

King of Kings Fellowship Church Government and Leadership

Preamble: There are several forms of church government employed in God's Church, worldwide. All of these models are expressed by Christians who love God, and who are attempting to faithfully follow the model and principles of the New Testament Church. In my opinion, each has their various strengths and weaknesses. The major forms of governance, although simplified, are summarized below.

A. Historical Forms of Governance

1. Episcopalian (expressed by Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Vineyard, and many "third Wave" churches).

- authority resides in the "bishop" (GK. *episkopos*)
- there are distinct levels of ministry or ordination (ie Deacons and Elders)
- These positions are not voted upon, but ordained to their positions, after having been discerned by leaders within the body.

2. Presbyterian (ie. Presbyterian and most 'Reformed' churches)

- The leading position is that of an "elder" (GK. *presbuteros*), which is generally considered to be interchangeable with the word bishop/overseer.
- "elders" are selected by the congregation, and a "teaching elder" acts as a "pastor".
- there as one level of oversight (by the "elders").

3. Congregational (ie. many Baptist, Lutheran, Congregationalist, and Pentecostals)

- every local church is autonomous
- the church is democratically operated (all positions of governance are elected)

4. Non- Governmental (ie. Quakers and Brethren churches)

- there is no visible church structure or system of government, and no designated leaders.
- all decisions are based on the unity of believers.

B. The Headship of Christ

In every model, the most **foundational understanding** of Church leadership or government, is that **Jesus Christ** is the **Head of the Church**. This is made very clear from Scripture (Eph 4:15; 5:23). Regardless of the *style* of governance, the Church must always be focused on maintaining the Lordship of Jesus Christ over His body. All those in authority must continually seek His mind and will, through the enabling of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, in all actions and decisions.

C. Biblical Leadership Positions

In the New Testament there are **different words** used to describe **delegated** leadership among God's people. It is understood that *together*, when expressed in *maturity*, these titles are a reflection of the Lord's own ministry of earth.

1. Apostle – (GK – *apostolos*) Describes those who are “sent forth”, or commissioned by Jesus to carry the Gospel to new areas, or among ‘unreached’ people groups. The twelve disciples were first called Apostles, but the term was used to describe numerous others, including Paul. Qualifications for apostleship seem to be stated in Scripture (I Cor 9:1; Rom 1:1; I Cor 1:1; Gal 2:7; 2 Cor 12:12). Apostles were considered “first” among those in church leadership (I Cor 12:28). They had authority beyond the local church, based on relationship.

2. Prophet – (GK – *prophetes*) Describes a person who speaks under the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. This may involve both ‘foretelling’ and ‘forthtelling’. (see Acts 11:28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10-11). They played a vital role in the early Church government, and are often listed together with apostles (I Cor 12:28).

3. Evangelist – (GK – *evangelistes*) Describes a person whose primary ministry and function in the body of Christ is to communicate the “Gospel” to others. After the Early Church period, the four Gospel writers were referred to as “evangelists”. Although Philip was a deacon (Acts 6:5), he was also formally in the office of an evangelist (Acts 21:8), and it may be that Timothy’s initial gifting was that of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5).

4. Pastor – (GK – *poimen*) Describes a person whose primary concern is caring for (shepherding) the ‘sheep’ (Eph 4:11). It is patterned after God, who is **Jehovah Rohi**, who cares for us as believers (Psa 23:1-2; Acts 20:28; I Pet 2:25). It is not a common title in the New Testament, but very common today.

5. Teacher – (GK – *didaskalos*) Describes the person who grounds others in truth; who instructs and disciples. They played a very important role in the early Church (Acts 13:1), as they do today, and is based on the Hebrew model of those who daily instructed others. The teaching ministry was an integral part of the work of an apostle (Matt 28:20).

6. Elders – (GK-*presbuteros*) The word “elder” describes leaders who give spiritual oversight within **local** churches. The position is based on the Jewish synagogue model, and was adopted by the Christian Church. In the New Testament this word is primarily used in plural form (elders) when referring to the local church. (Acts 15:4,6,22; 16:4; 20:17; James 5:14). At times, elders were included in decision making beyond the local church (Acts 15).

7. Overseer – (GK – *episkopos*) The word “overseer” is often translated as “bishop”. It seems the person was responsible for the general spiritual oversight of the local church, including overseeing local elders. The position came with certain qualifications as listed in I Tim 3:1-7 and Tit 1:7-9. The titles of “elder” and “overseer” are sometimes the same (Tit 1:6-9; I Pet 5:1-4).

8. Deacon – (GK – *diakonos*) Describes individuals who served in practical and supportive ministry roles within the local church, and who met certain spiritual qualifications (Acts 6:3-4; I Tim 3:8-13). Although their primary role within the local church was practical, it did not preclude their being used in significant spiritual ministry,

illustrated by Stephen, who performed signs and wonders, and spoke with great boldness (Acts 6:8-7, 52).

D. King of Kings Leadership Structure

When King of Kings Fellowship began in 2001, we put in place a *transitory* leadership structure. To satisfy the legal requirements for a non-profit organization, we elected *Directors*, who gave *legal* oversight to the church, and eventually added a **Ministries Leadership Team**. In time, and at the Holy Spirit's direction, Pastor Bob Butler as founding Pastor laid hands on qualified individuals, ordaining them to the position of *elder* and *deacon*. We have decided to maintain an *Episcopalian* model of governance, both at the local and extra-local level, which has served us very well.