



ELDERS OF VERTICAL CHURCH CODE OF CONDUCT

The elders of Vertical Church are called to shepherd God's people together in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. These Codes of Conduct exist to promote unity, humility, trust, accountability, and faithful leadership among the elder team.

These Codes do not replace Scripture but seek to help us faithfully apply its principles in our service together. They are intended to cultivate a culture of faithful eldership and shall always be interpreted in light of Scripture, the good of the church, and the responsibilities of the elder office.

Relating to One Another:

1. Trust and Assumption of Good Intent

Because we know and affirm the character of our fellow elders, we shall begin with the assumption that all elders are acting in good faith unless credible evidence demonstrates otherwise. We recognize that misunderstandings occur and that motives are often difficult to discern. We recognize that faithful men may remember conversations differently, weigh evidence differently, or reach different conclusions without acting dishonestly. We will be slow to assign motives and quick to seek clarification.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13

Commitment: *We will seek understanding before judgment, ask questions before drawing conclusions, and avoid assuming hidden motives without evidence.*

2. Speaking About One Another

Elders shall speak truthfully, fairly, and charitably about fellow elders, staff members, and church members. Concerns about another elder should be addressed directly with that elder before being discussed with others, unless immediate reporting is reasonably necessary to protect another person, preserve evidence, obtain appropriate counsel, or comply with law.

Scripture: Matthew 18:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 16:28

Commitment: *We will not gossip, misrepresent another person's words or actions, or use informal conversations to undermine trust.*

3. Commitment to Peace and Reconciliation

The elder team shall be committed to pursuing peace, reconciliation, and restoration whenever conflict arises. We recognize that correction is intended to restore brothers,



not destroy them.

Scripture: Luke 17:3-4; Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:1-3

Commitment: *We will make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, forgive as we have been forgiven, and pursue reconciliation whenever possible*

4. Escalation and Outside Counsel

The elders recognize that some conflicts cannot be resolved solely through internal discussion. When disagreement becomes entrenched, trust has significantly deteriorated, or progress toward reconciliation has stalled, the elder team may, by the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the sitting elders eligible to vote, seek outside counsel, mediation, or assistance from trusted ministry partners. Before any outside engagement begins, the elder team shall define its scope, authority, confidentiality, expected role, and anticipated outcome. The selection of the outside counselor, mediator, or ministry partner shall likewise require the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the sitting elders eligible to vote.

Scripture: Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 11:14; James 3:17

Commitment: *We will not allow pride, fear, or delay to prevent us from seeking wise counsel when it is needed. We will view outside counsel as a gift of God's wisdom rather than a threat to the work already completed.*

5. Restoration as the Goal of Correction

The purpose of correction, rebuke, and accountability is ultimately restoration. The elder team shall seek the spiritual good of one another and remember that discipline is intended to restore brothers in Christ rather than merely expose faults.

Scripture: Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 2:7-8; Luke 17:3-4

Commitment: *We will pursue repentance, forgiveness, restoration, and renewed trust whenever possible. We will not allow correction to become condemnation or accountability to become prosecution.*

Relating to the Work:

6. Christ Is the Head of the Church

The elder team exists to serve Jesus Christ and shepherd His church. No elder serves for personal influence, preference, or agenda. We submit ourselves first to Christ, His Word, and



His mission. Jesus has delegated authority to the plurality of elders, therefore no individual elder possesses independent governing authority apart from the elder board unless authority has been specifically delegated.

Scripture: Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:2-4; Ephesians 4:15-16

Commitment: *We will seek the glory of Christ above personal preference, reputation, or position.*

7. Deliberation and Board Unity

While elders may build friendships and discuss ministry outside formal meetings, substantive discussions regarding church governance, accusations, discipline, personnel matters, or major decisions should occur in properly convened elder meetings where all elders have the opportunity to participate. Similarly, no elder shall intentionally withhold material information from the elder team that is necessary for the faithful discharge of the board's responsibilities.

