

At GCPC, we try to have as few committees as possible. We would rather folks serve with their gifts without always having to meet about it. That is why we have a list of about eighty Ministry & Task Coordinators, so folks know whom to contact if they want to help.

Nevertheless, some structure is both Biblical and helpful. We find such a simple structure laid out in Biblical texts such as Acts 6 and I Timothy 3, in which the duties of Elders and Deacons are described. At the same time, Elders and Deacons are not the only ones tasked with ministry in the early church. We find godly men and women right alongside them, using their gifts to assist these leaders for the good and growth of the Kingdom (Ephesians 4:7-16; Acts 18:26; Philippians 4:3).

Therefore, we find at least three principles at play in the New Testament. The first principle is that every member has spiritual gifts and should serve as God has equipped them for the good of the whole Body (I Corinthians 12). All believers are royal priests in God's household and we are all to teach and admonish one another with God's Word (I Peter 2:9; Colossians 3:16; I Samuel 25:23-35).

The second principle is that God calls certain men as official representatives of Christ, Elders and Deacons, whom we dub, "officers" (Acts 6:1-7; I Timothy 3:1-16; Titus 1:5-8). This does not mean they are more important or valuable than other members. But they are set aside by training and ordination to particularly represent Christ's rule and service in His church. As they serve the Church in this way, members are expected to follow their lead, provided it remains godly and Biblical (I Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:17).

This leads to a third principle, that leadership in the church parallels the Biblical, "complementarian" view of male headship in the home. While there is not room to elaborate here, in general this means that the church should reinforce husbands' roles to lovingly lead their wives, and wives' roles to respectfully follow their husbands as they mutually submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21-33; I Peter 3:1-7). Both are roles of service, reflecting Christ's gentle character - and yet they do differ.

Keeping these three principles in balance is a delicate but important task. We must celebrate every member's gifts, both men and women, and find ways for those gifts to express themselves with appropriate cooperation, honor and recognition for the good of the whole Body. At the same time, as the Church is God's household (I Timothy 3:15), we recognize that

every household is different, and each congregation has a degree of Christian freedom within the parameters of the Biblical model.

## **MINISTRY & LEADERSHIP BOARDS AT GCPC**

To maintain these Biblical principles and balance, Grace Covenant maintains five boards to conduct the ministry of the church and extend the Gospel. These are the Elders (Session) and Diaconate, as well as the Discipleship, Missions and Mercy Committee teams, described below.

Normally, we will receive nominations for each of these boards from the congregation each year. We receive nominations for new officers in the Spring, and nominations for new committee members in the Fall.

After nominees have been approved by the Session, they will undergo a period of training in accordance with the board for which each has been nominated, usually over the summer. Following this training, the Elders will interview each nominee on theology and Christian practice, with the overall aim of safeguarding sound thinking and unity in the church.

Those who are approved for Committees will be appointed by the Elders to those boards for approximately two-year terms. As they continue to desire to serve, they may be reappointed by the Session for a maximum of six years, at which point they will be granted a well-earned sabbatical.

Men who are approved for the office of Deacon or Elder are put up for election by the Congregation and each elected to three-year terms. Those new elders and deacons who are elected are then ordained to serve Christ in that office, after the Biblical model of Acts 6:6 and I Timothy 4:14. These officers may then be re-nominated and elected every three years, also with a mandatory sabbatical every six years. Normally, once a man is ordained, he retains the office for life, even when not actively serving.

## **DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR**

This is a four-hour class offered periodically by the pastors to help develop a culture of discipleship and service at GCPC. It is offered as a follow up to the Inquirers Class and is designed to help members grow in details of the Reformed faith and the practical aspects of following Christ. Those who wish to serve on leadership boards, or teach Bible Studies, Home Groups and upper levels of Sunday School are asked to complete this class before beginning their ministry. We also teach a Theology Leadership Training Class every other summer on Sunday mornings.

## **ELDERS**

Elders are ordained men called by God to represent Jesus' victorious rule over His church through teaching, prayer and ordering of her affairs. As such, they are charged to particularly watch over the souls of church members, reminding them of the greatness of God's grace, and helping the sheep to follow Christ more faithfully in their daily lives. The Session supervises the work of the Discipleship and Missions Committees and is itself under the oversight of Blue Ridge Presbytery.

## **DEACONS**

Deacons are ordained men called to represent Jesus' humble care for His church through leading in practical love, caring for physical needs, and in menial service. As elders watch over souls, so deacons care for the physical well-being of members and seekers, to give hands and feet to the proclamation of the Gospel. The Deaconate supervises the work of the Mercy Team and is itself under the oversight of the Session.

## **DISCIPLESHIP COMMITTEE**

The Discipleship Committee consists of men and women who work with our Director of Ministries to help plan our Family, Children's, Men's and Women's ministries, as well as Sunday School and Adult Classes. It also plans special events such as Summer Bible Camp and one-time seminars.

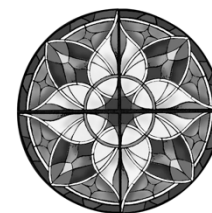
## **MISSIONS COMMITTEE**

The Missions Committee consists of men and women who sense a call to spread the Gospel beyond our community and cross-culturally, leading GCPC to fulfill our part of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). It dispenses GCPC's Short Term Missions Funds, supports our current missionaries, recommends new missionary support requests, organizes our biennial Missions Conference, and promotes GCPC short term missions trips as God leads.

## **MERCY TEAM**

The Mercy Team consists of men and women who sense a call to demonstrate Christ's love locally to those in need, particularly "the sick, widows, orphans, prisoners, and others who may be in any distress or need" (Book of Church Order 9-7). They lead with practical service but also eager to share the Gospel verbally (James 1:27; I Peter 3:15). It dispenses GCPC's Mercy Funds, organizes GCPC's ministries of mercy, and seeks to actively reach the marginalized and needy of our community.

# **Ministry Structure at *Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church***



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