

A Definition of “Total Agreement” Olathe Bible Church

When we speak of total agreement, we are speaking about the final conclusion of the elders concerning a matter. Total agreement does not mean that every policy adopted or decision made has a unanimous perspective during the processing and deliberation. Total agreement means that every elder comes to a unified consensus about the decision or policy; that every elder agrees with every policy or decision that is made.

The process of getting to total agreement is to be a forthright, no holds barred, honest, and vulnerable exchange of perspectives. The board allows **each elder to deliberate in his own voice**—each elder can argue, take exception, disagree, examine, evaluate, scrutinize, investigate, explore, etc whatever is being proposed. However, when all the discussion is done and the elders come to a consensus, **all the elders speak with one voice**. When the elder board comes to a decision or sets a policy, everybody must unite behind the decision or the policy. That policy or opinion then becomes the voice of the elders.

Coming to total agreement will not always be easy. Any one elder, when standing on unwavering conviction, can stop any decision. If in the process of evaluating a decision or policy an elder comes to the conclusion that the issue at hand is not weighty enough for him to stop the decision or policy (i.e. it is a matter of your personal opinion rather than a matter of theological or philosophical conviction), then he should yield to the group. If he believes that the decision or policy may be unwise, then he should request that the elders table the decision. At that point, the Chairman will initiate the scheduling of extended time for the elders to spend in prayerful reflection, fasting, and ongoing conversation.

However, once an elder agrees with the team to set a policy or make a decision (either through an affirmative vote or an abstention), even if he personally deliberated against it at the beginning, he is now united with the whole team on that decision. At the point he unites to speak as one voice, he gives up any personal rights to say to anyone that he disagrees with the decision. If he does not believe that the decision or policy was worth stopping because of conviction, then he has chosen to stand united behind that decision or policy.

In addition, total agreement means that no elder may speak his personal opinion as if it carried special weight. He may have moral suasion because of his spiritual maturity, but his personal opinions do not have any more value just because he is an elder. The authority of the elders belongs to those decisions and policies agreed upon by the whole elder team.

A misuse of authority or the undermining of elder unity is considered an offense for which an elder may be disciplined and/or removed from office.