No elder shall intentionally seek to build consensus, solicit commitments, or secure votes outside properly convened elder meetings on matters reserved to the elder board. This provision does not prohibit informal conversation, prayer, fact gathering, or consultation among elders, provided such interactions are not used to create a parallel decision-making process, predetermine the board's actions, or exclude an elder from matters in which he is entitled to participate.

Scripture: Acts 15:6; Proverbs 11:14

Commitment: *We will avoid factions, share material information faithfully, and ensure that major decisions are considered by the full elder team rather than predetermined through private conversations.*

8. Handling Disagreement

Disagreement is not failure. Elders are encouraged to express concerns, reservations, and differing perspectives honestly and respectfully. Healthy disagreement strengthens a team when handled with humility and love.

Scripture: Proverbs 27:17; Ephesians 4:2-3; Romans 12:10

Commitment: *We will seek understanding, listen carefully, and honor one another in disagreement.*

9. Decision-Making and Unity



The elder team shall strive to reach unanimous agreement on significant decisions whenever reasonably possible. Healthy disagreement is encouraged during deliberation, but the goal is unity rather than simply obtaining enough votes to proceed. If an elder believes supporting a decision would violate his understanding of Scripture or conscience, he should raise those concerns fully within the elder room and not undermine the decision afterward.

An elder who cannot, in good conscience, support a proposed decision shall communicate those concerns to the elder team before the decision is finalized so that the team may prayerfully consider whether additional discussion, delay, or outside counsel is warranted. If, after those efforts, the elder remains persuaded that he cannot faithfully support the decision without violating Scripture or conscience, he should voluntarily resign from the elder team rather than continue in a role that requires unified spiritual leadership. Once a decision has been prayerfully reached, each elder commits to supporting it publicly unless doing so would require him to violate Scripture.

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-4; Romans 15:5-6

Commitment: *We will pursue unity without demanding uniformity and will not undermine elder decisions outside the elder room.*

10. Confidentiality

Elders are entrusted with sensitive information regarding members, staff, counseling matters, finances, and discipline. Confidential information shall not be shared outside authorized contexts, such as when disclosure is reasonably necessary to comply with law, protect a person from harm, obtain legal or professional advice, report misconduct to appropriate authorities, or carry out a process authorized by the elder team.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 25:9-10

Commitment: *We will guard confidential information and refuse to use private information to gain influence or support.*

11. Attendance and Participation

Elders are expected to faithfully participate in the meetings and life of the elder team. The work of the elder team includes both the collective work of the plurality and responsibilities delegated to individual elders. No elder shall be intentionally excluded from meetings, deliberations, or communications concerning matters that properly belong to the work of the plurality except in accordance with the discipline process established in Section 15. Outside of that process, every elder retains both the right and responsibility to participate fully in the



work of the elder team.

At the same time, individual elders should respect responsibilities that have been delegated to other elders. No elder shall intrude into another elder's delegated responsibilities except when requested, authorized by the elder team, or when necessary to fulfill the elder team's collective responsibility for the doctrine, governance, discipline, spiritual health, or welfare of the church.

An elder may voluntarily excuse himself from meetings or responsibilities because of vacation, illness, family obligations, work commitments, or other legitimate circumstances. An elder who is the subject of a formal discipline process shall recuse himself as provided in Section 15. Recusal based upon conflicts of interest or questions regarding impartiality shall be governed by Section 16. Any recusal or voluntary absence from deliberation or voting shall be reflected in the meeting minutes.

Scripture: Hebrews 10:24-25; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Commitment: *We will faithfully participate in the work of the elder team, ensure every elder has the opportunity to contribute, and recuse ourselves when required by these Codes.*

12. Documentation and Stewardship

Major elder decisions shall be documented through approved meeting minutes. Minutes should identify matters considered, decisions reached, voting or agreement levels where material, recusals, and assigned action items, without unnecessarily recording confidential pastoral details. Significant decisions, recommendations, and action items should be preserved to promote clarity and accountability.

