

Apostolic Overseers

Summary

Since its particularization, and the appointing of local elders to serve alongside Pastor Léonce, Renovation Church has been on an island, of sorts. Staff elders can provide counsel on day-to-day church and ministry matters, but are unable to provide oversight for a senior pastor. At the same time, Non-Staff elders can provide some accountability and counsel, but they do so from a perspective that cannot fully understand the pressures, challenges, and scope of full-time vocational church leadership. More still Non-Staff elders, while attempting to provide accountability for the senior pastor, have no one providing explicit accountability for them. With this tension in mind, the following document outlines a solution that involves the installation of Apostolic Overseers, a group of no more than five external, more seasoned pastors who can provide mentorship, wisdom, and accountability for Pastor Leonce, as well as oversight for, and investment in the elders and the church.

Why An Apostolic Overseer Model

The shift to an Apostolic Overseer model will **facilitate the biblical norm, minimise the organisational tension, and bolster Pastoral longevity.**

Facilitate the Biblical Norm

In scripture and most of church history, the idea of an autonomous church is not only an anomaly but also a modern invention. In the book of Acts, each church plant was both connected to a larger body of churches and in submission to leadership beyond their own socio-local expression. In other words, every church had layers of leadership and oversight, both within the local body and beyond it.

The height of local leadership is that of a plurality of Elders, equal to but led by the First Among Equals (Senior Pastor), he being the Elder responsible to appoint new Elders, preach the word, lead and strengthen the church, and be frontline in communicating with and receiving instruction from the external Overseer(s).

The most prevalent example of this external/internal relationship is that of Paul and Timothy. Paul was Timothy's primary Oversight, and therefore the primary Oversight for the church in Ephesus, where Timothy served as Senior Pastor, and from where he appointed new Elders in the entire region. Paul did the same with Titus (Titus 1:5).

So, Timothy as the Leader, the Elders as co-labourers, and the churches as local assemblies, were not isolated and without Oversight. They were communal and subject to the Wisdom, Voice, Authority, Love, and Oversight of another.

Paul, also, was not a man in isolation. He too was subject to authority beyond him, and therefore the churches he led were subject to the same. When Paul wanted to fully walk in his ministry to the Gentiles, he went up to Jerusalem to get the approval and affirmation of the Church's Overseers, who extended to him and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship," confirming, affirming, and permitting his ministry to the Gentiles.

Further, when Paul was in Antioch and the issue arose as to whether Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be accepted into the household of faith, the plurality there in Antioch could not settle the matter with one another or those who had come down from Judea. Even Peter and Barnabas acted out of sorts. What did they do? They made their way back to Jerusalem, for the Jerusalem Council, and there, after hearing the arguments of all sides, the Council, headed by James, decided and decreed that it seemed good to them and the Holy Spirit that Gentiles had always been a part of God's plan, and should now be included, free of ritual circumcision (Acts 15).

Paul had external Oversight and Accountability over him, his ministry and the churches he led, and he exercised the same in the ministry and churches of Timothy and Titus.

Looking to church history, churches with the most enduring impact have done so under the commissioning and oversight of entities beyond the local plurality of Elders. The independent church, even when organised around a plurality of Eldership, is a new invention. God's church, just as God's individual people, was never meant to exist in communal isolation or organisational independence. Oversight and Accountability have always been key.

Minimise Organisational Tension

As I (Pastor Léonce) have stated many times, it was never my intent to pioneer this work and have it remain autonomous. For nearly a decade I have searched and prayed for a means, model, and most of all community to which Renovation might belong fully and to which it might healthily be in submission. But, beyond even that, it has become clear over the last several years that the governance model of most churches is broken.

The tension in most church governance models is that it puts the local elders in a position to feel as though the primary purpose for their service is to keep the pastor accountable, rather than shepherd the flock of God, as the Word instructs. This of course creates further tension because those tasked with keeping the pastor accountable either do not fully grasp the nature of his work and the weight of his calling (Non-Staff elders) or, they report to the pastor in a staff capacity, which complicates any accountability structure (staff elders).

An Apostolic Overseer model seeks to address this tension(s) by providing the Senior Pastor with external, seasoned pastors who can serve as resources of wisdom while also providing a measure of accountability not fully possible through a plurality of local elders.

