard about Jesus. The growth of the church began to challenge the livelihood of certain tradesmen who had business ties with the temple of Diana and a riot broke out in Ephesus (Acts 19). After the riot, Paul left Ephesus and ended up in Miletus but Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem, so as seen in Acts 20:17, he called the elders of the church in Ephesus to meet him at Miletus. This was Paul’s last meeting with these elders and he gave them his final instructions for the church: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). These instructions highlight that the aim of the elders is to pastor the church:

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord

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30 Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 93.
Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears (Acts 20:17-31).

The apostle Paul spent his entire life teaching and defending the church from both external and internal forces, but his time was ending. Therefore, Paul called the elders of the church together and charged them to pastor the church and to protect the sheep from these forces. This is a recurring theme found in other epistles. In Acts 20:28, Paul urged the church to “pay careful attention” against teachings or personalities that distorted the truth of scripture. The early church was constantly under attack by the world around it. For the next three hundred years, the church endured opposition and persecutions. Along with these external pressures, the early church wrestled with doctrinal heresies and misguided leadership. Paul himself predicted in Acts 20:29 that after his departure, wolves would infiltrate the church and harm the sheep. That is why he urged the elders of the church to be vigilant and protect the congregation. Newton writes,

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31 Ibid., 94.
“The weight of reasonability for recognizing false teaching, and then acting to remove it, rests with the elders.”

One may argue that the church in North America is no longer under persecution and there is freedom to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Acts 20:30, Paul warned against men who speak twisted things that will draw disciples away from the church. The Greek word for perverse means to turn aside, to pervert, to distort. Paul warns believers against false teachers who will infiltrate the church, twist the truth of Scripture, and manipulate it for their own selfish gains. Newton cautions, “Once a Christian latches on to such distorted ideas of biblical truth, that person is easy prey for alienation from the rest of the church. He or she might view others in the church as unenlightened and then follow the deceitful teaching to his or her own shame.” While it is true that the church in North America enjoys certain freedoms and protection, it is not spared from the threat of false teachers. In fact, under the pretense of freedom, these teachers have greater opportunities to affect the church. The charge from Paul remains true for elders today: pay careful attention and pastor the flock. For the teaching elders, Newton writes, “They must at times reprove those who are in sin. They must admonish those who are toying with compromising the faith. They must instruct and exhort the church to walk in sound doctrine. They must recognize error and not be afraid to address it.”

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32 Ibid., 96.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 97.
The work of an elder never ends. Regardless of which part of the world it is in, the church is constantly under attack. The battle for the hearts of the people comes from both the outside and from within. Paul gave this final reminder to the elders he met with in Acts 20:31: “Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.” This unending and hard work of an elder is work that is vital to the health of the church.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 offers another description of elders:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

In the passage above, Paul begins with this statement: “If anyone aspires to the office of an overseer (elder), he desires a noble task” (1 Tm 3:1). The significance of this statement can only be understood with its context.36 At the time of Paul’s letter to Timothy, the church was in its infancy. It did not have a long history or even a large pool of men to draw from when it came to fill elder positions. The early church was constantly under persecution and, in many situations, the elders of the church were the first to be persecuted.37 In such a time, it makes sense that elders would be hard to find. Yet Paul

36 Ibid., 114.
37 Ibid.
begins with a “trustworthy statement”—which Fee interprets to mean “generally accepted as true”—that anyone who aspires to the office of an elder desires a noble task.\textsuperscript{38} The focus of this verse lies not with the person but with the position.\textsuperscript{39} Fee writes that Paul is not asking people to run for office or to have the desire to be leaders in the church; rather, Paul is highlighting that the office of an elder is a noble task and it should be the kind of task that people aspire to do.\textsuperscript{40} This statement likens the task of an elder to other coveted career choices. It is because the work of an elder has such importance that Paul continues to outline the qualifications of an elder.

D.A. Carson said this about the qualifications of an elder: “Remarkable for being unremarkable.”\textsuperscript{41} The values cited by Paul in 1 Timothy should be exemplified by all Christians, not just elders or leaders of the church. All Christians must be above reproach, faithful to their spouses, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, and everything else Paul lists in the passage. The only exception to this list is the requirement to teach.\textsuperscript{42} Elders have the responsibility to defend the doctrine of the church from false teachers. This passage states that elders must teach the church to live in accordance with God’s word. This is done primarily through living by example. The church will learn how to live according to God’s word by observing how the elders manage their families and

\textsuperscript{38} Gordon Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 79.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} D. A. Carson, quoted in Phil A. Newton, Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005), 74.

\textsuperscript{42} Newton, Elders in the Life of the Church, 115.
how they are respected by the community. Newton adds that a ruling elder should lovingly manage the church in the same way they manage their own families. Further, a teaching elder should, according to Titus 1:9, exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict the truth.\textsuperscript{43} Together, the elders lead the church through their example and teaching in holiness and faithfulness.

Therefore, the church needs to exercise discernment in the selection process to ensure that qualified leaders are chosen for the office of elder. Referencing the earlier differences between G1 and G2, the church must look beyond an individual’s secular success and focus on that individual’s spiritual maturity. Elders are an example to the rest of the church. They must demonstrate all of the qualities Paul lists in 1 Timothy in their relationship with their spouses, with their children, and in their devotion to God. Grudem concludes by stating, “It is not optional that their lives be examples for others to follow; it is a requirement.”\textsuperscript{44}

Hebrews 13:17-19 explains the relationship between the congregation and its leaders:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 116-117.

\textsuperscript{44} Grudem, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 916.
The book of Hebrews is like a sermon whereby the author pastorally exhorts his church to remain faithful to Christ and to resist the temptation to return to the safety of Judaism even during times of distress. At the end of the letter, the author charges the members of the church to obey their leaders. Even though the word used is leaders, not elders or overseers, it is safe to conclude that the author was referring to the elders of the church as this was the primary mode of church governance.

The author describes the work of these elders or leaders. One of the main tasks of an elder is to “keep watch over your souls” (Heb 13:17). Newton writes that the imagery of this text is that of a shepherd who vigilantly and sacrificially watches over its flock. The shepherd leads the flock to green pastures and still waters and, while they graze and rest, keeps watch over them. He watches out for dangerous wolves and signs of trouble. The elders of the church need to watch over the souls of the people rather than buildings and budget. The elders of the church need to be on the lookout for false teachers and doctrines. They must be alert for deceitful behavior within the church. The church will always be filled with broken people with personal agendas and selfish ambitions. If such behaviour goes unchecked, it will divide the church and derail its mission. One area in which elders exercise their authority is in church discipline.

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46 Newton, Elders in the Life of the Church, 126.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 128.
Scripture has many things to say regarding church discipline. 1 Peter 1 calls believers to live in holiness. Hebrews 12 states that just like a father will discipline his son, God will discipline his children. Galatians 6 reminds the church to restore a sinner in a gentle way. Matthew 18 lays out the steps to confronting someone who refuses to repent. 1 Corinthians provides the extreme example of excommunication. Dever summarizes the goal and purpose for church discipline: “It should be practiced in order to bring sinners to repentance, a warning to other church members, health to the whole congregation, a distinct corporate witness to the world, and, ultimately, glory to God, as his people display his character of holy love.”49 Elders need to give account for the holiness of the church and its witness to the world. The mission of the church is not about budgets, buildings, or the number of people coming to church. The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ who walk in holiness and purity. To do so, elders must exercise church discipline.

This is one area that is lacking in the Chinese church because there is an avoidance or minimization of conflicts. In addition to the issue of saving face, leaders are often slow to address sin or sinful behaviors, which usually leads to greater conflicts and divisions. The mandate to watch over the souls of the church lies with the elders. They must exercise their authority to maintain the holiness and purity of the church.

The following passage encourages elders in their work and describes the heavenly reward for their efforts:

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion,

49 Akin, ed., A Theology for the Church, 809.
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. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pt 5:1-5).

Prior to this exhortation, Peter warned the church about suffering. In order for the church to persevere through “fiery trials” (1 Pt 4:12), the church needs to be able to look to its elders for example and encouragement. Elders need to demonstrate a sense of dignity and dependence on God in the midst of trials. They are examples to the flock, both in character and during difficult times. This is the type of leadership needed by the church.

Elders lead by exercising oversight over the church. Karen Jobes further explains the three ways in which this oversight works. First, elders shepherd the flock by overseeing them voluntarily. The office of an elder is a noble task and one is not forced into that role. When one is in that role, he or she is to lead the church in accordance to God’s will and not the people’s will or by following the patterns of the world. Second, elders do not shepherd the flock for personal gain. An elder must not be motivated by financial gains or misuse the resources of the church, but rather be eager to serve regardless of reward. Third, elders shepherd the flock in humility and service. An elder should not lord over the people but rather be an example to them. Newton writes that, in the end, elders are only under-shepherds, assistants to the chief shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

50 Newton, Elders in the Life of the Church, 147.
51 Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 304.
52 Ibid., 305.
53 Ibid., 306.
Christ. Elders hold the authority in the church, but they answer to Christ and give an account for their actions. This form of shepherd leadership is how elders are called to lead the church. Newton best summarizes this by stating, “Being an elder does not mean that a man is better than others, for ‘all of you clothe yourselves with humility towards one another.’ Nor does eldership exclude a man from diligent Christian living, for elders must ‘prove to be examples to the flock.’ Elders serve not out of constraint or the desire for earthly reward and recognition, but enthusiastically with a sense of God’s call to this office.”

Summary for Biblical Elders

The office of elder is one of two models of leadership for the New Testament church. Along with the office of deacon, Scripture has set forth a clear pattern for church leadership and structure. The word elder is used interchangeably with bishop, overseer, and shepherd or pastor and each denotes the same office and function. Among the elders, it is helpful to distinguish between elders who rule and elders who teach. In the case of full-time pastors, the main teaching pastor falls into the category of a teaching elder. The tasks of an elder can be categorized into four areas: ensuring proper doctrine is taught and protecting the church from false teachings; maintaining the holiness of the church, and when necessary, exercising church discipline; living as a witness to the world and as a role model to the church; and finally, leading the church in accordance to God’s will by exercising oversight over the church and by keeping watch over the lives of the people.