Scripture: Habakkuk 2:2; 1 Corinthians 14:40

Commitment: *We will conduct church business decently, orderly, and transparently with proper accountability.*

13. Speaking with One Voice

The elder team is called to lead the church with unity, clarity, and mutual support. While healthy disagreement is encouraged during prayerful deliberation, once the elder team has reached a decision, each elder should seek to uphold and faithfully communicate that decision as a united body. Speaking with one voice does not require uniformity of thought but reflects a shared commitment to steward the church's trust, preserve its unity, and lead with humility and mutual respect.



Scripture: Romans 15:5-6; Philippians 2:2; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 1:10

Commitment: We will support one another, communicate consistently as a unified elder team, and seek to strengthen the church's confidence in its leaders through our shared commitment to Christ, one another, and the decisions of the elder team.

14. Governance and Delegation

The elder team is responsible for the spiritual oversight, doctrine, governance, and shepherding of the church. While elders retain ultimate responsibility for the ministry of the church, they should wisely delegate appropriate operational, administrative, and ministry responsibilities to qualified staff, individual elders, and ministry leaders.

The scope of delegated authority shall be determined by the elder team. Matters that primarily concern the routine administration of delegated ministries should ordinarily remain with those to whom responsibility has been entrusted. However, matters that materially affect the doctrine, spiritual health, governance, discipline, unity, legal obligations, or long-term direction of the church remain the responsibility of the elder team and should be brought before the elders for prayer, deliberation, and oversight.

Elders should avoid unnecessary involvement in day-to-day operations so they may devote themselves to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the faithful oversight of God's people.

Scripture: Acts 6:2-4; Exodus 18:17-23; Ephesians 4:11-13; Titus 1:5

Commitment: We will faithfully govern and shepherd the church while empowering qualified leaders to carry out the work of ministry, recognizing that healthy delegation strengthens both the church and its leaders.

Relating to Times of Difficulties:

15. Discipline, Removal, and Restoration

When concerns arise that an elder has violated Scripture, the biblical qualifications for eldership, or these Codes of Conduct, the elder team shall pursue the matter with truth, humility, impartiality, and a sincere desire for restoration. Throughout this process, the elder team shall act without favoritism or prejudice, seeking only the truth under the authority of Scripture. The purpose of discipline is to honor Christ, protect His church, restore a brother whenever possible, and preserve confidence in the church's leadership.

Not every violation requires formal discipline. Minor or first-time concerns should be



addressed through direct correction, pastoral conversation, or informal accountability. The formal process below is intended for serious, repeated, unresolved, or potentially disqualifying conduct.

Whenever reasonably appropriate, concerns should first be addressed directly with the elder involved in a spirit consistent with Matthew 18:15, seeking clarification, repentance, reconciliation, or mutual understanding before invoking the formal discipline process. If the concern remains unresolved, appears to involve serious or potentially disqualifying misconduct, or if direct confrontation would be inappropriate because of the nature of the allegation, concerns may be presented to the elder team for consideration. The elder team shall then determine whether a preliminary inquiry is warranted.

The discipline process shall proceed as follows:

A. Preliminary Inquiry. One or more disinterested lay elders shall be designated by the elder team to conduct a preliminary inquiry. If the elder team cannot identify sufficiently impartial persons, it should seek qualified outside assistance.

B. Presentation of Charges. Formal charges shall ordinarily be supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses consistent with 1 Timothy 5:19. Where misconduct inherently occurs in private, such as abuse of authority, sexual misconduct, financial misconduct, or similar offenses, credible corroborating evidence may satisfy this requirement. Allegations shall be investigated carefully before formal charges are presented.

C. Formal Notice. If formal charges are warranted, they shall be presented to the elder in writing. The elder shall receive the allegations, the supporting evidence, and an opportunity to begin responding.

