**Elders, Deacons and More**

**(Titus 1-3)**

# Introduction

FCF: Difficulties when dealing with this subject, moreso adjusting a church

* Ideas of Governance from Business, Political, even church tradition models
* Interpretation of Scripture: clerical ordination, or anti-title
* Baggage: How we’ve been bitten by either top-down approaches or bottom-up approaches
* Personal ambitions: the wrong people wanting, the right people not wanting
* Pragmatism: “don’t fix what’s not broken”, “this would be nice”
* Extremism: the be all and end all, or “it doesn’t matter”

An Indaba on governance would fail if all we did was debate and vote on it.

1. We believe, the Bible is “fully inspired of God and accept them as the supreme and final authority for faith and life.”. Therefore we start there. We evaluate there. We end there!
2. But we also grow in our understanding of God’s will and word in discussion! The leadership have been talking about eldership for years. And we have come a long way in understanding it. But when you talk about practically implementing an eldership team, you realise you still have different concepts. It’s as we’ve concertedly been grappling with one another, over the word of God, that we’re finding traction.
   1. We’re going to host a weekly session in the place of our usual review meeting, and that will be our primary place for these discussions. The intention is to create a space where we can grapple over the direction of the church and these matters. It’s not for the leadership only. It’s not for potential elders only. Or deacons. No one excluded. But whoever comes will have to be invested in the benefit of the church - partly because we’ll be meeting at dawn on Thursday mornings for an hour. Of course, we will target people we believe need to be there. But I’m hoping even before that, someone will say to me before I speak to them, “I know I need to be there”. It will be a sacrifice. But that is fitting for God’s Kingdom in this place. So please, speak to me.

# Titus - An overview of eldership

Please turn to the letter Paul wrote to his assistant Titus. We need to remind ourselves of the point of eldership.

* 1:1-3 - The apostle’s purpose: for faith and knowledge leading to godliness
* 1:5(-8) - appointing elders
* 1:9 - Elder purpose
* 2:1 - Titus, like an elder, though here, to do the same  
  (Paul also an “elder” 1 Pet 5)
  + The purpose again: doctrine towards godliness (2:11-14)
* 2:15 Authority. For this cause.
  + 3:9 not argumentative, high-mindedness. Division and strife is out.
* 3:1-7 = we do this because of the gospel, of grace, which is our Life and Hope.
  + If this is compromised, souls are compromised. [Illus: Plett BS]

# More than one elder?

* You have already appointed one elder (either 7 years ago by voting, or when you became a member)
* You have also appointed 4 deacons.
* Together the 5 of us make up the leadership of the church,
* Why do we need more than one elder?
  + (I think we agree that plurality is important. But we have that in the existing team, and the existing team works well. Why create 2 teams?
  + The reasons for plurality are Helping with the Load, Substituting each others’ weaknesses, and having accountability - but we have these to a degree already.)
* Practically:
  + Leading a church is too much for the existing team to handle. When Ron stepped back from the diaconate, he suggested I take the chairmanship of the deacons’ meetings - which I did, and, having then the responsibility of setting the agenda, and knowing that we are moving towards eldership, I divided the agenda into Deacon and Elder sections. (for example, under Diaconate: 2 month event list and schedule, like Jews 4 Jesus, Easter weekend, Stavropolous visit, worship leading, preaching roster, shut-in visitation and leave; Finance reports and budgeting and donations to visiting missionaries and churches in need; Church property - moving the projector, improving sound, spraying the weeds, and fixing damp; Ministry forums - keeping tabs on hospital ministry, arranging ePap portions for needy people; Arranging plaques on the wall of remembrance; Discussing arrangements around this years holiday club, and church getaway to deHoek. Under Eldership, are listed members and discipleship, Bible studies, leadership develpoment, church partnership with Luxolo and Holy Ghost Fire Ministries. The School of Theology. The 1 word project. Strategic thinking and talking about spiritual temperature of the People. Difficult people issues. (I also introduced a rotating chairman of the meeting so that each one can develop their leadership) The meetings are now at least 2 hours long. Recently, we closed after 2.5 hours, because we couldn’t afford longer - but we hardly got to section 2, the spiritual oversight of the church. Often section 2 goes hungry. And let me say, we meet every week for informal review - This isn’t about meetings. It’s about the diversity of ministry that happens in this church. Praise the Lord, the Builder of it!
  + Roles in the church, of which eldership is one, are given to enable the fully flexing ministry of the Body.

# Expand your thinking

* NT evidence:
  + 2 “offices” - official roles. Elder and Deacon. (Php 1:1-2)
  + But, the WORK of the church was FAR MORE than 2 official roles! The mention of vibrant individuals far outweighs mention of offices.
* I raise this because: all this talk of elders and deacons may bore you or offend you (irrelevant, or “what about my ministry? Why isn’t it significant in the church?”).
* Turn over to the letter to Philemon. Which roles are these people:
  + 1:1, 2, 10, 23-24. Philipp 4:1, ROm 16:1 - One can only guess. But the testimony is - there was ONE BODY. their work for the Lord was certainly not determined by whether they had an office or not.
* Therefore, Official Roles say ZERO about the significance or importance of the ministry being done. (ANd our Indaba has proven that, hasn’t it?). There are teachers who teach well and are not elders. There are people who care well who are not deacons. You don’t have to be an elder or deacon to VALIDATE you or your ministry. Eph 4:12 - Every member a minister.

# Elders, Deacons and More

* 2 wrong understandings and 1 right of church governance
  + Elders are King (3 John 1:9 Diotrephes, who loves to be first) - to make sure what happened was what he wanted.
  + Congregation is King (Ex 16:2 In the desert, the whole congregation grumbled against Moses and Aaron)-to get them to do what they wanted
  + Jesus is King (Col 1:18), and the Church is His Body, gifted by the decision of the Holy Spirit - placed and equipped to serve the entire Body. Elders, Deacons, Champions, and every other member - all are servant-saints.
  + Particular distinctions in role:
    - Elders: not the only ministry leaders, teachers, counsellors, but they are installed to exercise that over the entire congregation. Take the can for what happens, exercise authority of leading, teaching, rebuking, disciplining, training, counselling. Strauch: “Household Stewards”.
    - Deacons: (women too!) not the only ones who help organise the church and its events, but they understand the church needs committed servants on call to keep the essential church functioning - a 2 year term.
    - Neither elder nor deacon - Champion - indicating that their ministry is run in a more personal capacity, project based. Under the oversight of eldership of course, but not involving the whole church.
    - And what else? Well I would refer again to the letter to Philemon. We don’t need offices to validate our work. But we DO need to know, there is a guaranteed, committed eldership ensuring the church is in God’s will, and we DO need a diaconate of people saying, “You can count on me - I’m available to help with such and such vital aspect of KBC’s existence.”

# The Focus now

* Strengthening our eldership and diaconate.