

**To: the MH elders**  
**From: Mark Driscoll**  
**Re: Further details on the proposal to reorganize the elders**  
**Date: October 19, 2004**

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At the conclusion of our last meeting we had not made much progress on the details surrounding the proposed elder reorganization as there was both a resistance to the proposal I brought, and a lack of any other proposal to consider. This follow up memo is my attempt to help move our conversation forward towards some sort of eventual resolution. I would also like to again stress that the New Testament speaks of the qualifications and duties of an elder and does not speak to the organization of the elders but instead leaves such details as how testing and approving is to be done, how long a term lasts, how many elders rule, how the elders organize themselves, who makes which decisions, how often they meet, how they are to vote (e.g. majority, consensus, unanimity), etc. to each elder team to determine what is best for the church to be efficiently lead. Additionally, I would like to stress that churches do not solely grow, but as they grow they must also change. Any church that fails to change in wise and preemptive ways will be forced to change through crisis and strain and so change is not an option, but prudent wisdom is.

First, there was a resistance to see any hierarchy within the board as biblical and in effect a demeaning of some elders. However, I would give the following arguments for leaders within the team of leaders:

- Within the godhead we see Jesus doing the Fathers will and speaking the Fathers words in clear deference to the Father though they are equal and united as one
- Within the church we see that Jesus developed Peter, James, and John as His inner circle of disciples who were present at particular times that the other disciples were not (e.g. on the Mount of Transfiguration), and given access to Jesus such as sitting next to Him at meals in the place of honor and leadership among the apostles
- Before He ascended Jesus clearly appointed Peter as the leader of the disciples and he becomes the dominant figure throughout the gospels and the book of Acts as He is the leader and figures far more prominently than some me. And, John functions as the second leader in command as the following occurrences in the New Testament indicate and the simple observation that we truly know virtually nothing about some apostles as they are obviously godly and important but not prominent:

<b>Apostles</b>	<b># of appearances in gospels</b>	<b># of appearances in the book of acts</b>	<b>total appearances</b>
Peter	117	72	189
John	35	15	50
James	16	2	18
Andrew	12	1	13
Philip	16	1	17
Bartholomew/Nathaniel	0	1	1
Thomas	10	1	11
Matthew/Levi	8	1	9
James, son of Alphaeus	6	1	7
Thaddeus/Judas	3	1	4
Simon, the Zealot	3	1	4
Judas Iscariot	20	2	22

- Peter, James, and John are mentioned first among the lists of the New Testament apostles as they are the leaders among the men
- Peter functioned as the leader of James and John prior to being appointed by Jesus as apostles as he was also the leader of their business together (Luke 5:7,10)
- in the upper room after Jesus ascension Peter stood up among the believers and spoke because he was their leader as appointed by Jesus (Acts 1:15)
- on the day of Pentecost it was Peter who stepped forward from among the apostles to preach the gospel as their leader
- Peter also referred to himself as a "fellow elder" though he was the leader of the elders (I Peter 5:1)
- Initially, Barnabas lead a missions team in Acts with Paul and John Mark as his assistants but in a short time they came to be known as "Paul and his companions" as Paul had overtaken Barnabas in leadership prominence (Acts 13:13) a fact further proven by Paul's penning of New Testament books but not Barnabas
- In Jerusalem Jesus brother James was clearly seen as the primary leader (Acts 12:17, 15:7-11, 15:13-21, 21:8), something also shown by his penning an epistle while none of his other elders did
- Both Timothy and Titus are widely recognized as senior leaders, even being told by Paul to "appoint elders" in Titus 1:5 showing their authority over those elders they appoint

In summary, such men as Peter, John, Paul, Timothy, and Titus are obviously prominent leaders in the New Testament who exercise authority over other elders without being overbearing or sinful in the exercise of their necessary authority.

Second, I am personally opposed to the idea of having a completely flat elder board with me as the only first among equals for both theological and practical reasons.

- I do believe Jesus was wise to appoint Peter as the leader, and also appoint James and John as second leaders.
- I believe that if we adopt this model I will in fact wield too much power and be a senior pastor with an ever widening power gap between myself and the other elders without any range in between
- I will invariably be pulled into any conflicts between elders as I will be the only court of arbitration as the only senior elder
- By nature a large elder council without hierarchy becomes a representative board of differing men from departments in the church lobbying for the interests of their ministry area with me being the only man truly looking at the entire church and charting a direction for its' overall future. I simply do not like the idea of competing interests and me alone holding the authority to make decisions for the entirety of the future of the church.
- A large flat elder council is ineffective to lead and results more in compromise to appease factions than clear vision to simply get things passed.
- If I am the only first among equals I will push my authority through reasoning and persuasion to get my way and though I am not saying this is godly, I am saying that it will happen as if the only way to get something passed is for me to push a room full of men I anticipate I will push. To keep me from becoming this type of leader I need a team around me small enough to lead but big enough to have some checks and balances of me.