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\(^{54}\) Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 154.
The office of elder is a privilege and a responsibility. It must not be forced upon anyone. It involves time, energy, and almost guarantees suffering. It is a high but noble calling. The church will thrive, even in difficult times, when godly and qualified elders operate in their God-given authority. This is the biblical office of an elder.

The Case for the Plurality of Elders

According to Acts 1:8, Jesus chose and commissioned his twelve disciples to continue his work after his departure. They were to be witnesses and bearers of the good news of Jesus. The Apostle Peter preached the first sermon on the day of Pentecost and the church was born. The early church devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, community, and prayer (Acts 2:42), and it continued to grow. Soon, as seen in Acts 6:1-7, the apostles could not meet the growing needs of the church. They set up the office of the deacons—men of faith and wisdom—to assist them in ministry. Thus, the apostles could concentrate on teaching and prayer.

There is always a group or team-based approach to leadership in the New Testament church. Even the Apostle Paul, the greatest New Testament theologian and church planter, worked in partnership with the church in Jerusalem and with other coworkers like Timothy, Titus, and Barnabas. Grudem believes there is a consistent pattern of a plurality of elders as the main governing group in the New Testament churches.\(^5^5\) As indicated by the references below, most of the time, the word elders is used in the plural form (italics mine):

Acts 11:30 “And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.”
Acts 14:23 “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”
Acts 15:2 “And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.”
Acts 20:17 “Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.”
Acts 20:28 “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”
Philippians 1:1 “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:”
1 Timothy 5:17 “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”
Titus 1:5 “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”
James 5:14 “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”
1 Peter 5:1 “So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:”

Merkle writes, “In almost every reference in the New Testament, the term for ‘elders’ is found in the plural.”56 The only exception is found in the writings of the Apostle John, whereby he referred to himself as “the elder” in his opening greetings in 2 John and 3 John. Dever believes since John was writing to people outside of his own congregation, the reference to “the elder” suggests not an office but a title.57 As Merkle highlights, elsewhere in the New Testament, references for leaders of the church are also found in the plural, further emphasizing the fact that leading the church was never a one-person job.

56 Merkle, 40 Questions about Elders and Deacons, 163.
57 Akin, ed., A Theology for the Church, 803.
1 Corinthians 16:15-16 “Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints—be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.”

1 Thessalonians 5:12 “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,”

Hebrews 13:7 “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Hebrews 13:24 “Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.”

Based on these New Testament references, we can conclude with reasonable certainty that most, if not all churches had a plurality of elders. Merkle adds, “There is no example in the New Testament of one elder or pastor leading a congregation as the sole or primary leader.” Grudem agrees with this conclusion and writes, “First, no passage suggests that any church, no matter how small, had only one elder. The consistent New Testament pattern is a plurality of elders ‘in every church’ and ‘in every town.’ Second, we do not see a diversity of forms of government in the New Testament church, but a unified and consistent pattern in which every church had elders governing it and keeping watch over it.”

In the early second century, Bishop Ignatius wrote a letter to the Magnesians in which he cited a single bishop in authority over the entire church. Until this point, the words for pastor, overseer, and bishop had been used interchangeably. This gave way to

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58 Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons*, 164.


60 Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 112.
the rise of a monarchical episcopacy, or the rule of a single bishop.\textsuperscript{61} Eventually, the bishop of Rome, later known as the Pope, gained primacy over every other bishop.\textsuperscript{62} In the Protestant tradition, Protestants do not believe in the authority of the Pope, but the effects of monarchical episcopacy exist in other forms. Most notably, its effects are seen in the level of authority a pastor has over the church. The single elder or single pastor model of governance is the most common model among Baptist churches in the United States.\textsuperscript{63} Due to the influence of Confucius and the pursuit of the \textit{jun zhi}, the single pastor model is also the most practiced model among Chinese churches. In this model, the pastor is seen as the only elder in the church and there is an elected or appointed board of deacons to assist in the ministries of the church. In the case of Cornerstone, the working committee acts like the deacon board while all authority resides with the senior pastor.

As Grudem points out, the problem with the single pastor model is that it places either an excessive concentration of power or an excessive demand on one individual.\textsuperscript{64} A proverbial quote reads, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”\textsuperscript{65} When power and authority are vested in a single individual with little or no accountability, accompanied by the sinfulness of human nature, it is a recipe for disaster for both the individual and the

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Grudem, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 928.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 931.
church. As Wallace points out, “Churches that have a pastor as an authority above others have a disproportionately high number of moral failures at the top level of leadership.”

The best way to protect the pastor and the church is to ensure that there is a system of accountability. The plurality of elders protects the church from such failures or abuses because elders hold one another accountable. Newton writes, “Equal authority among the elders checks attempts by one man to dominate the church leadership.”

In addition, the work of ministry is hard and lonesome. It is even harder if the load is borne by one individual. A plurality of elders shares the workload of ministry and offers encouragement when needed. Newton writes, “A plurality provides the opportunity to do ministry in a more exciting way. Each person in a body of elders and deacons will bring his own gifts and strengths to the overall work and can apply his gifts to the common good. No one man needs to attempt carrying the load of a congregation.” This is a healthier model of leadership for the pastor and in the long run, is a more effective and cohesive model for the church.

The pastor should be not considered the only elder of the church, but one of several. Each elder has the same amount of authority because it is within this framework that mutual accountability is possible. Merkle gives three reasons for this arrangement: First, all elders must meet the same qualifications. The same list of qualifications applies to both teaching elders and ruling elders. Second, all elders share the same

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67 Ibid., 81.
68 Ibid.
responsibilities—teaching and shepherding the flock. Third, giving more authority to one elder will create a separate and distinct office.\(^6\) This arrangement may raise the question of how the pastor can function effectively in this structure without being viewed as an employee or as one bestowed with special authority. It is important to note that “although elders act jointly as a council and share equal authority and responsibility for the leadership of the church, all are not equal in their giftedness, biblical knowledge, leadership ability, experience, or dedication.”\(^7\) This leads to the phrase “first among equals.”\(^8\) Citing the example of Jesus, Newton points out that even though Jesus had twelve disciples, Peter, James, and John were often chosen and singled out for specific activities, and that out of the three, Peter was most prominent among the disciples.\(^9\) Newton further writes that Peter was not given a special title or special clothes, and he was equal in rank and authority to the other disciples who were not subordinate to him, but he was a natural leader.\(^10\) On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up to preach the first sermon and became the head of the church in Jerusalem. In this sense, Peter was the first among equals.

In a similar way, the full-time pastor is the first among equals. Paul alluded to this in 1 Timothy 5:17, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching.” This does not refer to a separate

\(^6\) Ibid., 173-174.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^10\) Ibid.
or distinct office but a special recognition to those who are called to concentrate on the ministry of teaching and preaching. Hence, the pastor is not merely an employee who sits on the elder board, but is, by function and gifting, an elder in his or her own right. Neither does the pastor have special authority over the other elders. He may be the first among equals but he is still just an elder.

There is a recent trend of hiring professional clergy to do the work of ministry. Many churches have adopted a business-like model whereby the pastor is hired by the board and functions like the chief executive officer. In turn, this pastor would hire his own staff and the whole church is staff-led or pastor-driven. Grudem calls this the “corporate board model” and lists three objections: First, there is no New Testament precedent to support this model. Second, the pastor is not the spiritual leader but rather a church employee. Third, the pastor will run into problems because some of his members are his bosses. The danger lies with the delegation of responsibilities. The mandate to oversee the church and to shepherd the flock lies with the elders. It may be easier to delegate the responsibility of running the church to paid professionals, but elders cannot fulfill their responsibilities if they are not involved in the lives of the congregation or the operations of the church.

It is important to strike a balance between church staff and church elders to ensure smooth operations and a faithful witness. Each church must wrestle with this balance, but the fact remains that a plurality of leadership is a healthier model for the church. Dever

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74 Grudem, Systematic Theology, 935.

75 Ibid.
writes, “A plurality also makes leadership more rooted and permanent and allows for more mature continuity. It encourages the church to take more responsibility for the spiritual growth of its own members and helps make the church less dependent on its employees. As the elders lead and the deacons serve, the congregation is prepared to live as the witness God intends his church to be.”

The Case for Women Elders

Women in leadership is an important issue to address because it has significant implications for the development of future leaders, but it is not the primary concern of this project. Hence, this section will only provide a general overview of this issue and will focus on the question of whether women can be elders. It is important to note that the conclusion drawn for Cornerstone may not apply to other Baptist or Chinese churches.

Both women and men are created in the image of God, both have equal value and worth, both are gifted by the Holy Spirit, and both can serve and lead in various ministries, but various churches disagree on whether women can be elders. The most cited text against women in leadership is 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Paul writes to Timothy, “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” Grudem writes that the functions of teaching and having authority over

76 Akin, ed., A Theology for the Church, 805.
men are functions of an elder. As stated above, the requirement to teach is one of the core functions of an elder, and based on the above passage, women cannot be elders because they are prohibited to teach or exercise authority over men. The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to Timothy to remind the church how it should behave as the household of God (1 Tm 3:15). Paul wrote this letter during a time when false teachers had infiltrated the church and many had been led astray by their teachings. The church was divided and was entangled in many disagreements. For instance, these false teachers were encouraging women to discard traditional female roles and adopt a more egalitarian approach towards their relationships with men. Hence, in response to this error, the Apostle Paul wrote about the proper behaviour for women such as dressing modestly, clothing themselves in good works, and learning quietly with all submission. Douglas Moo writes, “Paul is concerned that the women accept the teachings of the church ‘peaceably’—without criticism and without dispute.” In response to the egalitarian influence of these false teachers, Paul reminded the women of the church to submit to their husbands and to the male leadership of the church. Moo concludes,

In the pastoral epistles, this governing activity is ascribed to the elders. Clearly, then, Paul’s prohibition of women’s having authority over a man would exclude a woman from becoming an elder in the way this office is described in the pastoral epistles. By extension, then, women would be debarred from occupying whatever position in a given local church would be equivalent to the pastoral epistles’

77 Grudem, Systematic Theology, 938.

78 Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?” in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 177.

