



Vine Church Announcement

Explaining the new Elders and Pastoral Leadership Team

Sunday 27th February 2022

We are celebrating next week on Sunday 6th March 2022, when we will be introducing new Elders to form a new Pastoral Leadership team.

The Vine church is currently led by Senior Pastors Aaron and Lynsey Dowds with Aaron and Alan Kelly acting as the Elders. They are supported by our Founding Pastors Jimmy and Elma Dowds.

We have been preparing to extend the eldership for some time, working with a number of our key ministry leaders to prepare them to take on this role. We now feel the time is right to take this step, in line with the example we see set by the early church to introduce new Elders and as laid out in Titus 1.

Historically, as a church we have been led by male elders supported by their wives. The role of “Elder's wife” was informal but significant in the influence and honour it held. Going forward we are introducing women formally into the Eldership and this means the new Pastoral Leadership Team will now be:

Aaron and Lynsey Dowds – Senior Pastors
Alan and Sally Kelly - Elders
Tim and Mel Thomson - Elders
Stuart and Gill Hannah - Elders

Jimmy and Elma Dowds will continue as they have always done as Founding Pastors of the Vine Church supporting the Pastoral Leadership team and church.

These couples have been invited to become Elders for a number of reasons following much prayer, fasting and listening to God. We love and respect each couple and value their friendship deeply. Each couple has a faithful and fruitful marriage, are spiritually mature, experienced as leaders in the Vine Church and also in the business world. Each one has proven faithful in the areas of service they have given to the church over many years. And as far as anyone can, each person fulfils the requirements of a church elder as described in the New Testament.

None of us are perfect but each of us continues to grow in our relationship with God and in spiritual maturity. However, all of us agree that these wonderful and special couples have a

heart and love for the people of God in our church and a heart and passion to reach those of our city and nation with the gospel.



What is an elder?

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you...shepherd [pastor] the flock of God. ”
1 Peter 5:1a,2a

Elders shepherd or pastor, oversee, lead, and care for the local church. The task of shepherding the local church is given to elders. ¹

“As keepers of sheep, New Testament elders are to protect, feed, lead, and care for the flock’s many practical needs.” ²

In biblical language, to shepherd a nation or any group of people means to lead or to govern. ³ Elders lead the local church.

“Let the elders who rule [lead, direct, manage] well be considered worthy of double honour”
1 Tim. 5:17a

Elders, then, lead, direct, govern, manage, and care for the flock of God. Elders are stewards of God’s household, the local church. ⁴ Elders are also called “overseers,” which signifies that they supervise and manage the church.⁵ Elders lead the local church but they have to do

¹ 1Act 20:28 (ESV) “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.”

1Pe 5:1-2 (ESV) “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: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;”

² Strauch, Alexander. Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership (p. 14). Lewis & Roth Publishers. Kindle Edition.

³ 2 Sam. 5:2; Ps. 78:71,72

⁴ Tit 1:7 (ESV) ““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,”

⁵ “Elders are also called “overseers,” which signifies that they supervise and manage the church. Peter uses the verb form of overseer when he exhorts the elders: “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight” (1 Peter 5:1a,2a). In this instance, Peter combines the concepts of shepherding and overseeing when he exhorts the elders to do their duty. Hence we can speak of the elders’ overall function as the pastoral oversight of the local church.”



so with the understanding they need the help of other leaders (referred to as deacons or servants in the New Testament). We also believe in every-member ministry so the care of the church is not the sole responsibility of the elders but all of its members.⁶ Although the elders lead and are officially responsible for the spiritual oversight of the whole church, they are not the total ministry of the church. They are not the ministers. Ministry is the work of the whole church. Ministry is not the work of one person or even one group of people.

Can women be elders?