Third, we have conflicting tensions in four directions:

- Mark Driscoll – between my internal and external responsibilities I need to have a workable leadership structure that keeps me from burning out, neglecting my family, or pushing my weight around out of frustration to move a large and uninformed elder council that I don't have time to keep up to speed on everything
- People – by January I expect we will have 3000 people a Sunday, 4500 people who call MH home, and 1200 plus members who need enough pastors to get care, get married, be disciplined, etc.
- Departments – each growing area of ministry is now large enough that it can and will bury the elder leading it and those areas (e.g. worship, small groups, biblical counseling, etc.) need a team of multiple elders, deacons, and key members to oversee and build
- Elder Council – we need to have enough elders to care for our people, build out departments, and still meet regularly, be united, be up to speed, communicate effectively, and actually lead the church rather than representing factions or making compromises

- Other – any other written proposal devised by any elder can be brought before all elders providing it is approved by Mark Driscoll

In this scenario, all front-line ministry decisions would be made by the elders working together to run their area of ministry and would not come before all of the elders unless proposed and approved by Mark Driscoll who would function as the gatekeeper to ensure that multiple men are not dropping multiple issues into the elders meetings without prior approval. In this scenario there would also be a team of four elders (Mark, Jamie, Lief, and Tim) who would work on future planning proposals, most of which would end up coming up for vote before all of the elders according to the above criteria. In this scenario, the team of four elders would make the following decisions:

- staff salaries
- hiring and firing of paid deacons and other paid staff
- annual elder reviews of fellow elders (these elders in addition to the elders in their ministry area would also be reviewed for performance)
- budget line items
- proposal generation, and approval of proposals from other elders, for all elder voting

Lastly, this small team of four elders is not necessarily static. Any man can be removed from this team if he requests to do so, disqualifies himself as decided by all of the elders, or if 3/4 of this elder team vote for the removal of another man though that men could then simply return to functioning as an elder with the majority of other elders. And, a man could be added to this elder team by a unanimous vote of this team. In this way, if the church should outgrow one or more of our present leaders, or if a gifted leader emerges we can guarantee that the best leaders are always leading the church.

Sixth, in addition to possible future needs for elder teams, at present it seems we need to see the following departmental elder teams built and believe the sooner we release the building of teams the better positioned we are to avoid a real leadership crisis in the next year to year and a half:

- Mike needs a team of elders over community groups
- Tim needs a team of elders over worship
- Jamie needs a team of elders over administration
- Dick needs a team of elders over children
- Lief needs a team of elders over marriages
- Bent needs a team of elders over biblical counseling
- Gary needs a team of elders over Capstone
- Steve and I can function as the elder team over church planting

In this, it does not seem unreasonable to expect it to take 12-18 months to bring elders under these men, and longer for men like Dick who are not yet elders. If

the first seven of these areas were to each train an average of 2 more elders for their area, which seems justifiable in light of our projected attendance in 12-18 months, then our elder council will be our current seven, plus three who are in the process (James, Dick, and Steve), and 14 or so new elders for a total of 24 elders, over half of whom will be brand new to the elder council. I state this to show the need to do two things in our elder restructuring:

- allow some elders to provide overall leadership so that we are not bogged down by a large elder team that is primarily brand new
- allow our monthly elder meetings to focus on training and not business to best prepare our elders, especially our new elders, to succeed

Seventh, we need to clarify the elder candidate process for new men and I am proposing the following steps:

- a man expresses his interest to one of the elders to be considered as an elder
- to even be considered the man must be active in a leadership capacity in a church ministry as a member in good standing (including giving) who meets the qualifications of a New Testament elder
- that elder can encourage or discourage the man's request
- if that elder affirms the man's desire, he should then notify Mark Driscoll who will meet with the man, and then notify all of the other elders of that man's desire only if I approve
- if none of the other elders oppose the testing of the man for eldership then he will be assigned to six months of training under an existing elder during which time he will
  - read Wayne Grudem's systematic theology and write a 2 page summary of his opinion of the work
  - read Elders and Leaders by Gene Getz and write a 2 page summary of his opinion of the work
  - read Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch and write a 2 page summary of his opinion of the book
  - read The Radical Reformation by Mark Driscoll and write a 2 page summary of his opinion of the book
  - read the MH booklet on Church Leadership and write a 1 page summary of his opinion of the booklet
  - write out a personal doctrinal statement (in either the form of biblical narrative or systematic theology) with a detailed subsection on the gospel and missiology, and footnotes on any potentially controversial theological issues
  - read the article on larger churches
  - read the article on church size by Tim Keller
  - read the strategic plan that includes elder reorganization and multi site venues
  - write out a self-analysis of their gifts and reason God has called them to be a pastor at Mars Hill, including any long-term desires they may have for full-time ministry, church planting, etc.

- write out a detailed philosophy and plan for ministry for their area of calling with the intentions of implementing those thoughts in the church under their leadership
- after 6 months to 1 year of attending departmental elder meetings, leading in ministry, and completing all of the above tasks the man's portfolio of work will be considered by the departmental elder(s) and they can approve or deny the man for consideration as an elder
- if the departmental elder(s) unanimously approve of the man to become an official nominee then he and his portfolio is passed onto the smaller team of lead elders for approval or rejection
- if the smaller team of elders unanimously approves of the man then his portfolio and nomination is forwarded to all elders for consideration who are given one month to read the portfolio and meet with the man if they desire to
- if 100% of the elders vote for the acceptance of the nominee as a fellow elder then he and his wife (if married) are brought before the church body which has one month to raise any questions or problems they may have
- providing nothing to disqualify the man arises, then he is installed as an elder during a church service

Lastly, I am hoping this proposal brings some viable points for discussion and consideration. Should anyone have a better idea, or ideas to better modify this proposal please do bring them to our next meeting. If you should have any questions or concerns for me personally, or regarding this proposal please do let me know and we can meet privately before the next elders meeting.