

# HARVESTS FROM ELDERING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

## MORNING DISCUSSIONS, MARCH 26, 2011

Visalia, Woodland, Concord, Santa Cruz

The following lists were compiled from all the notes made on the flipchart paper on the tables as groups discussed these topics. Words have been emphasized according to the importance rated by a group and the same word or concept showing up more than once in all the notes.

### MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS/TRAITS

**\*GOOD LISTENER (listen with all your senses)**

**\*Compassionate/Caring/Listening**

**\*FLEXIBLE/ADAPTABLE**

**\*TRUSTWORTHY**

**\*ABLE TO TOLERATE TENSION OR AMBIGUITY** \*Faithful to God's Word

**\*STRONG IN FAITH** \***PRESENCE** \***Integrity** \*Respectful

\*Nurturing \*Dedicated \***Patient w/ Self and others** \***Servant Leader**

\***Keeps Confidentiality** \*Good Communicator \***Positive Attitude**

\*Spiritual/Spiritual Maturity \***Open to Growth** \***HUMOR** \*Uses **discretion**

\*Creative \***Reliable/Dependable** \*Energetic \***Friendly** \*Available \***Faithful**

\*Able to speak authentically \*Able to make tough decisions \*Being able to Witness

\***Empathic** \*Self-Aware \*Aware of own limits \*Able to say "no" \*Willing to say "yes"

\*Honest \*Intentional \***Welcoming** \*Engaging \*Amicable \*Organized/er

\***Giving/Generous** \*Smiles \*Conflict resolver \*Respects group diversity \*Joyful

\*Loving \***Integrity** \*Literate \*Discerning \*Teachable \*Prayer Warrior

\***Humble** \*Moral \*Servant \*Leader \*articulate in Christianity \*Administrator

\*Steward \*Willing to risk \*Sense of the Whole \*Brevity \*Biblically Literate

\*Prayerful \*Able to share faith story \*Focus on Christ \***Kind** \*Presentable

\*Aware/comfortable with own humanness \*Christ-Centered and Spirit-Driven

\***NON-JUDGMENTAL** \*Interested in the Stories of Others \***Walk the walk**

\*Wisdom Seeker \*Able to listen to the silence \*Studious \*Feel loved by God

\*Navigate and transcend generational boundaries \*Comfortable in own skin

\*Good learner \*Willing to be vulnerable \*Social/sociable \*Embracing differences

\*Willingness to grow/change \*Willingness to explore \*Living witness for Christ

\*Present—involved and engaged \*Able to take/give direction \*Understanding

\*Healthy boundaries—not "fixers" \*Rely on other Elders \*Diplomatic

\*Called by God to Serve \*Servant humility \*Filled with God's love/mercy

\*not afraid to speak out \*dedication/loyalty

## **MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS/COMPETENCIES**

- \*LISTENING**
- \*PERSPECTIVE: BIG-PICTURE**
- \*LEADERSHIP**
- \*EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR**
- \*FLEXIBILITY
- \*REASONABLE
- \*GOOD ORGANIZER
- \*THEOLOGICALLY COMPETENT
- \*BE PRESENT IN EVERY WAY**
- \*SUPPORT AND ASSIST THE PASTOR
- \*Teaching**
- \*Evangelism
- \*Elders as a group are balanced between leaders/contemplative thinkers/
- \*Diversity of thought/experience
- \*TEACHING/MENTORING OTHERS**
- \*PUBLIC SPEAKING and prayers
- \*Able to pray on the spot
- \*Know prayer songs
- \*Friendly
- \*Gives impartial feedback
- \*Sense of humor
- \*Inclusive**
- \*Open
- \*Tolerates tension**
- \*Courage to talk to people
- \*Available for special needs
- \*Good follow through
- \*Versatile
- \*Group Facilitation
- \*Servant Heart
- \*Spontaneous “take charge” type
- \*The “calming voice in the storm”
- \*Stay Awake!
- \*Acceptance
- \*On a spiritual journey
- \*Able to accept help
- \*Honesty**
- \*Discernment** of Spirit—why we do what we do
- \*People-person
- \*Empathic**
- \*Work well with others
- \*Know when to refer
- \*Knows strengths and gifts
- \*Eloquence
- \*Story-telling/**testimony**
- \*Love of God/Jesus/Others driving actions
- \*Discretion
- \*Involved in Community
- \*Congregational voice/conscience
- \*Willingness to change
- \*Open to new relationships and perspectives
- \*Ability to be open and affirming
- \*Attune to the new folk
- \*Need both Marys and Marthas
- \*Understand the role
- \*Biblical knowledge**
- \*Presiding at the Table**
- \*Show up!
- \*Denominational knowledge
- \*Finding resources and training
- \*Approachable
- \*Ability to see Christ in others
- \*Speak loudly and clearly—project
- \*Sensitivity
- \*Pay attention—notice who is there and not there—call on parishioners
- \*Faith in and reverence for the power of the Elements at the Table
- \*Child-like
- \*Stewardship**—Ability to lead and listen; respond to needs; prioritize your time
- \*Willing to accept criticism and change/give constructive suggestions
- \*Willingness to recognize problems and have the courage to find solutions
- \*Ability to speak more than one language to build stronger relationships
- \*Responsiveness to the Holy Spirit
- \*Prayerful Spirit
- \*Hospitable
- \*Active in all aspects of the church and outside church
- \*Use available technology**
- \*Relational/Interpersonal Skills
- \*Organizational Skills
- \*Skills to resolve conflict
- \*Good family leaders (their own house is in order)

