

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

You asked me to respond to your church member's letter. In this letter he attempted to argue that a plurality of Elders is the prescribed form for church government.

This is a straight forward response to the assertions made regarding church government and a plurality of elder rule. For clarity sake, All statements made by your church member are noted by the word "statement." They are also in bold print and quotation marks. After each statement, I will offer an answer which is likewise noted by the word "answer."

Before I respond to your church member's belief that Elder rule is the only mandated ecclesiology, let me state that I do not oppose Elder rule. I am only building the case that it is not mandated in the Scriptures. However, I would argue that when I compare the three forms of church government (Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational), I would argue that some form of Elder rule will present the healthiest option.

Statement:

"Yet the instructions and example of the apostles seems to indicate that the church is to be governed by multiple elected elders as indicated in Acts 14:23 and Titus. 1:5."

"Elders are elected by the people, not imposed upon them against their will. The verb translated "ordained" in Acts 14:23 means "to confirm by the raising of the hand." (See Strong's)"

Answer:

You are making an invalid assumption here. It is not valid to assume that just because elders were appointed by the apostles they were appointed against the will of the church. It is also incorrect to assume that the word for appoint in any way suggests that the congregation was involved in the appointment. To prove this we need only do a brief survey of the Greek words in question.

Acts 14:23

χειροτονησαντες δε αυτοις κατ εκκλησιαν πρεσβυτερους
And having appointed for them in every church elders

προσευξαμενοι μετα νηστειων παρεθεντο αυτους τω κυριω
 praying with fastings they committed them to the Lord
 εις ον πεπιστευκεισαν.¹
 in whom they had believed.

There is no Greek equivalent for the English word “ordain.” Without going into the minutia of morphology, etymology, definition, or semantic domains, I will list some (about half) of the Greek words that are sometimes translated as “ordain.”

Τιθημι (tithemi), **καθισταμι** (kathistemi), **τασσω** (Tasso)
διατασσω (diatasso), **οριζο** (horidzo), **κρινω** (krino)²

These words are not necessarily interchangeable.

1

Marshall, Alfred., The New International Version Interlinear Greek–English New Testament. (Regency: Grand Rapids, MI 1984), 531.

2

Vine, W. E., Merrill F. Unger and William White Jr., An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words. (Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville TN, 1984), 816.

Here in Acts 14:23 the Greek word χειροτονησαντες (chairotonasantes) is used. It's root is χειροτονεω (chairotoneo). The simplest definition of this word is "to appoint." The form used is the aorist active participle. It means to elect by show of hands, to appoint. Here the selection was made by Paul and Barnabas. The prepositional phrase "κατ εκκλησιαν" (kata ekklesian) is translated, "in every church."³ An expanded translation of "χειροτονησαντες δε αυτοις κατ εκκλησιαν πρεσβυτερους" (chairotonasantes de autois kat ekklesian presbuterous) is "Paul and Barnabus appointed by a show of hands from churches elders." A smooth translation will read, "Paul and Barnabus appointed elders from church to church."

It does not say that they went to "every" church and appointed elders. The Greek word "παντα" (panta) which is translated "each," or "every," does not appear in this verse. Instead, the preposition "κατα" (kata) is used in conjunction with "church." In this context it is used distributively and should be translated "from church to church."⁴

The activity is focused on Paul and Barnabus, not the churches. It cannot be assumed that the particular word used for "appoint" suggests that each local church participated in the selection of their elders. Also, there is absolutely no indication in this passage that there was to be a plurality of elders in any one church. When the word χειροτονεω (chairotoneo) is studied and properly defined it will become obvious that one cannot interpret this passage as advocating a plurality of elders in each church.

3

Reinecker, Fritz and Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament. (Regency: Grand Rapids MI, 1980), 297.

Ibid., 297.

Gerhard Kittel in his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, defines χειροτονεω (chairotoneo) as raising the hand to express an agreement in a vote. Non-canonical literature such as Demosthenes of Athens' *Orationes* 18:248, Plato of Athens' *Leges* VI, 755e, 756a, and Philo of Alexandria's *De Specialibus Legibus* all refer to χειροτονεω as the selection for the discharge of a specific task; highly regarded men who are chosen from every town as messengers to bring in the sacred monies that have been gathered.⁵

This word is mentioned only twice in the New Testament. In the sense "to select" χειροτονεω occurs in II Corinthians 8:19. A representative chosen by the church is to accompany the apostle on his journey with the collection.⁶ This idea is consistent with the word's use in non-canonical literature. Just as with non-canonical literature, where one person was selected to represent one town, so also here in II Corinthians 8:19, one person was selected to represent the churches in the area.

Here in II Corinthians 8:19 we do not have one church appointing a plurality of representatives. What we have is a plurality of churches all selecting one representative. The only thing plural about this process are the persons or churches involved in the selecting. However, only one person is selected; one individual, not a group.