79 Ibid., 179.

80 Ibid.
governing elder (many churches, for instance, call these people deacons). This would be the case even if a woman’s husband were to give her permission to occupy such a position, for Paul’s concern is not with a woman’s acting independently of her husband or usurping his authority but with the woman’s exercising authority in the church over any man.81

Linda Belleville provides the counter-argument to this passage. Belleville agrees that much of this letter has to do with women and the impact of these false teachers.82 Belleville focuses on the word authentein, which historically has been translated as “to exercise authority over.”83 Belleville argues that authentein only occurs once in the New Testament, in this passage, and if Paul wanted to speak about the exercise of authority, he could have used other words like “rule” or “govern.”84 After a long and detailed analysis over the usage of this word, both in Scripture and other ancient literature, Belleville concludes that the most accurate meaning and usage of this word is “to dominate or to get one’s way”—best understood as holding sway or mastery over another.85 In this case, Paul was writing to the women to remind them that they are not permitted to teach so as to gain mastery over a man, but rather to have a quiet demeanor.86 Citing 1 Timothy 2:13, Belleville adds that Eve was created as Adam’s partner and not his boss.87

81 Newton, Elders in the Life of the Church, 182.


83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., 3451.

85 Ibid., 3577.

86 Ibid., 3601.

87 Ibid., 3670.
I believe that Belleville’s interpretation of the text best suits the context of 1 Timothy. The influence of false teachers had caused some women to dominate the men of the church, particularly in teaching. In response, the men became angry and disagreed with what the women were saying, resulting in tension and conflicts. This is not how Paul wanted the household of God to behave. Therefore, men should lift up holy hands and pray and women should, among other things, dress appropriately and learn quietly (1 Tm 2:8-11). This passage is not about church governance but about church unity. No one, man or woman, should be dominating or trying to gain mastery over another, especially when it comes to teaching. 1 Timothy should not be used to exclude a qualified woman from a position of leadership. Instead, 1 Timothy reminds us about the qualifications of a good leader, which applies to both men and women.

The text below is sometimes cited as grounds to exclude women from leadership because women were told to keep silent in the church:

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? (1 Cor 14:33b-36)

However, one must define the concept of keeping silent to fully understand the passage. Grudem argues that this passage does not prohibit women from all public speech.\textsuperscript{88}

Earlier in this letter, in 1 Corinthians 11:5, women were allowed to pray and prophesy. Grudem suggests that 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 applies to the immediate context of the

\textsuperscript{88} Grudem, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 939.
chapter, which involves judging and interpreting tongues and prophecies.\textsuperscript{89} Judging and interpreting tongues and prophecies is considered as a ruling and governing function, reserved for the elders of the church.\textsuperscript{90} Carson agrees with this position and writes, “A strong case can be made for the view that Paul refused to permit any woman to enjoy a church-recognized teaching authority over men and the careful weighing of prophecies fell under that magisterial function.”\textsuperscript{91} Therefore, if the women had any questions or issues with the interpretation of prophecy, they were told they should go home and ask their husbands. The church is the not a place of confusion but peace. With these restrictions, Carson believes that the gospel has freed women from certain cultural restrictions, but there are still distinctions in roles and responsibilities, such as the role of an elder.\textsuperscript{92}

Craig Keener disagrees with this interpretation and argues that the context does not address spiritual gifts, but order and propriety during church meetings.\textsuperscript{93} Keener writes the Apostle Paul only forbade one type of speech: asking questions.\textsuperscript{94} According to 1 Corinthians 14:35, the Apostle Paul based his injunction on asking questions privately on his demand for silence.\textsuperscript{95} In other words, women were interrupting the service with

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, 144.


\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 2690.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
questions. In addition to the social and customary practices of that day, it was not proper for women to address unrelated men; hence, asking questions during service, much like not wearing head coverings when praying or prophesying would have been considered shameful (1 Cor 11:5). Therefore, if a woman had a question, Paul requested that the woman ask her husbands at home. By doing so, Paul avoided the social impropriety of women questioning men in the context of a public gathering.

Like the passage in 1 Timothy, 1 Corinthians 14 does not deal with church governance or the roles of women. Instead, this passage is about the proper behaviour within a church gathering. The church is not a place of confusion but peace, and no one, man or woman, should interrupt that peace with questions. This position is in line with the larger section on spiritual gifts, best summed up by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:39-40: “…earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should be done decently and in order.”

In contrast to the earlier passages, Galatians 3:26-29 has been widely used to support egalitarianism:

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

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96 Ibid., 2705, 2724.

97 Ibid., 2783.
However, Lewis Johnson disagrees and argues that such a view is a misreading of the intent of the Apostle Paul. The letter to the Galatians focuses on two themes: the justification of faith and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life.\textsuperscript{98} Therefore, as Paul argues, the purpose of the law is to guide the believer along the path of maturity and sonship.\textsuperscript{99} The result of sonship means freedom from bondage, particularly life under the old covenant.\textsuperscript{100} Paul explains sonship means through faith in Jesus Christ, a believer is brought into union with Christ. In this context, there is a universal sonship of believers; there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free.\textsuperscript{101} Johnson argues that Galatians is not about egalitarianism in function—for example, that women can be elders—but about egalitarianism in privilege. Women, like men, through faith in Christ are children of God.\textsuperscript{102}

Gordon Fee thinks that the implications of Galatians 3:26-29 go beyond justification by faith.\textsuperscript{103} Fee asks, “Why does Paul add the second and third pair at all in an argument that otherwise has to do only with Jew and Gentile?”\textsuperscript{104} The Apostle Paul seems to imply that through justification by faith in Christ, there is a “newness” in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{98} S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “Role Distinctions in the Church,” in \textit{Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood}, 150.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 151.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Johnson, “Role Distinctions in the Church,” 157.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Gordon D. Fee, “Male and Female in the New Creation,” in \textit{Discovering Biblical Equality}, 2803.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 2811.
\end{itemize}
relationships between Jew and Gentile, men and women, and masters and slaves.\textsuperscript{105} Fee agrees with most commentators that the nature of the crisis in Galatia was caused by Jewish Christian “agitators,” men who had infiltrated the church and insisted that men must be circumcised as part of their justification.\textsuperscript{106} But Fee thinks that such a view does not take into account the role of the Holy Spirit and Paul’s primary concern of the relationship between the people of God.\textsuperscript{107} Paul’s life message is that through Christ, both Jew and Gentile have become one people of God.\textsuperscript{108} Through the work of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, there is no difference or advantage between Jew and Gentile. Fee continues, “Since all are now ‘children of God through faith’ and all who have been baptized are thus clothed with Christ, there is, therefore ‘neither Jew nor Greek… for you are all one in Christ Jesus. This, at least, is where the argument has been heading and where it will go from here.”\textsuperscript{109}

Fee disagrees with Johnson that Galatians 3:28 does not imply that all are equally justified through faith in Christ, but rather that all constitute one people by their equal standing in Christ.\textsuperscript{110} According to Fee, this is the reason why the apostle Paul included two other categories, slave and free and male and female:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 2817.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 2825.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Fee, “Male and Female in the New Creation,” 2864.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 2872.
\end{itemize}
For these three pairs represent the primary ways people were divided/separated from each other in the structures of the present age that was now passing away: on the basis of race, social standing and gender. But ‘in Christ Jesus,’ Paul asserts these categories have lost their structural significance and relevance; that is, these very things that keep people distanced from or at odds with each other in a fallen world have been relativized in the body of Christ, where not only Jew and Greek but also masters and slaves, men and women, all form that one body together. \(^{111}\)

This new creation, through Christ, has made all, including male and female, equals in the church. The passage does not explicitly mention anything about women in leadership, but the natural conclusion is there should be no restriction to what a Jew or Gentile, master or slave, or male and female can do in the church, for we are one people in Christ.

**Conclusion**

The New Testament church was led by elders and deacons. Together, elders and deacons complemented and supported each other in the ministries of the church. The main functions of elders are to teach proper doctrine, exercise church discipline, live with distinction, and lead in direction. \(^{112}\) The work of an elder is hard, but it is a privilege and an honour to be called into such a role. In addition, the Bible makes a strong case for the plurality of elders. Elders work as a team, each contributing their distinctive gifts and strengths while holding each other accountable. The teaching pastor is part of the elder team but should not hold extra authority or power; rather, the teaching pastor should be supported and recognized as the first among equals. Lastly, women can be elders. Merkle sums this up by writing, “In Christ, there is neither male or female. All verses related to

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\(^{111}\) Ibid., 2872, 2880.

\(^{112}\) Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 55.
the role of women must be interpreted in the light of this truth. The New Testament gives us evidence that this radical equality was already breaking through during the early church. If the church continues to hold onto a male-centred leadership and prohibit women from using their gifts, then the development of the church will be hindered. In short, a team of qualified elders made up of men and women, working alongside staff and deacons, is the healthiest and most effective model of church leadership.

113 Merkle, 40 Questions about Elders and Deacons, 140.
PART THREE

MINISTRY STRATEGY
CHAPTER 4: MINISTRY OUTCOME

The goal for this section is to develop a new leadership structure for Cornerstone. The previous chapter demonstrated that the most biblical form of governance is through a plurality of elders. Together with the pastor, elders shepherd and protect the church from harm and lead the church toward maturity. The task of leading the church is never a one-person job and through a plurality of leaders, elders are held accountable and the burden of ministry is shared. In addition, elders work with deacons to ensure that the needs of the church are met. This combination between pastors, elders, and deacons enhances the effectiveness of the church.

The Chinese church has the tendency to favor a patriarchal model, where power and authority resides within an individual, like the single-pastor model. Despite the individual’s strengths and giftedness, the single-pastor model places too much power and demand on one person. This is unhealthy both for the individual and for the church. A plurality of elders distributes that power and promotes accountability and shared responsibilities. This chapter aims to develop a new leadership structure for Cornerstone by establishing the board of directors as elders, reorganizing the working committee as deacons and forming a management team comprising paid staff that oversee the day-to-
day operations of the church and the school.