Local elders may have more insight into the day-to-day life and practice of ministry of the local church than external Overseers. However, since they are also in the “petri dish” of the local church and, in most cases, have not faced the unique challenges of leading a church, their ability to provide the appropriate level of both wisdom and accountability is limited.

As such, an Apostolic Overseer model relieves the tension of local non-staff elders feeling that their primary responsibility is accountability for the Senior Pastor, freeing them up to focus on shepherding the flock. It also relieves the tension of a complicated accountability structure with staff elders.

Bolster Pastoral Longevity

In preparing this document I (Pastor Léonce) felt it necessary to share briefly on my personal desire for this shift. Of course I believe wholeheartedly that this is a biblical imperative—to have external Oversight and Accountability.

But, there are also very personal implications for me. While I deeply love and appreciate each of our elders, there has been over the years an increasing sense of loneliness.

There are unique hurdles, challenges, and I imagine hurts associated with any field in which someone works and in those challenges, as a pastor, I can provide biblical truth. I can love. I cannot, however, be a helpful advocate, and can not give precise guidance to other job fields.

The same rings true for my calling. Only a pastor truly knows what it is like to be a pastor, and only a pastor can fully oversee, counsel, direct, instruct, and hold accountable a pastor. It has been a missing dynamic for the whole of my ministry.

The weight of leading God's church is heavy no matter how you are gifted or wired. In fact 250 pastors quit every month, and 50% of all pastors will not be pastoring in the next five years.

Simply put, no one is bulletproof, and it's wise and humble to build support/structure to aid any leader in their weakness.

Apostolic Overseers Summary

This is a shift in the way Renovations' elders function, and in the way our church is governed in general. As we implement any shift in governance, it is important to remember that the primary role of an Elder is to shepherd the flock of God (**1 Peter 5**). As such, governance is, at best, a secondary responsibility. Further, decisions about Renovations' governance structure should be made with the consideration of a model that facilitates the health and equipping of the flock, as well as the longevity and health of the senior pastor and pastoral staff.

Responsibilities of the Apostolic Overseers¹

The Overseers shall provide apostolic oversight to the Senior Pastor and are charged with protecting the Church through counsel, prayer, wisdom, accountability and when required, the investigation of alleged pastoral misconduct, and if any, the resulting discipline of the Senior Pastor, up to and including his removal. Their authority is vested in holding to account the Senior Pastor, Senior Pastor Leadership Team, and Elders for the designated work and roles of ministry they occupy.

As part of this work, the Overseers will also conduct an annual 360 Review of the Senior Pastor, and submit its findings and recommendations to the Executive Ministry Team (E.M.T.)² and the Independent Compensation Committee (Defined in the Amendments to the Bylaws).

Benefits

As has been outlined, the benefits of this model are many, but there are three that rise to the fore:

- Biblical/Historical Fidelity
- Intimate Oversight
- Objective Vantage Point

In inviting this opportunity, we are empowering these men to Protect and Oversee us, primarily through the oversight and accountability of the Senior Pastor, and secondarily through the Oversight of and investment in the Elder Team. This model more closely aligns with the structure of the early church in Scripture. We are inviting these men to protect and invest in Renovations' body, primarily through their Oversight of and Investment in the Senior Pastor and the Elder Team, but also through regularly being present to preach the word and greet the people.

¹ Work by Dr. Darrin Patrick; Modified for the purposes of Renovation Church.

² The Executive Ministry Team (E.M.T.) is a team of three (3) to seven (7) elders nominated by the Senior Pastor from amongst the Non-Staff Elder Team, having served at least two years as an Elder, and affirmed by a majority vote of the larger Non-Staff Elder Team. Until their current term expires, the E.M.T. would consist of the church's former Governing Elders. The E.M.T. is defined in more detail later in this section and in the amended bylaws.

In short, upon taking this role, they are committing to a more intimate role in the life and health of Renovation that is necessary to fulfill their responsibilities as Overseers with fidelity.

We are inviting these men to help shape us, through strategically investing a combined 150 years of pastoral wisdom, experience, successes and failures. It seems there is little doubt that this will be for the blessing and benefit of the body as a whole.