D. Prayer and Reflection. Ordinarily, a minimum two-week period shall follow the presentation of formal charges to allow for prayer, investigation, and careful consideration by all involved. During this period, the elder shall recuse himself from participating in elder deliberations and the exercise of spiritual authority. The elder team shall avoid unnecessary discussion, lobbying, or gossip regarding the matter. If the misconduct is publicly known, presents an ongoing risk to others, or is otherwise verified and requires immediate action, the elder team may shorten or waive this period.

E. Elder Deliberation. Following the period of prayer and reflection, the elder team may meet as often as necessary to discuss the matter. No disciplinary action shall be taken unless the elder team is persuaded that the allegations are more likely true than not, based upon credible evidence evaluated fairly and impartially. No final decision shall be made until the elder has been given a full opportunity to meet with the elder team, answer questions, and respond to the charges.



F. Determination. After the elder has been heard, he shall recuse himself from deliberation and voting. The remaining elders shall prayerfully determine the appropriate course of action. Removal from the elder team shall require the unanimous vote of the remaining elders. Only elders eligible to participate and not recused for conflict of interest shall be counted for purposes of the voting threshold.

Removal from the Vertical Church elder team under these Codes of Conduct is distinct from biblical disqualification from eldership. An elder may be removed from this elder team while questions regarding future ministry, restoration, or qualification for eldership are addressed separately through biblical and pastoral discernment.

Whenever appropriate, the elder team may establish a plan for repentance, accountability, counseling, and restoration. Trusted outside biblical counselors or ministry partners may be invited to assist in the process. Resignation after formal charges have been presented shall not automatically terminate the discipline process if continuing the process is necessary for the protection of the church or the faithful discharge of the elders' responsibilities.

When an elder is removed because of persistent or disqualifying sin, the elder team shall communicate with the congregation truthfully, with unity, and with sufficient transparency to preserve trust while avoiding unnecessary disclosure of private matters.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:19-21; Galatians 6:1; James 3:17; Proverbs 11:14; 1 Peter 5:2-3

Commitment: *We will pursue truth without partiality, discipline with humility, restoration with hope, and the protection of Christ's church above personal preference or reputation.*

16. Conflicts of Interest and Recusal

The elders recognize that faithful leadership requires impartiality. Whenever an elder has a personal, financial, familial, employment, counseling, or other relationship that could reasonably impair his objectivity or create the appearance of partiality, he should voluntarily disclose the conflict to the elder team and recuse himself from deliberation and voting on that matter. The remaining elders may determine, after discussion, whether recusal is appropriate in circumstances where a conflict is uncertain.

Recusal is intended to protect both the integrity of the elder team's decisions and the reputation of the elder involved. It is not a disciplinary action, nor should it be interpreted as an admission of wrongdoing.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 16:19; Proverbs 24:23; James 2:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:21

Commitment: *We will seek to exercise our responsibilities impartially, disclose conflicts*



honestly, and willingly step aside when our objectivity may reasonably be questioned so that the decisions of the elder team remain above reproach.

17. Amendment of These Codes

These Codes of Conduct are intended to provide a stable framework for the healthy functioning of the elder team while recognizing that no human document is perfect. As the church grows and circumstances change, the elder team may determine that revisions are necessary to better reflect biblical wisdom and faithful governance.

These Codes may be amended only by the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the sitting elders at a duly convened elder meeting. Proposed amendments should be distributed to the elder team in advance to allow adequate time for prayer, study, and discussion before any vote is taken.

No amendment to these Codes may contradict Scripture, the Articles of Faith, or the Bylaws of Vertical Church.

Scripture: Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 11:14; 1 Corinthians 14:40

Commitment: *We will preserve the stability of these Codes while remaining humble enough to improve them as the Lord grants greater wisdom and experience.*

Final Covenant

Recognizing our own weakness and dependence upon Christ, we commit ourselves to these principles not as perfect men, but as forgiven sinners seeking to shepherd God's church faithfully. We recognize that no written rule can replace the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, and we therefore depend upon God's grace to live faithfully according to these commitments. By God's grace, we will pursue humility, unity, truth, courage, and love as we serve together for the glory of Christ and the good of His church.