To accomplish this, changes must be made to the existing church bylaws, along with training for the current board of directors. The board of directors must shift their focus from administration of the church and school to their new spiritual roles. As elders, along with the pastor, they will lead the church through a visioning process that includes discerning from the past, healing the hurts of the present, and setting goals for the future. This process will take around five years to complete. Newton wisely notes that “No church or pastor should rush into changing its leadership structure. Careful thought, study, and planning must precede any changes, because implementing drastic changes too quickly might do the church more harm than good.”\(^1\) As noted in Chapter 1, within the Chinese culture the acceptance of a leader comes after years of faithful service. This is a long process and it requires great patience and perseverance. This chapter and the next address the details for this transition.

**The Board of Directors as Elders**

The board of directors functions as the elders of the church. The teaching/senior pastor is part of the board of directors. The main functions of the elders are to teach proper doctrine, exercise church discipline, live with distinction, and lead in direction. They hold the highest level of authority in the church, but they are elected and accountable to the congregation.

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\(^1\) Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 165.
The Working Committee as Deacons

The working committee is made up of the various ministry department heads. The senior pastor chairs and leads the monthly meetings that focus on the ministries of the church. Currently, Cornerstone has the following departments: music, fellowship, hospitality, Christian education, children, and special events. The committee gathers to strategize and coordinate the various programs and events of the church.

The Management Team

Due to the unique nature of Cornerstone, a team of paid staff is tasked with managing the daily operations for both the church and school. Currently, the management team is made up of the senior pastor, the school principal, the school administrator, and the property manager. They meet weekly to ensure that the operations of the church and school run smoothly. They are empowered by the board of directors to make decisions under a certain budgetary threshold for the sake of speed and expediency.

These three levels of leadership at Cornerstone each have a distinctive function and focus. This model of operation is actually different from the structure described in the current bylaws; hence, an amendment to the bylaws is necessary. Since the management team is a sub-division created by the board of directors, it will not be discussed in the following section. Similarly, no changes to the bylaws are needed to redefine the roles and responsibilities of the working committee. However, amendments are needed to redefine the role of the board of directors to empower them to function as elders of the church.
Amend Existing Church Bylaws to Allow for Elders and Deacons

Under Cornerstone’s current bylaws, section 5 reads:

Under Cornerstone’s current bylaws, section 5 reads:

Members of the Board of Directors are appointed and renewed yearly by the authority of the Senior Pastor and the Pastoral Staff with affirmation by Church Members. The Board of Directors shall consist of minimum of three members plus the Senior Pastor as an ex-officio member. The Board of Directors shall have the charge of real property assets. They are amenable to and must cooperate with the Senior Pastor and the Pastoral Staff. All cheques of the Church shall be signed by two Board Members. No Board Members shall receive remuneration for being or acting as a Board Member, but he may be reimbursed for all expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by him while engaged in the affairs of the Church. The Board shall meet at least once a year. Board Members must be Members of the Church.

The current bylaws are insufficient in several areas. First, it states that board members are chosen by the senior pastor and it is by appointment rather than an election and it does not come with set terms for length of service. Secondly, the current board’s duties are mostly administrative, whereas section two of the bylaws states that “The members of the Pastoral Staff are appointed by the Senior Pastor and together, they shall be the decision-making body of Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church.” Cornerstone is structured on a pastor-driven model, therefore the current bylaws do not allow for a plurality of elders to serve as leaders of the church. The proposed amendments are provided by the North American Baptist Conference. Slight modifications have been made to acknowledge that women can serve as elders and to more clearly define the role of the teaching elder. The new proposed bylaws read as follows:
5.2 The Board of Directors shall function as the leadership body to serve, oversee and expedite the ministries of the Church in accordance to the teachings of Scripture and as prescribed in the Society Act.

5.3 Members of the Board of Directors are elected at the Annual General Meeting and must receive at least two-thirds majority of votes. There is no gender restriction to this office, both male and female, Board Members must obtain at least two-thirds majority of votes.

5.3.1 A nomination committee must be formed at least 12 weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting. The nomination committee consist of three members, the Senior Pastor, a Board Member and a Member at large. The names of potential candidates must be submitted to the Board of Directors at least 6 weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting for prayer and interview. The names of candidates standing for election will be listed in the Notice of Membership Meeting and given to every member at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting.

5.3.2 The Director’s term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that a Director should be dismissed should express such concern to the Board of Directors and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions found in Matthew 18: 15 – 17 and 1 Tim 5: 17 – 21. Any Director may be dismissed by a two third vote of members at any members’ meeting of the church.

5.3.3 Members shall be elected for a term of three (3) years and they may be reelected for an additional three (3) year term, after which they must vacate the Board for at least one (1) year.

5.4 The size of the Board of Directors shall be at least 3 members plus the Senior Pastor as an ex-officio member.²

The Role of the Senior Pastor on the Board

The senior pastor has a unique role as the teaching elder and as the first among

² See Appendix A for the full text of section 5.
equals. Yet as Newton points out, “He [the senior pastor] is needed as a leader among the elders since he devotes his full labors and energies to the ministry.”\(^3\) This is not to say that the senior pastor has a higher authority, but rather by nature of his work and time, he is often the main driver for change and direction. Many denominations such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance state in their bylaws that the senior pastor, or another board member appointed by him, shall chair the board meetings. This should not be the default practice. The role of the chair or the moderator should be held by the most qualified individual, someone who demonstrates administration skills, wisdom, and leadership. This person may or may not be the senior pastor. In addition, if the senior pastor is not strong in administration, added pressure is placed on him by this responsibility. The whole concept behind the plurality of elders is to allow for complementary giftings. Dever writes, “Elders as a whole should learn to rely on one another’s gifts and assign ministry responsibilities to the elders best gifted for them.”\(^4\) This also applies to the teaching elder/senior pastor.

Therefore, the senior pastor plays a vital role in the transition to a plurality of elders. As stated in chapter one, there is an inherent sense of honour and loyalty within the Chinese church towards the founding pastor. However, Lau is close to retirement and Cornerstone must be prepared for the inevitable transition. The pressing issue is to ensure that there are qualified leaders in place. Merkle writes, “Without godly, qualified men

\(^3\) Ibid., 205.

leading the church, all the talk about biblical eldership is useless. Hence, to ensure a smooth transition, training for existing board members is essential. The next chapter highlights some of the resources used for training.

Traditionally, Cornerstone has listened to and carried out the instructions of the senior pastor without challenge or questions. This method of leadership does not train or empower others to be leaders. Therefore, to raise qualified elders, the senior pastor must adopt a mentoring and coaching approach. An example of this at Cornerstone was the discussion about allowing women to serve as elders. This was not part of Cornerstone’s typical tradition or practice. When this issue was brought up, many on the board were hesitant because they felt that this was a spiritual matter and should be resolved by the pastors. Instead of telling them what I believe as the senior pastor or what Lau believed, position papers were prepared illustrating both sides of the issue. Articles from Grudem, Piper, and Keller were read along with articles from Keener, Wright, and Fee. After a few sessions of discussions where each board member shared his or her opinion on the matter, a consensus was formed to move ahead to allow women to serve without restrictions. The senior pastor played the role of facilitator, guiding the discussions and ensuring that the points made were vital and on topic. Through this process, the board not only gained a deeper understanding of this contentious issue, they also learned how to make spiritual decisions that require study, prayer, and careful sharing.

The same can be said about formulating a vision for the church. The long-term vision of the church or the short-term strategy should not come from one person.

5 Merkle, 40 Questions, 194.
Herrington writes that true congregational transformation only happens when there is a deep commitment to a shared vision.\(^{6}\) Hence, the goal of discerning the vision of the church is a process that involves various levels of leadership as well as congregational input.

**Recast the Vision and Develop a Five and Ten Year Plan for Cornerstone**

One of the goals of this project is to recast the vision for Cornerstone. The original vision and strategy were set up by Lau and have served Cornerstone well but forty years have passed and a whole generation with no ties to Lau has emerged. This is the opportune time to recast the vision for the new generation and to call forth their commitment to build the church. The primary method of accomplishing this is to lead the leaders through various visioning exercises. This will take place at the annual leaders’ retreat and will involve the board of directors, the working committee, and the management team. Below are the themes for each retreat, starting from the first retreat in 2015. Each retreat was designed to introduce a key component of the visioning process, which would then be fleshed out through the year and through other related groups.

2015: “Our History”

Every church starts with a vision and each one has a unique calling and mission. Over time, that calling or mission may change, but I believe that it never strays too far from its original path. Terry Walling uses an illustration of a row boat to teach how

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\(^{6}\) Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 103.
“sometimes we look back to move forward.”7 The Cornerstone leadership team embarked on our visioning journey by looking at our past. We examined how the church started, why people initially came, and shared stories and events that defined who we were as a church. It was through these stories that we rediscovered our purpose and passion. It created momentum for the future and a sense of expectancy. It filled us with confidence that God has been faithful in leading and providing for the church. We ended with gratitude to God and great anticipation for the future.

A byproduct of this retreat was the creation of the Ministry Flow Chart (Appendix B). This chart shows how each ministry is related to one another, and more importantly, how the school fits into the overall strategy of the church. For several years, the school has been left on its own to operate independently from the church. Through the interweaving of stories at the retreat, a clear and strong connection between the church and the school was rediscovered. The school started as a mission of the church to reach the next generation. It was this same mission that started Cornerstone in 1978. Seeing and understanding how the school and the church are related to each other strengthens our understanding of our vision. The next chapter details the process to these conclusions, but this exercise gave us a blueprint upon which to build and clarify our collective vision.

2016: “Our Present Hurts”

As Cornerstone journeys together, there were times of conflict and hurt. Unresolved conflicts can create distrust and resentment among members and towards

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7 Terry Walling, Organic Leadership Development, Fuller OD757, 2011.
leadership. Forgiveness and reconciliation must occur among members and leaders before any significant progress can be made toward our vision. This is particularly true for the Chinese church, which often struggles with how to resolve conflicts. It is a shame-driven culture that does not work well with an open, direct Western style of communication. We need to develop a way to talk to one another about issues that lead to mutual understanding.

One area of consistent conflict for Cornerstone is its organizational structure. For many years, Cornerstone was run like a small privately owned store. As school enrollment increased, more staff members were added. Yet the organizational structure was never addressed, resulting in many misunderstandings and bottlenecks. The board spent several months working on an organizational chart which was presented at the retreat for feedback and revision. Clearly defined roles goes a long way in improving communications. Appendix C shows the most recent version of the organizational chart.

