

Leadership @ OEC

At OEC we are committed to following the teaching, example and mission of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. Therefore our view and practice of 'Leadership' seeks to honour Jesus so that those we lead will also honour and follow him.

The history of how God works in our world as recorded in the Bible shows us that God works through leaders that he raises up, empowers and appoints. Examples include Moses, the judges, King David, Jeremiah and the Apostles.

Biblical leadership is consistently characterised by the metaphor of a shepherd leading his sheep. God is described as a shepherd (Gen. 49:24; Rev. 7:17); Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd (John 10). New Testament leaders are also called shepherds but they are effectively overseers or under-shepherds answerable for their care of the chief shepherd's flock (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Essential humility

Built into the biblical model of leadership is an essential humility. God's leaders are drawn from His flock. Kings, prophets, church leaders and members alike are all God's sheep—there are no exceptions (Ps. 100). This demands humility and tempers ambition. Even the kings of Israel were not to raise their perception of themselves above that of their brothers (Deut. 17:18-20). Peter reminds church leaders that God is opposed to the proud and gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5).

Servant leadership

However, humility does not exempt God's appointed leaders from taking the responsibility of leadership. Leadership among God's people has always assumed God-given authority and responsibility but it must be practiced by following Jesus' example. The Gospel of John tells us that when Jesus understood that the Father had given him all authority he then served his disciples by performing the most menial and humiliating of tasks. Jesus then made the point that he expected his example to be followed by all those who follow him and lead his people (John 13:1-20).

Leadership is a relationship centred on love

There are two essential partners in leadership—*LEADERS* and *FOLLOWERS*. By definition one does not exist without the other. This is often forgotten in secular leadership, where the focus is almost entirely on the leader. This is not the case in the shepherd/sheep leadership dynamic. The sheep always look to the shepherd and the shepherd always looks to the sheep (Ps. 23; 145:15). Among God's people the bond of this dynamic relationship is neither self-interest nor bald responsibility, but love and devotion. A love and devotion of which the Lord himself is the source (1 John 4:7-12) and the Holy Spirit is the bond (Eph. 4:4-7).

All of the above provides the context for what the New Testament clearly teaches about church leaders—that they carry God-given authority (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17) with which they are to serve and for which they will give an account. The New Testament also teaches that church members, the flock of God, must submit to this leadership and make their leaders' task a joyful one (Heb. 13:17), that they must regard them highly in love and be at peace with them (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Qualification for leadership

God chooses leaders by demonstrating in them that they are his people. They first and foremost have been reborn through faith and repentance in Christ and then through the Spirit produce the fruit of the Spirit in godly character and Christian maturity. This is the fundamental requirement for leaders of every group and ministry at OEC.

God has always led his people through his word so those who oversee the church must be able to teach and lead from God's word. As it is God's household that is being led (1 Tim. 3:14-15), God requires that his people be led by men as he first ordained in Genesis (1 Tim. 3:1-13; 2:11-15; 1 Cor. 11:1-3; 14:33-35). Importantly, this does not mean that women do not have critical ministry leadership roles in the church (see the paper on 'Men, Women & Ministry at OEC').

We are committed to training up the next generation of leaders—this is what is required of us in the New Testament (2 Tim. 2:1-2). Leadership is demanding and so we commit to supporting our leaders in prayer.

The harsh reality for leaders is that they are also the focus of Satan's attack (1 Chron. 21; Luke 22:31). Through sin, leaders can be disqualified from their leadership roles. At OEC we commit to helping any leader who falls into sin by treating them the way Jesus recommended in Matthew 18:15-20 and with the humility Paul advocates in Galatians 6:1-3: *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ."*

In cases where the leader has betrayed the trust put in them and dishonoured the name of Jesus or of OEC, he or she will be required to step down for an appropriate period. In all cases we commit to both correcting and loving people through the particular issues at hand, and working to restore them to full fellowship and heal any damaged relationships.

The leadership structure of OEC

OEC's leadership structure is based on the biblical principles and qualifications for leadership discussed above. The OEC Constitution outlines it as follows:

- There are five Overseers. They comprise four men elected bi-annually by the partners of OEC and one man who is the senior minister. The other full-time male ministers join with the Overseers as equals in leading but not in authority. The Overseers are responsible for the oversight of all OEC ministries and business. They are able to invite others, whose lives exemplify the principles laid out in this paper, to help them in this task.
- The Church Council is elected annually by the partners of OEC and may comprise both men and women. The Church Councillors have the task of helping the Overseers in the management and implementation of the Overseers' decisions.
- Leaders of specific OEC ministries with appropriate gifts and whose lives exemplify the principles laid out in this paper are appointed to their positions

by the full-time ministers. They are accountable in those positions to the Overseers.

The leadership structure of OEC also includes a Board of Reference. This is a group of men who are not members of but are committed to OEC and are known for their maturity of Christian faith and character and have demonstrated a commitment to pursuing the OEC mission statement within their own ministry context. The Constitution identifies a number of matters on which the Board of Reference must be consulted, but the Overseers and any partner may consult the members of the Board of Reference on any matter to do with OEC, as he or she sees fit.

If you have any questions, ideas or comments related to Leadership at OEC, please contact a member of the OEC Church Council. Or you can:

- **Comment on a feedback card and place it in the giving box**
- **Email the OEC office: office@o church.org.au**
- **Ring the church office to arrange a chat on 6362 1025**