This has been an area of disagreement in the church across the earth for many years and strong arguments exist on both sides and strong opinions are held. However, our current elders and founding Pastors Jimmy and Elma are in agreement that women have been, should be and will be encouraged, trained and empowered at all levels of leadership. We welcome participation of women in leadership in all areas of the Vine Church including as elders. We believe the Bible gives us good and strong teaching why women can be elders.⁷

Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (p. 22). Lewis & Roth Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁶ “We must, however, balance what we have been saying about the elders’ ministry with the parallel truth of every member ministry. Although the elders lead and are officially responsible for the spiritual oversight of the whole church, they are not the total ministry of the church. They are not the ministers. Ministry is the work of the whole church. Ministry is not the work of one person or even one group of people.

The local church is not only a flock; it is also a body of Spirit-gifted, royal priests who minister to the Lord and His people. Thus, the care of the local body is not the sole responsibility of the elders, but of all the members. Each member of Christ’s body is equipped by the Spirit to minister to the needs of others. The elders are dependent upon the gifts and skills of others (some of whom may be more gifted than any of the elders in certain areas of ministry) for the overall care of the local church. Biblical elders do not want to control a passive congregation. They desire to lead an active, alive, every-member-ministering church.

Furthermore, the deacons are the church’s ministers of mercy. Like the elders, they are to attend to the people’s many practical care needs (Acts 6:1-6). So the elders need to delegate to the deacons many of the practical mercy needs of the congregation. Like the apostles, the church elders must remember that although they are involved in ministering to practical care needs, their priorities must always be “prayer, and...the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).”

Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (p. 26). Lewis & Roth Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁷ For an example view the Vineyard group of churches’ statement: “Women are serving in growing numbers as leaders in Vineyard churches. In some cases, women serve as the sole senior pastor of a church. In others, husbands and wives are teaming together to share the role of senior pastor. Women also serve as staff pastors, ministry leaders, volunteers, elders, small group leaders, and church board members. Women serve trans-locally as area and regional leaders who care



We are in agreement that this is the right decision for us as the Vine Church to build a strong leadership platform for our future.

What will the elders do?

The elders will fulfil the role as described above. We will meet fortnightly as a Pastoral Leadership Team where we will be together, pray together, learn together, discuss together and lead together.

We will be responsible for setting out the vision and direction of the church and how to lead the church towards greater health and growth.

All elders have the requirement to be able to teach. However, that does not mean every elder will necessarily teach and preach from a platform on a Sunday.⁸ Teaching can take many forms such as teaching in small groups, children's or youth ministry or in one-to-one discussions with others. As elders we will continue to grow and learn together to better equip us to teach and train others as well.

Why Now?

The world and the church have been through a massive challenge with Covid19 pandemic. As an independent, local Christian church in Dunfermline for about 50 years we have put down strong roots in the community. We believe that as we come out of Covid and build on our history God is calling us to build a generation of believers, who are growing in their faith in God through a strong personal relationship with Jesus.

for groups of pastors within our movement and as members of the executive team that makes up our National Board. There are no areas of ministry or levels of leadership closed to women in the Vineyard. In this booklet, we explore the Vineyard's commitment to gift-based leadership, how we've arrived at this commitment, and what it means for Vineyard men and women as we serve together in the church."

<https://d1h8uvf6sd4tvp.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/20160520115159/WomenInLeadership1.pdf>
<https://vineyardusa.org/library/one-in-christ-men-women-together-in-ministry/>

⁸ "...all New Testament elders were required to be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). In the list of elder qualifications in his letter to Titus, Paul states, "[the elder must hold] fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9; italics added)... This ministry does not necessarily have to be exercised from the platform and the centre of gravity of the gifts of one elder may be towards teaching while that of another may be towards pastoring. But all need a sound grasp of the Faith and the ability to teach and instruct in small groups and one-to-one in the pastoral situation."

Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (p. 21). Lewis & Roth Publishers. Kindle Edition.



We want to be able to meet people's need for love and purpose and community which comes through salvation in Jesus. God has blessed us with a fantastic building which is a great

blessing to us as a church but also to the community we are called to love. We want to love, serve and impact the local community and make a real difference in the city of Dunfermline. The step to introduce new elders is a significant step to lay a strong foundation of biblical leadership in our church. This will allow us to be the church He has called us to be so we can see God move in our lives, families and hopefully everyone who comes into contact with us.