2017: “Our Future Goals”

Three months prior to this leaders’ retreat, the board of directors, the working committee, and the management team were tasked with doing a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and to set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound). These are popular business tools but are not totally practical for church use. Nevertheless, SWOT and SMART gave each ministry and level of leadership a snapshot of their current state and helped them set immediate goals. This also allowed others who were serving, but not in leadership roles, to give their input into matters of the church. This may seem trivial, but it was a
significant moment for Cornerstone.

The main goal for the retreat was to sit together and talk about what Cornerstone’s ministries would look like in three years. We addressed what we wanted to achieve and how to do so. The SWOT and SMART tools were great starting points, but ultimately each ministry needed to have a clear objective or direction. For example, the Christian education team decided that it was not beneficial to have an ad-hoc menu of topics but prioritized the development of systematic curriculum that is repeatable year after year. Upon further discussions after the retreat, three foundational classes were formed: 101 for new believers, 201 for growing Christians, and 301 for emerging leaders.

2018: “Building a Team”

The focus this year was on team building and understanding how we relate to one another. The organizational chart gave clarity to some of our roles and responsibilities, but details on task assignments and decision-making power was still a work in progress. Since we could not make policies for every detail, we tried role playing how information flows and how decisions are made. Even though this sounds simple, it was very effective because everyone was present in the room and got to see how decisions were made. A cohesive team is necessary to advance the vision of the church.

During this retreat, we also learned about the differences between generations. For Cornerstone to succeed, leadership development must become a priority. Cornerstone was started forty years ago to reach the next generation for Christ and if we are to stay true to that calling, we need to raise the next generation of leaders. Each ministry must begin the task of identifying, investing, and empowering emerging leaders.
Understanding how each generation views the world will help the church in this endeavor.

2019: “Our Vision and Strategy”

The next retreat will weave together the work of the previous retreats as well as the work that has taken place at other times. Over the years, through storytelling and setting goals, we have caught glimpses of Cornerstone’s identity. Cornerstone is a church that started forty years ago to reach the next generation for Christ. The outreach strategy has been to work through the ministries of the church and the mission of the school. It is time to form a vision statement that is clear, shared, and compelling. After forming the vision statement, the next step is develop a strategy plan. As cited in chapter two, Herrington refers to this as a “visionpath,” stating, “Vision describes the big picture of where the church is going and visionpath begins to fill in details of how the church will get there.” This is the goal for the upcoming retreat.

Two months prior to the retreat, the board of directors and the senior pastor will gather data from the previous retreats as well as input from key leaders of the church. At the retreat, we will begin the writing process, followed by a feedback session. The retreat will hopefully end with a draft of the vision statement and strategy plan. After the retreat, we will present our draft to the various church departments. Further input and revision might be needed. We need to pay attention to our process and our language. Briggs

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8 Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, Leading Congregational Change, 50.

9 Ibid., 51.
writes, “Language creates culture.” The outcome of our five-year process is not just the writing of a vision statement, but the creation of a culture of empowerment. The board, the church leaders, and the pastors are responsible for guiding the church. We need to pray and discern the way forward. We need to learn how to overcome our differences and work together for our shared future.

**Conclusion**

The goal is to create a new leadership structure for Cornerstone. At the top is the board of directors who serve as elders alongside the senior pastor. The board is held accountable to the congregation through the process of election and terms. The working committee serves as deacons who run the ministries of the church. Finally, the management team is made up of paid staff who oversee the daily operations of the church and school.

In order to make this work, a clear organizational structure is needed. In addition, each leader needs to know how the mission of the school works together with the ministries of the church. Along the way, any hinderances or grievances must be dealt with and the different leadership groups must learn how to serve together as a team. Only then will we be ready to draft a vision statement and strategy plan. This will begin from the board level and work its way down to the congregation. This new leadership structure will empower Cornerstone to take ownership of the church and develop a vision of their own.

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CHAPTER 5:
IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This final chapter focuses on the steps needed to achieve the ministry goals set forth in chapter four, which are to change the church bylaws, train the board of directors, and lead the annual leaders’ retreat. These steps lead to a congregational vote to change a portion of the bylaws and a formulation of a vision statement and a strategy plan. Training board members is an ongoing process for leadership development. The resources to be used and best practices is listed below.

These goals are organized into three distinct timelines since they are independent of each other. The first goal of changing the church bylaws involves the entire congregation. The second goal only applies to the board of directors. Finally, the third goal takes place during the annual leaders’ retreat.

Congregational Vote to Allow the Board of Directors to serve as Elders

This process details the steps taken to help the congregation understand and approve the board of directors to serve as elders of the church. The board of directors, along with the senior pastor, will become the leaders of the church in the areas of doctrine, direction, discipline, and distinction. The board of directors will become the
highest level of leadership in Cornerstone. This is a stark departure from its present role, as highlighted in the bylaws. Hence, there is a need to educate the congregation to embrace this change in leadership from a biblical perspective.

Six Sermons on Eldership — January 2019

A series of sermons will help educate the congregation about the topics in this project. The first sermon introduces the concept of a plurality of leaders. The sermon emphasizes that leadership is never a one-person job. The Bible is full of examples of multiple leaders working together for the common good of the community. A distinction is made between the role of an elder and the role of a deacon. Finally, the sermon defines the role of the pastor as one dedicated for ministry. The elders, deacons, and the pastor—together as a team—serve to build up the body of believers.

The second sermon is based on Acts 20:17–31. The task of an elder is to preserve the purity of the gospel and to protect the congregation from false teachers. During the sermon, examples of deviation is given to illustrate how slight changes in focus result in a distorted view of Scripture. For example, the central message of the Bible is not about our well-being, but about a God who loves us and wants the best for us. An individualistic, self-serving gospel is an antithesis of the gospel of grace and sacrifice. The job of the elder is to ensure that what is preached and practiced is in line with the teachings of Scripture.

The third sermon is based on 1 Timothy 3:1–7. The qualifications of an elder applies to all Christians, but one who desires to serve in this capacity must live a life worthy of that call. These individuals, with the help of the Holy Spirit, are called to live
lives of distinction and to manage their own families well. The standards of eldership must not be lowered or compromised. Only people of distinction should be considered for this high calling. This does not mean that elders are perfect. Elders, like all people, are broken and fallen, but with the help of the Holy Spirit and the accountability of a group, elders can hold up one another and build the church.

The fourth sermon is based on Hebrew 13:17–19. The role of an elder is to watch over the flock and part of this process involve discipline. People are broken, and they make mistakes. Elders must ensure that people do not disrupt the holiness of the church. People must be held accountable for their actions. They must learn how to deal with conflicts and, when necessary, discipline must be exercised to ensure the well-being of the congregation and the repentance of the offender.

The fifth sermon is based on 1 Peter 5:1–5. Elders lead by exercising oversight over the church. They must not be motivated by personal gains or selfish ambitions. They are called to serve in humility and they must lead during difficult times. Eldership is not an easy task. Elders will make mistakes, but godly elders will learn from their mistakes and continue to do what is best for the congregation, even if it comes at a great personal cost.

The final sermon is on women in ministry. The sermon looks at the broader question of if women can serve without restrictions. It will cover controversial verses like 2 Timothy 2:11–14, 1 Corinthians 14:33–36, and Galatians 3:26–29. The sermon is not designed to give a comprehensive argument; rather, its intention is to show the congregation an alternative to a male-centric interpretation. The sermon ends by detailing the decision process of the board of directors to allow women to serve without
restrictions, which includes serving in the role of an elder.

Notice of Meeting and Package for Annual General Meeting — February 2019

Cornerstone’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held in the month of February. A notice of the meeting will be issued to all members three weeks prior to the AGM. In addition to the usual agenda, a special resolution will be taken to amend section 5 of the bylaws to empower the board of directors to serve as elders of the church.

An informational package will accompany the notice of meetings. This package will include a copy of the section as written in the current bylaws and the proposed amendments, as seen in Appendix A. It will also include the organizational chart and ministry flowchart. Finally, it will include an article by Craig Keener titled “Was Paul For or Against Women in Ministry?”¹ This is a short well-written article that affirms both males and females for ministry. During this period before the AGM, members’ concerns or questions will be addressed by the board of directors.

The AGM begins with the usual business of budget and reports. Next, a quick presentation will be made based on the material included in the package. This presentation will walk the members through the meaning and practice of a plurality of elders. Finally, a congregational vote will be taken. A two-third majority is required to make the necessary amendments to the bylaws. Once approved, changes will be made to the bylaws and filed to the necessary authorities such as BC Online Registry and Canada Revenue Agency. To ensure a smooth transition from appointment to election, one of the

current board members will step down each year to ensure a staggered transition. Twelve weeks prior to the next AGM, a nomination committee will be set up in preparation for the first elder election. In time, a pool of experienced and qualified leaders can be called upon to serve as elders of the church.

Training and Best Practices for the Board of Directors

Leadership development plays a vital role in preparing the board members to serve as spiritual leaders of the church. This process requires their commitment to learn and grow as leaders. The board has committed to a book or video study each year. This began in 2016 when the board read Phil Newton’s book *Elders in the Life of the Church*\(^2\). This book lays out the theological basis for the roles and responsibilities of elders. It gave the board many practical suggestions and examples of how to be effective elders. In 2017, the board read Henri Nouwen’s *In the Name of Jesus*.\(^3\) Technically, this is not a book about eldership but rather about service and sacrifice. Nouwen’s book confronts the forces and attitudes behind power and pride. An elder must first learn to submit and gain control over these forces before he or she can serve in true humility and love. In 2018, the Board chose a video series by Mark Dever called “*What is a Healthy Church?*”\(^4\) The video series includes six sessions on essential topics such as preaching, evangelism, membership, discipleship, and leadership. Lessons from these videos may not reflect the

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\(^2\) Newton, *Elders in the Life of the Church*.


reality or context of Cornerstone, but it gave a baseline for discussions and adaptations.