## **MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCES (USE OF POWER)**

- \*COME FROM A PLACE OF LOVE (not divisive)**
- \*PRAYING FOR/WITH PEOPLE**      **\*MUSIC/WORSHIP**
- \*EMPOWER THE VOICELESS**      **\*MAKE HARD DECISIONS**
- \*USE OF TIME MANAGEMENT/SETTING PRIORITIES      \*BUDGET
- \*DEMONSTRATE ENTHUSIASM FOR PARTICIPATION AND GROWTH
- \*SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP      **\*Role Model**      \*CONFIDENTIALITY
- \*MAINTAINING THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF THE CONGREGATION
- \*CHANGE—SEEING THE NEED AND AIDING THE MOVEMENT**
- \*SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY-KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE HIM KNOWN
- \*Balance the tensions in the congregation      \*Give people permission
- \*Encourage** outreach ministries      \*Being positive      \*Opportunities to Inspire
- \*Potential Implements of Change      \*Creating choices vs. demanding action
- \*Trustworthiness      \*Listening      \*Understanding congregation power struggles
- \*Approachable      \*Caregivers      \*Educators      \*Non-anxious Presence
- \*Openness      \*Ability not to abuse power!      \*Preparing for the Spirit      \*Inclusive
- \*Unity      \*Future Oriented      **\*Encourage** Participation      **\*Encourage** Service      \*Hope
- \*Calming Effect (Holy Spirit Wisdom)      \*Reading the Bible to answer Life's Questions
- \*Balance of Power      **\*Be a support mechanism for the Pastor**      \*Personal Influence
- \*Service to God and Congregation**      \*Networking/Building Connections
- \*Teaching by example**      \*Presence for home/hospital bound      \*Forgiveness
- \*Sensitive to needs      **\*Serving on the Board (having a vote)**      \*Invoke
- \*Cohesive elders act as a team      \*Develop Spirituality for self/others
- \*Appreciate one another's gifts      \*Communicating/collaborating with Pastor
- \*\*"Clear window" for spiritually powerful communion      \*PRAY AND MODEL PRAYING
- \*Keeping the minister from being overwhelmed      \*Listening to people's views
- \*Meet the needs of people where we find them      \*Be prepared for...Whatever!
- \*Active participation in programs and ministry of the church      \*vision and direction
- \*Not high and mighty—but human and real      \*1Timothy 3:1-7      \*Administration
- \*Their wisdom/integrity called on in the public setting      \*raises the bar of personal life
- \*Liaison between congregation and pastor      \*knowledge of resources (community)

## **MOST IMPORTANT AREAS OF SERVICE (MINISTRY)**

- \*STEWARDSHIP \*PRAYER LIFE—SELF AND OTHERS**
- \*WORSHIP/OVERSIGHT AND PERSONAL PARTICIPATION**
- \*Strong Presences at the Table \*Service to God and Church**
- \*EARS/EYES/HANDS OF THE CONGREGATION SO THAT THINGS RUN MORE SMOOTHLY \*DISCIPLESHIP
- \*CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITH CONGREGATION/MEDIATORS**
- \*LISTENING AND HEARING—REALLY PAYING ATTENTION**
- \*PRESENTÉ! \*Serving God \*MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY**
- \*Crucial Conversations \*Outreach \*Self-development
- \*Assisting the minister**—able to do minister’s job “in a pinch”
- \*TAKE COMMUNION TO SHUT-INS/VISITATION** \*Empathic listener
- \*Continue to witness to those hungry for the Word \*Extending the invitation
- \*Innovators—leaders in creativity \*Role Models \*Teachers \*Hospitality
- \*Friendship \*Mission/Outreach \*Visits prisoners, etc. \*Pulpit Supply
- \*Advocate for follow through \*Debriefing and confidence with other Elders
- \*Bible Study \*Food preparation and clean-up \*Be welcoming and inviting
- \*Engagement—not just sharing the story—but the experience and feelings
- \*Open and available for special needs \*Counseling families; debriefing
- \*Serving God by serving others \*Being a living witness \*Support the Pastor
- \*Public speaking \*Providing spiritual leadership \*Discern gifts in self/others
- \*Nurturing \*Ministering to people outside our comfort zones
- \*Cultural transition—supporting people through change \*Connecting intentionally
- \*Support for decisions/actions of congregational leadership \*tithing
- \*Mentoring and training new Elders \*Visiting new members \*Greeting guests
- \*Visionary for the future of the congregation—establish goals and/or direction
- \*Ecumenical Efforts in community \*peace-makers/mediation
- \*Modeling core values of the congregation in the community \*cross-cultural ministry
- \*Oversee the life of the church—know what’s going on \*Administration??
- \*Justice ministry for those who have no voice \*Children’s Ministry \*Education