Requirements

Overseers shall be men, and ordained pastors among respected congregations who know and love the Church and her Senior Pastor. They must agree to make themselves available, at their own expense, to serve the church.

General Biblical Qualifications for Overseers

The general qualifications for an Overseer are that of all Elders in God's church, as outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7:

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's Church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

***The Appendix includes a full list of qualifications and explanations for all Elders, including Overseers.**

What to Look for in an Overseer

Overseers (and other leaders) must be chosen based on their character, chemistry, capacity and competence. As Pastor Darrin Patrick has stated, “The spiritual condition of the Senior Pastor’s soul before God and the forward progress of his leadership with the church is directly connected to the character, wisdom and skills of the Elders.” As such, it is vital that the Overseers serve as active mentors and oversight to the Senior Pastor, his family and the church in order for him to have a sustainable, fruitful ministry.

Specific Apostolic Overseer Roles and Qualifications

Counseling Overseer – Does this overseer have skill in helping me address my wounds?
Wound – A rebellious place that needs repentance or a broken place that needs healing.

Financial Overseer – Does this overseer have skill in helping me steward personal and church finances?

Family Overseer – Does this overseer have skill in helping me lead my spouse and kids to love Jesus and the church?

Leader Overseer – Does this overseer have skill in systems and structures that encourage healthy church growth?

Number, Appointment, and Term of Overseers

The number of Overseers will be no less than three (3). So long as the Senior Pastor is in Good Standing—meaning (1) he is not under investigation by the Overseers, or (2) he is not undergoing discipline by the Overseers—Overseers shall be nominated by the Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Senior Pastor Leadership Team Members, and affirmed by a majority vote of the Non-Staff Elders [or a Commission of the Elders should the Elder Team exceed a number of twenty (20)]. After initial implementation when multiple Overseers are put in place at once, Overseers shall be added at a rate not to exceed one (1) new Overseer per year.

The term of service for each Overseer shall continue until he resigns, is deceased, or is removed. The maximum number of Overseers shall be five (5).

Resignation, Removal and/or Nomination of New Overseers

An Overseer may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Church. Such resignation shall take effect on the date of the receipt of such notice; and, the acceptance of resignation shall not be necessary to be effective.

The Senior Pastor may remove Overseers, with grounds and notice, but at a rate that does not exceed one (1) removal per year. The removal of an Overseer requires an affirmation of the majority of the collective Overseer Body. The Senior Pastor may remove Overseers at a rate of more than one (1) removal per year only upon approval by a majority vote of the Elders, or a Commission of the Elders (the E.M.T.), should the Elders exceed twenty (20) in number.

In the event of a vacancy by an Overseer that causes the total number of Overseers to be less than three (3), the Senior Pastor shall be given a reasonable amount of time to nominate a new Overseer, in consultation with the Senior Pastor Leadership Team Members, to be affirmed by a majority vote of the Non-Staff Elders, or the E.M.T., should the Non-Staff Elders exceed 20 in number.

If disciplinary action is being considered or an investigation of the Senior Pastor is underway, no changes in the composition of the Overseers shall be made until the Overseers' work is completed and such findings are reported to the Non-Staff Elders, or the E.M.T., should the Non-Staff Elders exceed (20) in number.

Church Discipline Regarding the Senior Pastor

Should, in the opinion of two (2) or more Non-Staff Elders or two (2) or more members of the Senior Pastor Leadership Team, the Senior Pastor engages in immoral conduct, improper financial practices, or espouse theological views or beliefs (hereinafter referred to as "pastoral misconduct") that may require discipline, then such Non-Staff Elders or Senior Pastor Leadership Team Members shall contact the Senior Pastor and then, if necessary, the

Overseers, and request that the Overseers undertake an investigation of all alleged incidents of pastoral misconduct and the evaluation of appropriate discipline, if warranted.

Process for Investigation and Disciplinary Action

Should the Overseers be called upon to investigate Senior Pastor for pastoral misconduct, an affirmative vote of a majority of the total number of Overseers is required to commence an investigation. Following the conclusion of the Overseers investigation and the making of findings, an affirmative vote of a majority of the total number of Overseers is required to initiate disciplinary action against the Senior Pastor. Following such majority vote, the Overseers shall report to the Non-Staff Elders the findings and disciplinary action.