Along with a commitment to read and study, the board has introduced a time for prayer and sharing before or after each board meeting. Cornerstone’s board of directors used to function primarily as administrators and only met twice a year. However, the board has since realized that before they can learn to shepherd the congregation, they must first learn to shepherd themselves. Each meeting starts or ends with members discussing what is God teaching them, a time of sharing or confessing, and a time for prayer. These topics are intended for the board members to answer about themselves only, not to talk about other people’s lives or struggles. They must first learn to love and support one another. The meetings must be a place where they feel safe to openly share about their lives and struggles. The business aspect of the meeting is secondary to the primary concern of love and encouragement. Lastly, the board must take up the mantle to pray and intercede over the congregation. Acts 6:4 encourages believers to devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of God’s word. All the planning made by the board must be accompanied by intercession. Prayer is the best practice during every meeting.

Visioning Workshops at the Annual Leaders’ Retreat

Most of the work needed to aid the transition from a patriarchy to a plurality of elders will take place during the annual leaders’ retreat. Every January or February the board of directors, the working committee and, more recently, the management team gather for an overnight retreat at Mark’s Centre in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. This retreat gives the leaders a chance to fellowship with one another. More importantly, workshops are allocated to introduce key concepts and changes. The focus
of the retreats is the visioning workshops. These leaders’ retreats are a five-year process of rediscovering purpose and organizational change. Below is a summary of each of the past retreats since 2015 and a description of the 2019 retreat.

2015: “Looking at our Past”

During a class at Fuller called Organic Leadership Development, Terry Walling led the students through the creation of individual Post-it Note timelines. The idea behind this exercise was that God develops leaders over a lifetime, and by looking at our past, we can determine where we are going. Clinton writes, “God develops a leader over a lifetime. That development is a function of the use of events and people to impress leadership lessons upon the leader time and response.”\(^5\) This exercise proved to be effective in helping individuals gain perspective and insights into their future. I believe the same principle can be applied to a collective group. God develops a church over a lifetime and if we want to gain insight into our future, the best place to start is by looking at the past. Through the creation of a church Post-it Note timeline, the church can see where it has been, the events that shaped it, the pain it has endured, and the common hope the congregation shares.

Detailed instructions on the steps for this exercise can be found in Appendix D.\(^6\)

At the retreat, each leader was given Post-it Notes of different colours and each contributed to the Cornerstone timeline. Stories, people, and events, both good and bad,


\(^6\) Terry Walling, *Personal Time Line*, Focused Living Resource Kit (Church Smart Resources).
were put on the board. This exercise took five hours to complete. Many wonderful stories were told. Some of these stories were unknown to the younger leaders. At the end of each phase, we saw how God had a specific lesson for the church. For the first time, the leaders could see that the school was an extension of the original vision to reach the next generation. In addition, some of our most committed leaders chose to serve in the school. As the school grew, it became an entity on its own and drifted away from the ministries of the church. Through the timeline exercise, each leader was able to see that the school was an extension of the church and that the school would play a crucial and complementary role to the vision of the church.

2016: “Healing the Present”

This retreat and its workshops were heavily based on Patrick Lencioni’s book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Lencioni explains that there are five levels of dysfunction in a team: the absence of trust, the fear of conflict, the lack of commitment, the avoidance of accountability, and the inattention to details. The retreat focused on the first two dysfunctions. After years of serving, leaders may develop resentment or hurts and these unaddressed issues can become stumbling blocks for future developments. Lencioni writes, “Members of great teams trust one another on a fundamental, emotional level, and they are comfortable being vulnerable with each other about their weakness, mistakes, fears, and behaviors.” Building trust, or as Lencioni calls it, vulnerability-based trust,

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8 Ibid., 8.
requires not time but courage.\textsuperscript{9}

The first workshop of the retreat began with a forty-minute abridged video version of Lencioni’s five dysfunctions.\textsuperscript{10} Next, we proceeded with Lencioni’s Team Effectiveness Exercise.\textsuperscript{11} Each person was given five minutes to write down one positive and one negative point of each leader. One by one, the individuals in the group read their positive comments about that leader. Then, they read the negative comments. The leader cannot respond or defend themselves. In this situation, the feedback began with the senior pastor. As Lencioni writes, the leader goes first and his or her response, openness, and humility determine the quality of sharing.\textsuperscript{12} He explains that “By the time the exercise is over, two separate but related feelings fill the room. The team members, even the difficult ones, were genuinely flattered by the specific, positive feedback they received. And they were collectively amazed by the clarity and simplicity of what the group needed to improve on for the team to grow.”\textsuperscript{13}

This exercise took over four hours to complete. Even though Confucian culture does not allow for open, direct confrontation, this exercise created a safe place for thoughts and feelings to be expressed. To have the opportunity to share one’s feelings directly to another was already a step towards restoration. As a follow-up to the retreat, a

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{10} Patrick Lencioni, “The 5 dysfunctions of a team,” YouTube video, 40:57, posted July 9, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=infqUOLFaM.
\textsuperscript{11} Lencioni, \textit{Dysfunctions of a Team}, 64.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
separate workshop on conflict resolution was conducted for all members of Cornerstone. While Cornerstone will never be conflict-free, it can learn how to deal with conflicts.

The next morning, the board led a session on organizational structure. The board recognized that much conflict comes from uncertainty over roles and responsibilities. Three short presentations were made. The first was on the role of the board as elders. The second was on the overall organizational chart. Lastly, there was a presentation on the formation of the management team. The feedback and questions indicated that there was a need for further revisions. In Appendix C there is an updated version of the organizational structure, but it is still a work in process.

2017: “Setting Goals and Budget”

Instructions on how to do a SWOT analysis were given at a workers committee meeting prior to the retreat. Each department was to hold meetings to discuss and analyze their ministries and to identify areas of improvement. Afterwards, departments were asked to discuss the goals they wanted to achieve and to identify the resources needed. The first part of this retreat was a report from the board of directors, the school, and the various ministries of the church. This report included a summary of the SWOT and SMART goals for each department. Each report was followed by a time of feedback and encouragement. This was a good exercise because everyone heard what each ministry was working on or struggling with. Often, being busy with service prevents church members from appreciating what others are doing. Through this time of sharing, the group had the chance to hear and pray for one another.

The next morning, the focus shifted to the budget. To reach our goals, some
ministries needed more resources. The board of directors heard the proposed budgets for each department and affirm their support. There were two tangible outcomes for the goal-setting and budgeting exercises. Firstly, each leader was empowered to make strategic plans for their own ministry rather than rely on the senior pastor to make those decisions. Leaders had a say in shaping their ministry since they were the most informed about the needs of their ministries. Secondly, we recognized the need for more pastoral staff, especially in the Chinese and children’s ministry. The last pastor that served the Chinese congregation was hired by Lau twenty years ago.

This exercise also revealed the benefits of a pastoral staff who could focus on the children at the school and help bridge them into the ministries of the church. Unfortunately, with the looming building project, tight budgets, and the lack of potential candidates, the possibility of securing two pastoral positions seemed slim. Upon further discussion, the board of directors approved an internship program whereby seminary students could be chosen to serve in these areas (see Appendix E for the internship policy). The internship program is a way to identify potential pastoral candidates who understand and fit into the culture of Cornerstone. At the same time, these interns can meet certain immediate needs of the church.

2018: “Building a Team”

This retreat marked two years since the creation of an organizational chart and the management team. Yet there were still areas of uncertainty when it came to making decisions. The retreat began with an exercise in role playing through a marshmallow challenge. The individuals at the retreat were split into groups. Each group was seated
together and tasked with creating the tallest freestanding structure that could hold a marshmallow at the top. They were given twenty sticks of spaghetti, one metre of tape, and one metre of string. The challenge lasted eighteen minutes and the team with the tallest marshmallow won.

While this exercise can be used as a lesson in teambuilding or collaboration, I chose to emphasize the concept of prototyping. A TED video by Tom Wujec was shown. Wujec’s conclusion was that the best structures were made by kindergarteners. These children understood the concept of prototyping, which means creating as you go and receiving feedback along the way. Afterwards, hypothetical scenarios were given to the groups such as who in church decides about parking and who hires a new teacher. Using these scenarios, we role played how information flows at Cornerstone and identified the decisionmakers. This was a simple exercise, but it revealed our hidden assumptions and misconceptions. What we learned was that most decisions could be decided by one body (either the board, the working committee, or the management team), but complex matters should involve collaborating and exchanging information between the entire leadership structure.

At the next workshop, we focused on the target group of the next generation of leaders. Cornerstone was started forty years ago to reach the next generation for Christ. In order to fulfill this mandate, we need to raise the next generation of leaders. We must identify emerging leaders, invest in their development, and entrust them with

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responsibilities. Most of the leaders at the retreat had been serving at Cornerstone for many years. We challenged them to begin training the next generation for leadership. In preparation for discussion, three videos were shown. The first was a comedic video by John Crist to introduce the term millennials.\textsuperscript{15} The second was a TED talk by Mary Donohue on generational communication.\textsuperscript{16} The last video was by Bill Hybels about Willowcreek Church’s survey on spiritual growth.\textsuperscript{17} This led to a very interesting discussion among the leadership team. We recognized the need to develop new leaders, but we also realized how differently each generation reacted to spiritual growth (Appendix F is a summary of generations and the best methods to reach them). There were no concrete answers, but the conclusion that was drawn was that each ministry must begin the process of leadership development and employ the most effective methods to reach the next generation of leaders. For the target group of millennials, we needed to address the core issue—their sense of entitlement. Each ministry needs to rethink how they do ministry. For example, Christian education needed to reinvent the way they teach and communicate. We learned that the answer would not be found in books or seminars, but would require prototyping, which would involve taking risks, failing, and incorporating feedback.

\textsuperscript{15} John Crist, “Millenial International: Sponsor a Millennial Today,” YouTube video, 4:07, posted on October 20, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGvmI1fMrA.

\textsuperscript{16} Mary Donahue, “How to get along with Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials,” YouTube video, 16:09, posted on December 13, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtDxPcQ8GJg.

