



## **Towards a philosophy of 'anchoring'**

Gateway's Sunday gatherings are a vital ingredient to our success as a church community<sup>i</sup> and therefore we aim for excellence in all we do at them.

It's essential therefore to review and consider why and how we do things on Sunday's to ensure we don't slip into unhelpful patterns or simply end up 'going through the motions' week after week. It's also important to define what we believe is best for Gateway and not just 'copy and paste' good ideas.

There are many roles that help make Sunday gatherings run effectively and smoothly, indeed it takes around 30 volunteers to put on a Sunday. Defining the role of anchor (the person who hosts the meeting) within that team is helpful to all involved.

The role of the 'anchor', is not 'recognised' in the New Testament (much like that of the worship leader)<sup>ii</sup>, but is a necessary role in the way we order our gatherings, helping us fulfil 1 Corinthians 14:33; "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people" (NLT).

What's clear from the NT is that local churches should be under the leadership responsibility of Holy Spirit appointed elders:

"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them..." 1 Peter 5:1-2

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." Acts 20:28: Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders.

The shepherding role referenced above incorporates overseeing the community of God's people as under shepherds of the "Chief shepherd"<sup>iii</sup>, the Lord Jesus. Alexander Strauch in Biblical Eldership states;

"Elders lead the church [1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1–2], teach and preach the Word [1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9], protect the church from false teachers [Acts 20:17, 28–31], exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine [1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:13–17; Titus 1:9], visit the sick and pray [James 5:14; Acts 6:4], and judge doctrinal issues [Acts 15:6]. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church"<sup>iv</sup>

The responsibility therefore for overseeing Gateway's Sunday gatherings (as well as other Gateway gatherings) lies solely with the eldership. However responsibility doesn't necessarily mean activity; just as parents have a responsibility to care for their children, but at times may delegate that responsibility to family, friends or school, so elders delegate responsibility to others they trust.

We see this principle working in the church in Acts 6:1-7, where a need comes to the surface and the leaders of the church state: "choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them..."<sup>v</sup>

### **WHO CAN FULFILL THE ANCHOR ROLE?**

In short anyone who the elders at Gateway trust to do it. However the following principles should hopefully bring further clarity;

- Elders will continue to do most of the anchoring as it's important for the church family to know the

hearts<sup>vi</sup> and voices of their under shepherds<sup>vii</sup> and this public role provides that opportunity. It's also important that as elders we don't seek to abdicate all responsibility<sup>viii</sup>. With this in mind we would always seek, where possible, to have an elder present at gatherings to maintain a presence, carry overall responsibility and offer support to an anchor.

- A level of spiritual maturity and biblical understanding is certainly required, as is the ability to lead and communicate clearly.

- The role could be fulfilled by men and women alike with the appropriate gifts and skills.

- A small team outside the eldership will be recruited and trained to serve in this area.

## **HOW MIGHT SOME OF OUR KEY VALUES AFFECT THE ROLE OF THE ANCHOR?**

Here are some of our values that will affect the way we anchor Gateway Church gatherings.

### **SPIRIT-LED WORSHIP**

We prioritise following the Holy Spirit's lead during our meetings. Whilst we choose to prepare well, we also recognise that our plans and priorities may not line up with God's as the meeting unfolds. Following the Spirit's lead may, in certain circumstances, mean plans change. One example may be that the Spirit is speaking and moving so clearly during the worship time that we choose to continue seeking God and have a shorter preach (or vice versa<sup>ix</sup>). To this end we have designed a standard 'running order' without specific timings that encourages the anchor to be flexible as they see fit.

### **VALUING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

We want our gatherings to be accessible to all, from the youngest to the oldest. At times it may be appropriate for the anchor to encourage children or families to engage in a particular way or to help facilitate a child share something God is speaking to them. There are frequent Sundays when the worship leaders specifically focus on involving children in the worship. It would be helpful to communicate this with anchors as we work together to encourage family worship.

Anchoring as married couples is a wonderful opportunity to value marriage and team-working, but we recognise the challenge here when it comes to couples with young children. If a married couple are both gifted and in faith for anchoring together we encourage this.

### **PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS / GIFTS**

We have an outstanding worship team with gifted worship leaders. We recognise and value the worship leader's preparation and leading in the worship time. There are a number of occasions when it's common for anchors to be tempted to 'lead worship' which can result in confusion about who is leading.

### **SUMMARY**

Elders are responsible for overseeing any church gathering, but are free to delegate that responsibility to anyone they trust to reflect our values.

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<sup>i</sup> "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

<sup>ii</sup> Some suggest that the gift of administration mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28, could be referring to this role which can literally mean to "steer" or govern", however the evidence is inconclusive.

<sup>iii</sup> 1 Peter 5:4

<sup>iv</sup> Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership

<sup>v</sup> Acts 6:3

<sup>vi</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:8: "Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."

<sup>vii</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. John 10:27

<sup>viii</sup> But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else." Exodus 4:13.

<sup>ix</sup> E.g. Acts 10:44: "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message."