Upon receipt, the Non-Staff Elders—or the Executive Ministry Team if the number of Non-Staff Elders exceeds twenty (20)—may decline enforcement of the disciplinary action only upon a vote of 75% of the Non-Staff Elders. Otherwise, the Overseers shall proceed with disciplinary action and assume complete authority over the Senior Pastor's on-going and future ministerial activities until the conclusion of the disciplinary action.

After an investigation by the Overseers or during a disciplinary action, the Overseers may also: (a) remove the Senior Pastor from his leadership position; and/or (b) terminate the Senior Pastor's employment with the Church. The Non-Staff Elders—or the Executive Ministry Team if the number of Non-Staff Elders exceeds twenty (20)—can decline the removal and/or termination of the Senior Pastor only upon a vote of 75% of Non-Staff Elders. In the rare event that the Non-Staff Elders decline enforcement of termination or removal, any disciplinary action by the Overseers against the Senior Pastor could be repeated in perpetuity, as applicable, until the will of the Overseers is satisfied by the Non-Staff Elders.

Otherwise, the Overseers shall have no authority in the operational and executional authority of the Church, and then only as set forth in the Bylaws.

Necessary Internal Governance Changes for this Model

In order to understand the function of the Overseers we must understand the function of our local plurality in this new model. One key change being proposed, in light of the whole, is that rather than our continuing to operate in a local Carver Model, specifically with respect to nominating, apart from one another, two groups of Non-Staff Elders, Parish and Board, that we instead move toward a more **holistic team model**.

In this holistic team model there will only be two types of local elders, Staff and Non-Staff. There will, however, be a commission of the Non-Staff elders whose responsibilities, in addition to the care of people, and shepherding of the flock, will be to oversee the finances and direct the provision of the facilities needed by the church. This commission will be called the Executive Ministry Team.

In the future, the Executive Ministry Team (E.M.T.) will be a team minimally of three, nominated by the Senior Pastor from amongst the Non-Staff Elder Team, having served at least two years as an Elder, and affirmed by a majority vote of the larger Non-Staff Elder Team.

The E.M.T. will serve on a rotational basis, with no more than two-thirds rolling off at any point in time (e.g., two men rolling off, and two rolling on every two years, with the remaining member staying on for an additional term). This rotation allows both fresh eyes and consistency and history to exist on the team simultaneously. As church size and dynamics change, the E.M.T. can grow to as many as seven (7) members.

However, at this juncture the E.M.T. will consist of our present Non-Staff Elders who formerly served on the Board. Having served in their capacity for the present duration, it is only good and right that they be the first E.M.T. group.

On May 31, 2020, two members of the E.M.T. will roll off, and two new members will roll on. We will go to great lengths to ensure in the subsequent years that the rotation is properly implemented, even if this means one member of the E.M.T. staying on longer than term limit for the sake of establishing a healthy rotation.

Weighed heavily in this selection is the gifting and season of life of the men nominated for the E.M.T., and whether the gifting and season is fit to match the work.

The Church seeks to be led by the Holy Spirit in all things, but the Senior Pastor, the Executive Ministry Team, the Officers, the Overseers, the Senior Pastor Leadership Team, and the Investors all have a certain role in the Church's government.

In this model Renovation Church will be:

GUIDED BY PASTORS.

The Senior Pastor Leadership Team is led by the Senior Pastor. This team oversees the day-to-day ministry and operations of the church. These staff pastors*³ serve the congregation and are responsible for the development of the spiritual life of the church. The Senior Pastor Leadership Team members serve as Staff Elders.

PROTECTED BY THE EXECUTIVE MINISTRY TEAM

The Executive Ministry Team (E.M.T.) is a team, nominated from the larger body of Non-Staff Elders, who oversee the finances and direct the provision of the facilities needed by the church. They provide counsel to the Senior Pastor Leadership Team regarding the major financial commitments of the church, pursuant to the Bylaws. The E.M.T. also serve as Non-Staff Elders.

STRENGTHENED BY OVERSEERS.