2019: “Writing our Vision and Strategy”

At the time of writing this paper, this retreat has not yet occurred. This retreat was planned as the conclusion of a five-year journey. The purpose of this retreat is to compile all our findings from the previous years’ retreats and formulate a statement that best summarizes who we are and what we do at Cornerstone. The vision statement and strategy plan must be clear, concise, and compelling. The retreat will begin with a summary of our journey: remembering key moments in the history of the church as well as the present structure and ministries.

In his presentation, “How great leaders inspire action,” Simon Sinek argues that people do not buy what one does but why that person does it. In a similar way, the congregation does not follow what the church does, but why the church does it. To make a compelling vision statement that is more than a mere collection of words, we need to craft a statement that captures our passion to reach the next generation. We will start by examining our current vision statement, “Be a Biblically-based, Christ-centered community of multi-generational believers that love the Lord above all else, desire spiritual maturity, and share the message of hope and salvation through Jesus Christ.” It is an adequate statement because it contains a lot of information, but it also needs to inspire passion. According to Hybels, vision is a picture of the future that produces passion in people. A vision statement needs to capture the essence of why we exist or,

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to put it differently, why we do what we do. The following exercise is simply a writing exercise. Each leader will be given a piece of paper and thirty minutes to come up with a vision statement that captures the vision of Cornerstone. Before we break for this exercise, the group will watch a short video by fastcompany.com to warn against the danger of being too technical in writing a vision statement.²⁰

The group will then gather and hear from one another. No one person will come up with a perfect vision statement. The board of directors will need to gather the input and prayerfully craft the final version. This statement must be clear, concise, and compelling. The next session at the retreat will involve projecting into the future of Cornerstone. We will ask ourselves what the school will look like in forty years and what the church will look like in that same amount of time. Next, we ask the same questions but for twenty years, ten years, and five years. This exercise aims to develop goals that are aligned with our vision statement and to identify key aspects of our development. For example, in the next forty years, we need a new generation of leaders. In the next twenty years, we want the church and school to grow and reach more people for Jesus. In the next ten years, we want to enlarge the ministry of the school as a mission field for the church. In the next five years, we need a larger facility and more pastoral staff to build relationships between the school and the church.

The final version of the vision statement must tell the story of Cornerstone. Cornerstone is a church that was started to reach the next generation for Jesus, which is why we do what we do, both in the church and in the school. Throughout this five-year

process, this vision has been made known to the leaders and must be made known to the rest of the church. The school is an extension of the mission of the church and when we build a bigger facility for the school, it is because it is an extension of the vision of the church. This becomes our long-term vision and short-term strategy.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This project began by asking from where vision comes. Vision comes from God. It is powerful and unifying, but it needs a vehicle. The Chinese church in Canada is influenced by the Confucian ideologies of jen (virtue) and li (propriety), and favours the jun zhi (the superior man), who is often embodied by the founder or senior pastor. Power and authority reside with the patriarchal leader. Within this context, obedience and submission are expected in exchange for unity and harmony. Cornerstone has been led by such a patriarchal leader, Lau. Tremendous credit must be given to him who had the vision and courage to build a church that aimed to reach the next generation. Many Chinese churches struggle with the silent exodus and issues of empowerment. Yet forty years ago, Lau had the foresight to start a second-generation Chinese church using sports, media, and the arts as means for evangelism and discipleship.

As Lau approaches the age of retirement, Cornerstone needs to evaluate its leadership structure. It must determine the best way to lead a church and how to create a vision for the future. This project determined that the healthiest form of leadership is a plurality of elders accompanied by a teaching elder/senior pastor. Together, they lead the church to cast a vision. The pressures of ministry and the consolidation of power should not be borne by a single individual. Through a plurality of elders, the workload is shared and each is held accountable.

The Bible clearly teaches that elders are leaders of the church and their responsibilities are to teach doctrine, exercise discipline, live lives of distinction, and give direction. The teaching elder/senior pastor is considered the first among equals. He or she does not have more authority or influence than the other elders. But due to the nature of
his or her public ministry, the teaching elder/senior pastor is often seen as the main leader that should be respected, supported, and held accountable by the other elders. It is within this framework of elders, deacons, and full-time pastoral staff that the entire church is built up.

The next step is to transition Cornerstone from a patriarchal leadership to a plurality of elders. This is done by empowering and equipping the board of directors to serve as elders of the church. This process requires leadership development and an amendment to the church bylaws. This process should not be rushed. Key concepts are introduced at the annual leaders’ retreat and specific workshops are designed to gain historical perspective, discuss organizational restructuring, address conflict resolution, set goals, and build a team. This process guides the leaders to a point where they feel empowered to discern a vision for Cornerstone. This vision may be an adaptation of Lau’s or it may be vastly different. Most importantly, the vision must compel the church towards its mission to reach the next generation for Jesus. Vision comes from God, but the vehicle is through leadership. A clear and compelling vision, along with an effective structure, is the best way to honour and continue the legacy of our patriarchal founder.
APPENDIX A

Section 5: Board of Directors

“5.1 Scripture exhorts all Christians to be sound in knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14), to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom (Col. 3:16), and to encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thess. 5:11). However, it is by gifting that Christ provides the Church with servant leaders. As Scripture exhorts: “to the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

5.2 The Board of Directors shall function as the leadership body to serve, oversee and expedite the ministries of the Church in accordance to the teachings of Scripture and as prescribed in the Society Act.

5.3 Members of the Board of Directors are elected at the Annual General Meeting and must receive at least two-thirds majority of votes. There is no gender restriction to this office, both male and female, Board Members must obtain at least two-thirds majority of votes.

5.3.1 A nomination committee must be formed at least 12 weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting. The nomination committee consist of three members, the Senior Pastor, a Board Member and a Member at large. The names of potential candidates must be submitted to the Board of Directors at least 6 weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting for prayer and interview. The names of candidates standing for election will be listed in the Notice of Membership Meeting and given to every member at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting.

5.3.2 The Director’s term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that a Director should be dismissed should express such concern to the Board of Directors and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions found in Matthew 18: 15 – 17 and 1 Tim 5: 17 – 21. Any Director may be dismissed by a two third vote of members at any members’ meeting of the church.

5.3. 3 Members shall be elected for a term of three (3) years and they may be reelected for an additional three (3) year term, after which they must vacate the Board for at least one (1) year.
5.4 The size of the Board of Directors shall be at least 3 members plus the Senior Pastor as an ex-officio member.

5.4.1 The Senior Pastor/teaching elder holds no greater authority than the remaining elders other than that of influence but is to be regarded as the "first among equals." He shall be responsible for the primary preaching and teaching ministries of the church (1 Tim 5:17, Ephesians 4:11-12), the conducting of all public and regular services, and the general oversight of the church.

5.5 To be eligible for the position of a director a member must meet the qualifications of Timothy 3:1-7.

5.6 A director shall not be remunerated for being or acting as a director, but a director may be reimbursed for all expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by the director while engaged in the affairs of the Church.

5.7 Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held a minimum of 8 times a year, with additional meetings called at the discretion of the Chairman of the Board.

5.8 At the Annual General Meeting, the Board will present a financial statement signed by two directors in accordance with the Society Act.

5.9 All cheques of the Church shall be signed by two Board Members.

5.10 The Board will receive, review and consider reports from the pastors, the working committee and any other groups or individuals.

5.10 The Board will support and encourage the membership, Pastors and Church staff.

5.11 The Board is responsible for the spiritual oversight of the Church, and providing vision and focus by assessing and praying over ministry priorities, which include but are not limited to:

5.11.1 matters of doctrine;
5.11.2 worship ministries;
5.11.3 prayer ministries;
5.11.4 baptism and membership;
5.11.5 leadership training;
5.11.6 conflict resolution and reconciliation;
5.11.7 Church discipline;
5.11.8 general fellowship;

5.12 The Board of Directors will review the Membership Roll annually.
5. 13 The Chairman of the Board is responsible for: Board of Directors meetings, Church Membership Meetings.

5. 14 The Secretary of the Board is responsible for: Custody of Church Seal; Staff Management; Public Relations; Record of Membership; Regular Attendance Directory; Records of Minutes of all Meetings; Legal Documents; Correspondence and all other records of the Church.

5. 15 The Treasurer of the Board is responsible for: Stewardship Education; Budget-planning; Budget Campaigns; Budgetary Expenditure; Record of Donations and Other Incoming Funds, Banking; Financial Report; Auditing.

5.16 The Board shall keep written minutes of each meeting. Due to the potentially confidential nature of matters discussed at the Board, minutes generally are not available for review by members. A Member may make a formal written request for access to portions of the minutes relating to a specific issue and such request will be granted upon unanimous consent of the Board.
APPENDIX B

CEBC Ministry Flow Chart

- **Purpose (Why)**
  - "Reach the Next Generation for Christ"

- **Strategy (How)**
  - Christ
  - Bridge
  - United

- **4 Corners (Core Values)**
  - Worship
  - Fellowship
  - Christian Education
  - Ministry

- **Philosophy (What)**
  - 4 Corners

- **Mission**
  - Create system where people can experience the presence of God
  - Connect people to Christ through relationship
  - Empower people for lifelong service
  - Witness people for God's work

[Diagram showing flowchart with relevant sections as described]
Where have I been?

**Building Your Post-It Note Timeline**

Today, more than ever, believers are searching for ways to recognise the hand of God in their lives. To see again that the God of the universe is personally involved in our lives, brings hope and a greater desire to persevere through the turbulent days in which we live. Most people feel their lives are pretty common. It is not until believers gain a big-picture look at their lives that they begin to recognize God’s unique, sovereign, shaping work. God has been at work in ways that might previously have gone unnoticed. It is very easy to lose sight of the big picture when we are entrenched in the day-to-day challenges of life. A personal timeline is a big-picture overview of your life. It is a chronological map of a believer’s development, highlighting those critical incidents and circumstances that God has used to shape your character and purpose.

Some have suggested we put the past behind us, ignore it and move on. After all, the past is the past! However, there is a constant encouragement in the scripture to remember. Israel was challenged to remember. Early in their history, God called the people to remember their past – Deuteronomy 8:2-4, 11, 12-14, 18. Psalm 106 directly connects the failure to Israel to remember God’s work in the past to their disobedience. The Feasts throughout the Old Testament were intended to remind the people of God’s work. In the New Testament, the Lord’s Table was introduced so that we would not forget.
The truth is, God has been at work throughout your life shaping you for a purpose through the positive and painful events. The tool we will use to help you get a big picture of God’s development in your life is the “Post-it Note” Timeline. Below is a glimpse of what you will be creating. We will walk you through the process of building yours step by step.

