

West-Ark Church of Christ Elders' Covenant of Conduct

I. Shepherding and Spiritual Leadership

1. The primary responsibility of the West-Ark elders is the spiritual shepherding of the flock.
 - We are dedicated to the ministry of the word and prayer. (Acts 6; Hebrews 13:7; Titus 1:7)
 - We are committed to being shepherds, mentors, and equippers (1 Pet. 5:1-7; Titus 2:11-15; Eph. 4:11-13)
 - Our priority is to the spiritual health of the church family. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) consoling those in suffering, 2) teaching the faith, 3) promoting unity and facilitating reconciliation, 4) equipping the saints for ministry.
2. To help all members grow as disciples we encourage the congregation as a whole to:
 - Daily focus on Jesus and the cross.
 - Nurture spiritual growth in order to transform all into God's holiness.
 - Increase in love and godly behavior.
 - Recognize our spiritual gifts and use them to glorify God.
 - Proclaim a biblical worldview that is obedient to Christ.
3. In order to concentrate on shepherding, the elders will use task groups and staff (deacons, ministers, specially qualified members) to do all that is possible involving administration, church management, and leadership of specific ministries.
 - With all assigned tasks goes the authority needed to accomplish the responsibility.
 - We will work to establish trust in the assigned groups to make good decisions.

II. Working Together as an Eldership

1. We consider that every elder, regardless of how long he may have served, is of equal status as a shepherd of this church. There are no junior or senior elders.
 - From the first day one serves as an elder, he has full co-responsibility with the other elders for the oversight of this church.
 - We believe each elder is under the spiritual care and oversight of the other elders.
2. When making a decision as a group we follow these principles:
 - Everyone's viewpoint will be heard.
 - At least one more than half of the elders currently serving are required to be present in order to have a quorum for making decisions for the group.
 - A majority vote of those present is considered to have approved or disapproved a motion.
 - Anyone not present at a meeting is considered to have voted with the majority on any motion.
 - A chairman is selected by rotation from among the administrative group of elders and serves a three month term.

3. All elders agree to support the decision of the group as if the vote had been unanimous.
 - We will not talk to anyone outside the meeting about how individuals voted on any issue.
 - We will not communicate with others in any manner so as to represent our personal point of view as being that of the West-Ark elders. Exceptions are:
 - 1) When directed by the elders to communicate a message on their behalf.
 - 2) When repeating a decision of the elders which has previously been made public.
4. Should a matter be decided by the group that an individual elder, for conscience's sake, cannot support, he has three alternatives:
 - 1) He can ask for the matter to be reconsidered, providing him with more time to make his point clearer.
 - 2) He can request assistance from the elders via prayer, study, coaching, or even counseling in order to manage his own anxiety appropriately.
 - 3) He can resign from his role as an elder if the above does not remedy the situation and the majority decision is sustained.
5. At all times confidentiality must be respected.
 - This means there will be many things considered by the elders (and often ministers included) which are not to be discussed with others, including: our wives, family members, or closest friends.

III. Communication, Conflict, and Reconciliation

1. We pledge to listen to any member who wishes to express his or her opinions about the life and ministry of the congregation.
 - We encourage open dialogue among members, and in matters of conflict or disagreement we hold to the principles taught by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20
 - We will always encourage members to share their opinions directly with other elders, ministers, deacons, ministry leaders and other members. This is especially the case when the opinion/concern involves another elder, minister, deacon, ministry leader, or member.
2. When members of the congregation express an opinion to an elder, the elder shall ask, *"What would you like me to do with this information?"*
 - If the member desires to have a meeting with the elders, the time and date will be arranged through the chairman of the elders for the month.
 - If the member does not wish to appear in person, the elder shall ask the member for permission to use their name in reporting. If permission is not given, the elder shall say, *"I'm sorry but I will not be able to repeat this to the eldership since we do not deal with anonymous letters or comments."*
 - If permission is given, the elder shall report the information / opinion to the eldership and use the member's name.
3. Opinions may be shared in writing with the elders and shall be handled in the manner mentioned above only if the letter or statement is signed.
 - Anonymous letters will not be read or discussed.