The Overseers are (up to) five ordained pastors of nationally respected congregations and ministries who love Renovation Church and are willing to provide spiritual protection to the church. They provide mentorship to the Senior Pastor and oversee accountability relating to him if requested by two or more members of the Senior Pastor Leadership Team and Non-Staff Elders. They may be called in to help in accountability matters relating to the Senior Pastor if requested by the Senior Pastor Leadership Team or Non-Staff Elders. The Overseers serve as Apostolic Elders.

³ Though not Elders, the Renovation Women's Minister and Renovation's First Lady will serve on the Senior Pastor Leadership Team. They will bring a unique and needed feminine perspective to the team.

Role Definitions

Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor has executive and supervisory leadership over and is ultimately responsible for both the spiritual and the corporate health of the Church, including communicating the ministry vision for and overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Church.

Overseers (Apostolic Elders)

The Overseers shall provide Apostolic Oversight to the Senior Pastor, the Non-Staff Elders, the Staff Pastors, and the church. They are charged with protecting the church through counsel, prayer, and if required, the discipline of the Senior Pastor, upon affirmation by the Non-Staff Elders, or a Commission of the Non-Staff Elders (the Executive Ministry Team if there are twenty (20) or more Non-Staff Elders). They shall have the duties and responsibilities generally associated with and exercised by a corporate or nonprofit board.

Elders (Non-Staff Elders)

The Elders are to serve the church through influence and investment. The Elders lead in consistent private and corporate prayer. They provide consistent care for leaders under their care, particularly for Group Leaders. The Elders shepherd the people of God.

Senior Pastor Leadership Team (Staff Elders)

The Senior Pastor Leadership Team serves in both spiritual and staff leadership capacities, as the protectors and encouragers of a positive spiritual climate within the Church and as seasoned and experienced members of the pastoral^{*4} team who work alongside the Senior Pastor in carrying out his directives.

Executive Ministry Team (E.M.T.)

The E.M.T., as an elected, commissioned group from amongst the larger body of Non-Staff Elders, are to serve the Church by affirming the annual budget and any amendments, receiving

⁴ Though not Elders, the Renovation Women's Minister and Renovation's First Lady will serve on the Senior Pastor Leadership Team. They will bring a unique and needed feminine perspective to the team.

and responding to quarterly reports of ministry progress toward affirmed budgetary goals, and approving other major financial commitments of the Church.

The Relationship Between the E.M.T. & Pastor

The role of the Pastor is to give effective leadership to the E.M.T.. He is to function as a leader of leaders, exemplifying servanthood in this role. As leader of the team, he is to act as the team's Moderator, or First Among Equals, assuming responsibility and authority for the preservation of order and the proper and expeditious conduct of all business, and for convening and adjourning the team meetings.

Deacons

The Deacons are to serve the Church in accordance with those certain roles and responsibilities as may be determined from time to time by the Senior Pastor, the Non-Staff Elders, or by such persons designated by the E.M.T. or Senior Pastor.

Officers

The Officers are to serve the Church as directors of the Corporation known as Renovation Church of Atlanta, Inc. as the term is defined and used in the Georgia Nonprofit Corporation Code.

Investors

The Investors of the Church support the Senior Pastor, staff, and elders in fulfilling God's given Vision and Mission. Investors influence the spiritual tone, strength, and the direction of the body of believers. Investors do the work of the ministry.

Renovations' Overseers

Dr. Darrin Patrick (Counseling Overseer)

Darrin Patrick is an American author and former pastor of The Journey, a megachurch in St. Louis, Missouri, which he founded in 2002. He served as the chaplain to the St. Louis Cardinals and is the author of several books.

Patrick was born in Marion, Illinois. He became a Christian while in high school, where he was an all-conference, all-area catcher on the baseball team. After beginning a successful ministry in high school, he pursued pastoral training rather than a college baseball career. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Biblical Languages from Southwest Baptist University (1994), he graduated summa cum laude from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div., 1997), and received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Covenant Theological Seminary (2010). He has been married since 1993 and has four children.