Titles: |

Lessons:
Where have I been?

**Building Your Post-It Note Timeline**

**Step 1 – Gather the supplies**

(The needed supplies listed below are available at any office supplies store)
- Cut a standard poster board (20” x 28”) in half using the width portion of one-half. (You will not need the other half for this exercise).
- A pad of small yellow post-it notes (1 1/2” x 2”).
- A pad of small pink post-it notes.
- A pad of small purple post-it notes.
- A pad of small blue post-it notes.

**Step 2 – Clear a space on your table**

**Step 3 – Brainstorm**

Brainstorm significant events and people that have shaped your life, both positive and painful. Start with your earliest recollections and continue on to the present. In three words or less, write the positive experiences on the yellow post-it notes and the difficult or painful experiences on the pink notes. If the experience was painful at the time it goes on a pink note. Do not try to organize the notes. Just place them anywhere in any order on your table top.

**Tips**
- One item per post-it note.
- Brainstorm – Record all the important people, events, and circumstances that come to mind. You can always remove items you deem unnecessary later.
- The object is to get 30-50 notes if possible. If an item embarrasses you – write in code. Be as honest as possible including all of the significant things that have impacted your life.
Building Your Post-It Note Timeline

Step 4 – Arrange your post-it notes chronologically

- Place your poster board in landscape position.
- Leave a 2” margin on the top and bottom (enough room to place post-it notes later)
- Arrange your post-it notes in chronological order.
- Earliest note will be the top left. Arrange subsequent events in columns from top to bottom and left to right. Your timeline moves from top to bottom and left to right.
- Integrate pink and yellow as you go.
- When you arrive at the margin on the top or you find that the next post-it represents a whole new facet of your life, start a new column.
- You may recall additional events that can be added later.

Step 5 – Identify major chapters or phases

- Now that the timeline is organized, seek to divide your life into three to five key phases or chapters. For example, birth to 18 (at home), 19-25 (single), 25-40 (married with kids), etc.
- Move the post-it notes around if needed. Try to have no fewer than three chapters or greater than five.
- Give each of these chapters a title that sums up what was occurring in your life during that chapter. Be creative.
- Write the titles on purple post-it notes and place them on the top of your board.
Building Your Post-It Note Timeline

Step 6 – Identify major chapters or phases

Based on your Post-It Note Timeline, use the following questions to help you assess your past:

- What are some of the important lessons God has taught you about your character?
- What are some important lessons God has taught you about the balance of work and your personal life?
- What are some of your core convictions about family, people, and relationships?
- What are some important lessons and insights God has taught you about Himself?
- Look at each of your chapters and try to identify two lessons God was teaching you.
- Write those lessons onto blue post-it notes (one lesson on each note) and place them at the bottom of the timeline in the place you reserved earlier, under the chapter where they originated.
- Note: Review the questions below to help you reflect on your lessons and to make sure that you are covering the essential issues.

Lesson Reflection Questions

The following reflection questions below help you surface other significant lessons that come from your personal timeline. Jot your responses on a separate paper and then distill your answers and write them on a post-it note and place them on the bottom of the timeline.

- General Question: What has God taught you in each of the chapters of your life?
- Some of the important lessons that God has taught you concerning your character are…
- Some of the important lessons God has taught you about your uniqueness as a child of God are…
- Some important lessons God has taught you concerning your effectiveness in serving Him are…
- Some of your core convictions about family are…
- Some of your core convictions about people and relationships are…
- Some of your core convictions about the church are…
- Some important lessons and insights God has taught you from your painful moments are…
**Interpreting Your Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Item</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity Checks (IC)</td>
<td>A test God uses to evaluate the heart and consistency of inner convictions with outward actions.</td>
<td>Temptation, conflict, persecution, values check, follow-through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Checks (WC)</td>
<td>Tests a leader’s capacity to hear from God and apply revelation to life and ministry.</td>
<td>Personal and ministry guidance, submission, lordship, direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Contact (DC)</td>
<td>Presence of a key contact person at the crucial moment to help ensure future development.</td>
<td>Ministry guidance and challenge, open door, new paradigms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Challenge (FC)</td>
<td>Tests a leader’s willingness to take steps of faith and grow in capacity to trust God.</td>
<td>Ministry crossroads, decisions, new directions, future vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destiny Revelation (DR)</td>
<td>Tests a leader’s capacity to hear from God concerning future direction and ultimate destiny.</td>
<td>Listening to God, giftedness, life-ministry direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Preparation (NP)</td>
<td>Special experiences or conflicts that focus and free leaders for the next stage of development.</td>
<td>Character challenge, ministry crisis, grass is greener syndrome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Crisis (LC)</td>
<td>Special intense situations of pressure in human experiences that test and teach dependence.</td>
<td>Health, finances, personalities, church splits, ministry attack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry Conflict (MC)</td>
<td>Ministry conflicts that are used to help shape ministry philosophy and values.</td>
<td>People struggles organizational restructuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Item</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Backlash (LB)</td>
<td>Ramifications of a decision taken by a leader.</td>
<td>Perseverance, clarity of vision, hurts, relational conflicts, faith challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation (I)</td>
<td>The setting aside of a leader from normal ministry involvement to hear from God in a deeper way.</td>
<td>Sickness, education, self-renewal, ending of ministry, termination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection:**
- Look over your timeline; see if you can spot any of these process items.
- Write the abbreviation of that process item on the corner of its corresponding post-it note. You may find that some events represent more than one process item.

**Why look at these?**
These “process items” are often ways God uses to get deeper access to our character and development. Learning to spot them can help us learn to see life from God’s perspective, to recognize His work in ourselves and in others.
CEBC INTERNSHIP POLICY

DATE: JULY 25, 2016

1. PURPOSE OF INTERN PROGRAM

   a. To provide a relational setting within the local church for training, encouraging, and supporting seminarians who have clearly sensed God's calling to full-time Christian ministry.

   b. To provide opportunities for interns to explore, test, expand, develop, and affirm their spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, passions, and field experiences within the context of ministry.

   c. To provide hands-on involvement and leadership opportunities in various areas of ministry under the guidance of a supervising pastor.

   d. To assist our church, mission field, and other churches by placing prospective interns in ministry positions for the kingdom of God.

2. QUALIFICATIONS OF PROSPECTIVE INTERNS

   a. Be a Christian and able to give evidence to that effect through his or her testimony of salvation.

   b. Be a member of our church or another recognized Evangelical church, or be working towards membership.

   c. Must affirm and fully support CEBC’s doctrinal statement and CEBC’s philosophy of ministry (vision, mission, core values).

   d. Have clear evidence of God's calling for him or her to ministry. This evidence would include a testimony of God's call. It should also include a history of the candidate's service for the Lord in the local church, a mission field, or in a parachurch setting.

   e. Be currently enrolled as a full-time or part-time student at a seminary (approved by the pastoral team) with the intention to

      i. complete a theological degree, and

      ii. serve full-time in Christian ministry (as pastor, missionary, or other full-time ministry worker).

   f. Be recommended by the senior pastor or the pastor-in-charge at his or her church.

   g. Be doctrinally sound, emotionally stable, and of good character.

3. BENEFITS TO THE INTERNS

   a. Although interns are not paid staff, CEBC will commit to supporting them in the following ways:

      i. Regularly praying for them.

      ii. Providing a monthly stipend of $1,000 based on 12 hours a week of ministry.

   b. Potential time off will be discussed between the supervising pastor and the intern.
4. LIMITATIONS OF THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

a. Internships are typically for a one-year term, except for interns who are in their last year of seminary or Bible school. In these cases, the internship ends upon the student’s graduation. Terms are renewable on a year-to-year basis after a pastoral review and are subject to the Board of Directors’ approval.
b. Available openings are limited by pastoral supervision capacity and budgetary considerations.
c. Internship curriculum, time schedules, and details of the program will be developed with the guidance of the supervising pastor.
d. At the conclusion of an individual's internship, there will be an exit interview, but there will be no further obligation on the part of the church or the intern. The church reserves the right to change, amend, modify, or terminate all or any part of the internship policy.

5. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

a. The applicant should contact a member of CEBC’s pastoral team and submit a completed CEBC Internship Application form (see cebccanada.com for form).
b. The applicant will be interviewed and approved by the Board of the Directors.
c. The Internship Committee will comprise of the pastor, Board members, and respective department heads.

6. WHAT INTERNS CAN EXPECT

a. To gain ministry experience and be provided with constructive feedback (encouragement, opportunities for improvement), which will allow interns to practice and grow in their pastoral/ministry leadership skills. The intern will report to and work with the respective department heads.
b. To work with the supervising pastor to establish a job description that reflects a commitment of 12 hours per week (including time in services, fellowship groups, prayer meetings, etc.). This may be replaced or modified with a framework recommended by a Bible school or seminary. The supervising pastor and intern will share that job description with church staff, so they know what the intern will be doing on a weekly basis.
c. To work with the supervising pastor to determine the following:
   i. How often meetings will occur between the supervising pastor and the intern, and how often the supervising pastor or someone else will observe the intern (e.g., meet with the intern once every two weeks, observe the intern and give feedback once a month).
   ii. How often the intern will be a part of staff meetings.
e. To have the appropriate tools, space, and communication channels to fulfil their role effectively.
## APPENDIX F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types</strong></td>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>Doers</td>
<td>Adaptors</td>
<td>Founders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What drives them?</strong></td>
<td>Legacy creation</td>
<td>Money and Work</td>
<td>Development with structure</td>
<td>Fear of loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How they process information?</strong></td>
<td>Auditory (Words)</td>
<td>Visual (Pictures)</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Issue</strong></td>
<td>Irrelevance</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Entitlement</td>
<td>Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Methods</strong></td>
<td>Preaching and Teaching</td>
<td>Small Groups</td>
<td>Discipleship</td>
<td>Faith in Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


BIBLIOGRAPHY