The following notes were compiled as a summary from the responses made at all the locations during the morning discussion of the history of Eldership:

## **WHAT'S CHANGED?**

- \*No longer only men
- \*No longer In charge of the service (full authority)
- \*Larger pool of Ordained ministers today
- \*Not as much “pillars” of the church
- \*No longer seen as all-knowing/authority (“ruling Elder” issues)
- \*Less training
- \*Women serving
- \*Church structure is based more on a business model
- \*Mobility—fewer long-term members
- \*Names of the role/office change
- \*Not necessarily seen as much as a Sacred Position—not as important
- \*Not as learned in the Bible
- \*Harder to build/plant congregations
- \*Humor at the Table
- \*No longer seen as an Elder—for Life
- \*Lower numbers in the congregation
- \*Not necessarily based on chronological age—younger Elders
- \*Church no longer center of the culture
- \*People are looking deeper/wanting more
- \*Churches are now Open and Affirming
- \*Online technology=no personal relations
- \*Visitations harder—Elders are busy people, and not everyone welcomes drop-in visits
- \*Can be difficult to find place to use gifts
- \*Structure is changing; consider the purpose
- \*Multiple congregations in same building
- \*Getting more part-time pastors
- \*Dress Code—anything goes
- \*Generational differences in expectations/practices
- \*There are spiritual leaders in the congregation who are NOT Elders
- \*Family involvement has declined (Sunday youth sports games, etc.)
- \*Flexibility as pastors come and go; partnership with pastors
- \*Elders are not always on the board or involved in decision-making
- \*Lack of training and education for eldership
- \*In the Spanish church—pastor is and Elder and those who help the pastor are deacons
- \*Promotion, marketing, electing of elders—need to know their gifts and talents

## **STAYED THE SAME?**

- \*Honor/respected authority
- \*Preside at the Table
- \*Oversee some ministry
- \*Confidentiality
- \*Guardian of Traditions
- \*Shepherding lists
- \*Spiritual Wisdom
- \*Called to sub-pastor
- \*Communion to shut-ins
- \*pulpit supply
- \*Commitment
- \*core—Body (backbone)
- \*Still not perfect
- \*Embraces Individuality
- \*Visitation
- \*Making change remains hard thing to do
- \*Our need for spiritual development
- \*Clergy still need the support/help of Elders
- \*Leadership expectation
- \*Faith remains central
- \*Elders are still lay/volunteer
- \*Still teach/model/mentor
- \*Advanced Technology/knowledge does not equal wisdom
- \*Continuity of traditions
- \*Celebrate different gifts of individual Elders
- \*Elders as liaison with Pastor
- \*Elders need to change as the congregation changes
- \*Spiritual Omnibudsman
- \*Passion to see church body grow in numbers and spirituality
- \*Word of God
- \*Bridge divisions in the church
- \*Walk the walk

## **WHY DO WE STILL NEED THE ROLE OF ELDER TODAY?**

- \*Guardians of Traditions balanced by leaders of Change
- \*To develop and promote the vision of the church
- \*Worship Leadership    \*Resources    \*Demonstrate Discipline—Tolerance
- \*Learned Leaders to mentor newly converted and unchurched
- \*Role Praying from the heart/Evangelism    \*Witness for those spiritually hungry
- \*Core continuity of the Church    \*Share the workload of ministry
- \*Lead us through fears of the future    \*Spiritual Discernment    \*Deal with conflict
- \*Distribute power    \*Assist Pastor    \*Mentor and Exemptor    \*Responsible for teaching
- \*Speak to spiritual hunger (youth)    \*Role in Missional Church    \*Help promote Change
- \*We need to practice/demonstrate the priesthood of all believers
- \*Still need this leadership in the Tribe!
- \*Diversity of need complex today—need diversity of people in leadership to respond
- \*Embrace differing levels of spirituality (both age and new/life Christians)
- \*Values are learned through a lifetime/value of life experience—Character in guidance
- \*The Lord's Table is at the heart of faith; Jesus is our Savior; as we partake of these elements feel Christ's Hands embrace you!