Patrick moved from suburban Kansas City, Missouri to St. Louis in 2002 to plant The Journey in the urban core. The church has seen unprecedented growth in the city of St. Louis and the broader metropolitan region. The Journey is now a multi-site ministry with 6 churches in Missouri and Illinois, including Patrick's hometown of Marion. The Journey has also supported 8 additional church plants, including one in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

In his role as the chaplain to the St. Louis Cardinals, Patrick regularly led chapel services and Bible studies during the baseball season. He was present for the players either before or after home games. Shortly after the end of the 2013 season, Patrick officiated the wedding of Cardinals pitcher Shelby Miller. As a chaplain, Patrick was a part of Baseball Chapel, an international ministry recognized by Major and Minor League Baseball, which is responsible for the appointment and oversight of all team chapel leaders (over 500 throughout professional baseball). Patrick was a vice-president of the Acts 29 Network, and he is currently one of the preaching pastors at Seacoast Church in South Carolina.

Pastor Bryan White (Family Overseer)

Bryan White serves as Parish Elder at Perimeter church for Atlanta, Dunwoody, Peachtree Corners, and Norcross. He oversees a group of elders and deacons in an effort to better serve and meet the needs of the families living within his parish. Bryan was also appointed to serve on the church plant commission (CPC) giving leadership and assistance to church plant pastors as they navigate the 2-year residency and process of planting new churches. Additionally, Bryan serves on the leadership team of Unite!, a network of over 200 churches in metro Atlanta who are working toward collaboration and relationship building for Kingdom impact. He is currently part of a committee of pastors who are praying and dialoguing around the issues of diversity and reconciliation in our churches and presbytery.

Elder White is a graduate of the University of Arkansas and also has a bachelor in theology from James W. Teamer School of Religion. He was an All-American defensive back and played 5 years professionally.

Pastor Ryan Kwon (Financial Overseer)

Ryan Kwon is the Lead Pastor of Resonate Church, Fremont, CA. Originally from Los Angeles, CA, Ryan was called out of his hometown to plant Resonate in 2010. He is passionate about gospel-centered doctrine and preaching and has a vision to see many churches planted in the San Francisco Bay Area. A sought-out speaker, he is actively involved with Exponential Conference and The Gospel Coalition. He also serves on the board for Acts 29. Ryan is married to Jenni and they have two sons and one daughter.

Originally from Los Angeles, Ryan moved to the Bay Area to serve as a teaching pastor at a healthy local church in Fremont. There, he envisioned a Gospel-centered church that would benefit the city physically, socially, and spiritually. He shared this vision and led a small group of people to birth a missional movement called Resonate. His passion for the Gospel and relevance of culture bleed out of his teaching. Ryan is a graduate of Talbot School of Theology.

Ryan's primary roles within Resonate are preaching, vision, and strategy. In his spare time, he likes to watch college basketball/football, UFC, and hang out with his wife, two boys and daughter. He enjoys the outdoors, but when it's too cold to surf and ride his bike, he likes to eat.

Pastor Shawn Lovejoy Bio Page (Leader Overseer)

Shawn is the Founder & CEO of CourageToLead.com. His heart beats for coaching leaders through what keeps them up at night. Shawn has been a successful real estate developer, church planter, (Mountain Lake Church) megachurch pastor, and successful entrepreneur and leadership coach. CourageToLead.com facilitates leadership growth and organizational health for leaders all around the globe.

Shawn developed the GearsofGrowth® Assessment for Leaders and the Gears of Personal Growth® for Leaders. Shawn now leads a team of coaches through CourageToLead who coach leaders through what keeps them up at night! Shawn is the author of three books. *Be Mean About the Vision: Preserving and Protecting What Matters*, released with Thomas Nelson Publishers in 2016. Shawn's latest book *The Measure of Our Success: Your Path To Significance, Satisfaction, & Leading Yourself To The Next Level* releases nationally in April 2019! Shawn has been married (for a quarter of a century!) to his partner and best friend Tricia Lovejoy, and they have three children: Hannah, Madison, & Paul. They all call Birmingham, AL home, and Church of the Highlands is their faith community.

