

HOW ARE WE SHEPHERDED? NEW CHURCHES, GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP – Summary 20 September 2022

Disclaimer: This document contains a summary of the discussions held by participants in attendance at an open forum. The opinions, beliefs, views and comments contained herein are solely those of individuals and may not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs, views or policies of New Heart Baptist Church, Queensland Baptist, or any of its members, leadership or affiliates.

Conversations have been anonymised and categorised for conciseness.

- What defines a church (when does a gathering become a ‘church’)
 - Maybe it is when the founder/s can leave without the group disbanding
 - There are indicators of self-sufficiency (giving, prayer, caring for one another, sharing the Word and growing in their walk (personally and collectively), etc)
 - How was the first church defined?
- We need to define the stages of autonomy for new congregations (from start-up to self-sufficient church), in particular:
 - Leadership
 - Decision making, and
 - Finances
 - As these can be fiction points if not clearly defined from the beginning
 - Need to form pathways whereby self-sufficient plants can stay a part of the mother church (if desired), etc
- There is a large variety of congregational maturity levels (Rochedale/Balmoral/Logan/Karenni), the challenge is to form a constitution that can adequately embrace and nurture this and not stifle growth
- Elders’ role is to keep the spiritual integrity of the church
- Elders should be chosen on spiritual maturity, not gender or age
 - Candidates should only be excluded on moral grounds
- The title of Elder or Overseer
 - Elder is a nicer term, more nurturing
 - Overseer sounds controlling, although perhaps more accurately describes their role
- Appointment process of Pastors and Elders should be Constitutionalised.
- Constitution currently states that size of eldership should be a minimum of 4 and maximum of 8 elders
 - How will this work as church grows (current statement in constitution may be too restrictive)?
- Should congregations have their own set of Elders?
 - Yes
 - People that are responsible for the start-up should be their Elders
 - Is an assembly of Elders a feasible model, then?
 - Yes.
 - [Suggestion] each congregation should have their own Elders and collectively (or subset, with all congregations represented) guide NHBC as a whole

- The 'assembly' must meet regularly to avoid individual congregations from drifting from the others – to stay in-step as 'one' church
- Elders (a.k.a. Leadership Team) should not move forward in a decision without unity [general positivity towards this process]
 - This is how it has been our experience
 - Is this able to be Constitutionalised?
- How to get more Elders
 - People decline, mostly due to perceived time commitment
 - Maybe we need teaching on Eldership, to encourage people to aspire to this role
- Who employs Pastors? 2 entities – salary paying [NHBC] and appointers [NHBC Partners]
- The issue of having *Pastor-Elders* is the thought that there is too much power within a single role
 - In Acts, Paul never mentions Pastors, only Deacons and Elders
 - Not all Pastors should be Elders. They should still be invited.
 - Is money a factor?
- Partnership in a multi-congregational church
 - Partnership should be to NHBC, not just their 'home' congregation
 - However, their application should be accepted/ratified by their 'home' leadership (Elders/Pastors) and not require the 'assembly of Elders' to vote/accept [as is suggested by the wording of the current constitution]
- Apparently, the Australian constitution does not make reference to the Prime Minister, so there must be a way to form the constitution that is not overly prescriptive
 - The constitution itself should **not** be altered overly frequently
 - [Suggestion] Constitutional technicalities may be broken into supporting docs to achieve this
- Section 1.5 of current Constitution needs to be cleaned up/clarified/updated