The churches are indeed doing the selecting here. However, they are not selecting their leaders. They are selecting someone to represent them on a journey with Paul.

5

Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Frierich, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol IX. Reprint. (Eerdmans: GR Michigan, 1992), 437.

6

Ibid., 437.

In Acts 14:23 is the second use of this word. The reference is not to election by the congregation. The presbyters are nominated by Paul and Barnabus and then with prayer and fasting they are instituted into their offices, which they are to exercise in the churches of Pisidia and Lycaonia.⁷ If all other known occurrences of this word in both canonical and non-canonical literature signifies one person to represent one institution (whether state, city, or church) it is highly improbable that the meaning in Acts 14:23 would be any different. Even if one could argue that each church was involved in the selection process, of their elders, one could not accurately deduce from Acts 14:23 that any given church selected more than one elder to lead or govern that individual church.

The obvious conclusion of Acts 14:23 is that Barnabus and Paul went from church to church appointing individual elders to lead each individual church. It is therefore invalid to suppose that Acts 14:23 is promoting a plurality of elders in an individual church. Such an interpretation is not a legitimate option.

Tit. 1:5

Titus 1:5 uses an altogether different word than Acts 14:23. It is not χειροτονεω (chairotoneo). It is the word καταστησης (katastasas).

τουτου	χαριν	απελιπον	δε	εν	κρητη	ινα
for this	reason	I left	You	in	Crete	in order that
τα	λειποντα	επιδιοπθωση	και			
the things	wanting	you should set in order	and			

καταστησης κατα πολιν πρεσβυτερους ωσ εγω

7

Ibid., 437.

should appoint in each city elders as I

σοι διαταξαμην.⁸
you charged

“For this reason I left you in Crete in order that you should set in order the things (that are) wanting and should appoint elders in each city as I charged you.” Titus 1:5

Here in Titus the word “appoint” is translated from the Greek word καταστησης (katastasas). It is the aorist active subjunctive of the word καθιστημι (kathistami) which means to appoint, to set down, to put into place.⁹

There is no element of a collective approval with this word. It cannot be translated “appointed by the raising of hands.” This verse clearly states that Paul charged Titus with the responsibility of going to the island of Crete so that he could resolve their problems and “appoint elders in each city.” There is no congregational consensus dictating whom Titus will appoint. The only collective here is a collective of elders being appointed in a collective of cities.

To further establish this understanding of the word καθιστημι (kathistami) one need only look at its other usages in the New Testament.

Acts 6:3

8

Marshall., Greek–English New Testament., 845.

Reinecker, Linguistic Key., 297.

επισκερασθε δε αδελφοι, ανδρας εξ υμων
 You look out but, brothers men of you

μαρτυρουμενους επτα πληρεις πνευματος και
 being witnessed to seven full of Spirit and

σοφιας, ους καταστησομεν επι της χρειας παυτης.¹⁰
 of wisdom whom we will appoint over this office

“But brothers, you find seven men among you who you can testify to that they are full of the Spirit and wisdom and we will appoint them over this office.” Acts 6:3

The apostles charged the church with the responsibility of finding seven men who were full of the Spirit and wisdom. Once these men were found they were to be brought before the apostles. After which, it was the apostles who appointed them.

This is the biblical formula for a congregational church. Unfortunately it is the exact opposite of the way most “congregational” churches conduct business. In a biblical congregational church, the church presents candidates for ministry to the elder/pastor who then decides if the candidates are to be appointed. In modern day “congregational” churches, either the elder/pastor, staff, or nominating committee presents candidates for ministry to the congregation and they decide if the candidates are to be appointed.

One may argue that Acts 6:3 offers a case for a collective of elders since the apostles acted together. However, there are at least two problems with this. First, they were not elders. They were apostles.

10

Marshall, 486.

Second, there are no longer any apostles today. Therefore, it is not possible to re-create the first century church because one of its main ingredients—the apostles—are no longer with us.

The selection of deacons in Acts 6 was clearly driven by the apostles. The congregation approached the apostles with a problem. The apostles gave them a course of action. The congregation did what the apostles asked. When they selected men for the task at hand, they then presented these men to the apostles who in turn appointed them.

καθιστημι (kathistami) which is translated “appoint” in Titus 1:5 and Acts 6:3 cannot be defined as “to appoint by showing of hands.” This word is used in another passage in the New Testament. It is used in Romans 5:19

ωσπερ γαρ δια της παρακοης του ενος ανθρωπου
for as through the disobedience of the one man

αμαρτωλοι κατεσταθησας οι πολλοι ουτως και δια
sinners were constituted the many so also through

της υπακοης του ενος δικαιοι κατασταωησονται
the obedience of the one man righteous will be constituted

οι πολλοι.¹¹
the many. Romans 5:19

¹¹
Marshall, 618.

“For as through the disobedience of one man were many constituted as sinners, so also through the obedience of one man will many be constituted righteous.”