Pastor Michael Fletcher (Family Overseer)

Michael has served Manna Church as Senior Pastor for over thirty years. In that time, he has seen the church grow from 350 members in 1985 to almost 9,000 members in 2017. Coupling sound biblical teaching with relevant, practical application and cutting-edge outreach, Michael and the pastoral staff have worked to create an “others-focused” culture that lifts the advancement of the Kingdom of God far above the concept of the stereotypical “me” church. Michael’s heart is not only to see God’s people equipped to change their world, but also for the planting of churches with the same world-changing vision.

Under his leadership, Manna has helped to plant over 100 churches to date. Michael has led Manna into the frontlines of the war against human trafficking and was invited to speak on the issue at Oxford University in 2013 and 2015. He also mentors national pastors with Leadership Network and international pastors with the European Learning Community. Under Michael’s leadership, Manna Church has embraced a “multiply strategy” and has a vision to plant a version of Manna Church near every US military base in the world.

Michael and the Manna team seek to inspire God’s people toward lives of active service and love around the world, as well as, at home. Manna is deeply involved in global missions, actively supporting the advancement of the Kingdom in 63 countries. Outreach Magazine has named Manna Church the 38th fastest growing and the 92nd largest church in America in 2017.

Michael and his wife Laura married in 1979 and live in Fayetteville, North Carolina. They have eight children. They have 19 grandchildren and counting. In their spare time, both enjoy training and competing in endurance sports, with over 26 marathons (Michael), 22 marathons (Laura,) 3 Iron Man finishes (Michael), 3 ultramarathon finishes (Michael) and 5 ultramarathon finishes (Laura) to their credit.

Appendix: Overseer Qualifications Explained

- **Episcope**, “Overseer”

This word describes one who looks after, considers, examines, and provides covering for someone or something. In ancient Greek society, an overseer was a guardian, controller, ruler, or manager.

- **Anepileptos**, “Above Reproach”

This term describes a man who is free from any serious character blights, is respected by those who know him, and is widely known to live a Godly life.

- **Mias Gunaikos Andra**, “Husband of One Wife” “one-woman man.”

At first glance, Paul might appear to be prohibiting a divorced person from being an Elder. But it is more likely that he is speaking of an elder’s devotion to and connection with their spouse. Elders are to take the lead in emotional, social, and sexual connection with their spouses.

- **Nephalios**, “Sober-minded” or Temperate

The Elder is to be self-controlled (not led by emotions or lusts) and has freedom from debilitating excesses or rash behavior. This qualification speaks to the emotional life of an elder.

- **Sophron**, “Self-controlled”

Elders must have a sound mind (he is able to focus and not be distracted easily), and has good judgment and common sense.

- **Kosmios**, “Respectable”

This means to have a well-ordered life (a life that is not characterized by chaos). To be respectable means that an Elder has a good handle on the complexities of his life, which then qualifies him to lead the various complexities of the church.

- **Philoxenos, “Hospitable”**

The word hospitable literally “lover of strangers.” Not cliquish. The word “hospitable” refers to the way the pastor and his family welcome those outside the faith.

- **Didaktikos, “Able to Teach”**

This indicates skill in teaching. A qualified Elder is able to take the Scripture and help people understand what it means in its original context and in its contemporary application.

- **Me Paroinon, “Not a Drunkard”**

Elders should not use or abuse substances, particularly to avoid reality.

- **Plektes, “Not Violent”**

Elders should not be threatening with their physicality.

- **Epiekes, “Gentle”**

Gentleness in this context means to be lenient, willing to yield when yielding is possible. It describes an Elder who does not always have to have their own way. This qualification speaks to the stubbornness quotient of a man. Qualified Elders do not always have to have their way.

- **Amachos, “Not Quarrelsome”**

Elders don’t turn discussions into arguments. You do not habitually “take the other side” and play “the devil’s advocate.” This kind of behavior might make you a successful seminary student, but it will disqualify you from being a Elder.

- **Aischrokeredes, “Not a Lover of Money”**

An Elder must not desire money more than God (Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:7–9).

- **Proistemi, “Managing His Own Household Well”**

This means to stand before, to rule, to be diligent (to be the spiritual leader in one’s family).

- **Neophutos, “Not a Recent Convert”**

This qualification has to do with the spiritual maturity of the Elder, specifically their longevity as a Christian.