

Jer 3:14 ... And I will bring you  
to Zion.' 15 "Then I will give  
you shepherds after My own  
heart, who will feed you on  
knowledge and understanding.

Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find the local church being led by committees, men's business meetings, or congregational meetings.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he  
sent to Ephesus and called to him  
the elders of the church.

Elder, Presbyter

Acts 14:2; I Tim 5:17; I Tim 4:14

*presbuteros*

Act 20:17 And from Miletus he  
sent to Ephesus and called to him  
the elders of the church.

Acts 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Overseers NASB

Bishops ASV

Greek *episkopous*

feed – KJV  
to shepherd – NASB  
be shepherds of - NIV

Eph 4:11 And He gave some as  
apostles, and some as prophets,  
and some as evangelists, and  
some as pastors and teachers,



Eph 4.11

Pastors – noun form

Greek *poimainein*

elsewhere shepherd

Acts 20.28

pastor - verb form

Greek *poimenas*

elsewhere shepherd

Acts 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Thus, in the Scriptures, the words,  
“elder”, “presbyter”, “bishop”,  
“overseer”, “pastor”, and  
“shepherd” all refer to the same  
men. Acts 20.17, 28

What is the authority of the elder?

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came up  
and spoke to them, saying, "All  
authority has been given to Me in  
heaven and on earth.

Matt 20:25 But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 "It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

# What is the work of an elder?

1 Tim 3:1 This is a true saying, If  
a man desire the office of a  
bishop, he desireth a good work.

KJV – he desires a noble task.

NIV – desires a good work (NET)

1 Peter 5:1 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ...

3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.



(Heb 13:7) Remember those who led (them which have the rule over you – KJV *hegeomai*), you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

(Heb 13:17) Obey your leaders (them that have the rule over you – KJV *hegeomai*), and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

These “leaders” would include the elders, but also those “leading men.”

Act 15:22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men (*hegeomai*) among the brethren,

How do the elders lead? “have the rule over you?” (as distinct from “leading men”)

Act 6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. 2 And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

A physical problem arose.

It was brought to the apostles' attention.

God instructed them to appoint deacons (servants  
– *diakoneo*)

The deacons (the servants of the table took care  
of the matter)

The church did not discuss this among  
themselves, except to find men “full of the Spirit  
and wisdom” to take care of the matter.

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Act 15:4-6 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. (5) But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." (6) And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

A spiritual problem arose.  
It was brought to the apostles' attention.

The church watched the discussion with those directly involved presenting their arguments.

A decision was made based on (1) a direct command of God to Peter; (2) a Scripture prophesying this new found (to them) truth; and a logical conclusion based on these.

The elders and the apostles discussed this in front of the congregation.



Who took part in the debate?

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Act 15:6-7 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. (7) And after there had been much debate, Peter [an elder from 1Pet 5.1] stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Act 15:12-13 And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. (13)  
And after they had stopped speaking, James [an elder, Acts 21.18] answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me.

Did the whole church discuss this during the assembly? No. Did they find the discussion of the elders acceptable? Yes.

Act 15:22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

A question about the public  
discussion of the expenditure of  
funds by the church.

What do the Scriptures say about  
the manner of collection of  
funds?

Act 11:28-29 And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. (29)

And in the proportion that any of the  
disciples had means, each of them  
determined to send a contribution for the  
relief of the brethren living in Judea.

Php 4:15-16 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; (16) for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

1Co 16:2 On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.



Each person must determine that the course of action to be pursued is worthy of their financial support and then give in accordance with their ability.

Thus, in keeping with the NT pattern of the needs being brought to the elders attention, the deacons are charged with taking care of the physical tasks based upon the desires of the church – each member realizing his/her part in the whole task.

Someone may say, “I only want  
my funds to be used for this  
purpose.”

Act 5:3-4 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? (4) "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God."

We learn from Peter's response to Ananias that if you want to control the funds, do it, but not when you have given it to the church. You have then given control to the group and the funds are no longer yours.

They are distributed by the “gatekeepers”, i.e., the elders and deacons as they meet the needs.

Act 22:16 'And now  
why do you delay?  
Arise, and be baptized,  
and wash away your  
sins, calling on His  
name.'