In this context the word καθίστημι (kathistami) means to make someone something, or to put someone in a certain state.¹² It carries the same sentiment as appointment, or appointing someone. The difference is that here someone is not being appointed to a position, but a certain state, or condition is being appointed onto them.

However, it carries the same emphasis as in Titus 1:5 and Acts 6:3. One man’s sin appointed brings sin onto the many and one man’s righteousness brings righteousness onto the many. It was not a plurality of sinners that made mankind sinners. It was just one. And, it was not a plurality of righteous men that makes mankind righteous, just one.

Statement:

“This election process seems to be patterned after the election of leaders in ancient Israel from among the people.

**“Ex. 18:21
Judges 11:11”**

“These elders, (whether or not one adopts the view that all elders are functionally equivalent or that teaching and ruling elders represent distinct functions within the eldership) seem to operate in terms of equality.”

Answer:

¹²

Kittel, Theological Dictionary. Vol III., 444-45.

It is invalid to call this a process when the word χειροτονεω (chairotoneo) only occurs twice in the New Testament and never in the LXX (Septuagint: Ancient Greek Translation of the Old Testament). Also, the word used for appoint in Titus 1:5 cannot in any case ever be translated as “appoint by the showing of hands.” Every time it is used it clearly defines a hierarchical role. One individual is solely responsible for making appointments.

Your church member is applying a method of argument that is both anachronistic and circular. It is anachronistic to develop an understanding of church government and polity based on the N.T. and then use that model as a templet for understanding O.T. leadership and selection. I believe your church member is being anachronistic because he starts his case within the New Testament and after he makes several declarations, he then attempts to use the O.T. as an enforcement.

His argument is circular because he first builds his understanding of a plurality and equality of elder rule in the N.T.. He then takes his assessment and applies it to the O.T.. He then takes the O.T. Scriptures that have been interpreted in light of the N.T. and uses them as a foundation for interpreting the N.T.

There is no doubt that the O.T. is both a pre-cursor and a fore-shadow to the N.T. It both enforces and forecasts the N.T.. However, if I am going to apply proper hermeneutics I must start with the O.T. and then move forward to the N.T. Therefore, if I want to understand N.T. leadership in light of O.T. leadership, I must first build a case on O.T. leadership from the O.T. alone. Then I am in a legitimate position to forecast my findings onto the N.T. Why? Simple, the O.T. was written first. This may be a minor point, but I believe it is an important one.

However, even this is problematic. One must be cautious when attempting to build patterns from the O.T. to the N.T. Not all judges were chosen the same way. Not all prophets were chosen the same way. Not all kings were chosen the same way. So, if there was no set pattern in the selection of leaders in the O.T. then one must conclude that there may not be any set pattern for selecting leaders in the N.T.

Your church member sighted two O.T. verses (Ex. 18:21 Judges 11:11) as a “pattern, for the election of leaders in ancient Israel from among the people.” So, we are going to look at these two verses and see if they build a case for elders who are “functionally equivalent,” and “operate in terms of equality” to their leaders.

1. Ex. 18:21 “Moreover you shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens.”

There are two important words used here. They are the words “provide,” and “place.”

The word “provide” is translated from the Hebrew word תַּחַזָּה (Ta-Hatza). Its root is חָזָה (Hatza).¹³ The Strong’s number for this word is #2372. It is used 46 times in the O.T. and has various meanings such as to see, to look, to observe, to gaze, to behold, to choose, and to prophesy.¹⁴

13

Einspahr, Bruce, Compiler., Index to Brown, Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon., (Moody Press: Chicago, 1976), 42.

14

<http://www.biblestudytools.net/InterlinearBible/>

The word “provide” (KJV) and “select” (NAS) are both legitimate translations. However, a more accurate rendering can be summed up with this phrase, “Moreover, *see to it* that the right men are chosen.”

The other word used in Exodus 18:21 is the word “place.” It is translated from the Hebrew word וַשָּׂמָה (Ve-saam-ta). It’s root is שָׂם (Soom).¹⁵ The Strong’s number for this word is #7760. It is used 547 times in the O.T., and 47 times in Exodus. The definition of this word is much narrower. It can mean to put, to place, to set, to appoint, and to make.¹⁶

Ex. 18:21 “Moreover you shall *provide* out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and *place* such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens.”

According to Exodus 18:21, it is obvious that Moses placed a large number of men into positions of leadership. That cannot be contested. However, your church member is asserting that the “pattern, for the election of leaders in ancient Israel (is) from among the people.” And that these leaders are “functionally equivalent,” and “operate in terms of equality” to their leaders. In other words, if your church member is correct, then Exodus 18:21 suggests that the leaders were appointed by Moses as he was guided by the population. These appointed leaders then assumed a position of leadership and authority that was functionally equivalent” and operated in “terms of equality” to Moses himself.

¹⁵

Einspahr, Index to Brown, Driver & Briggs, 42.

¹⁶

<http://www.biblestudytools.net/InterlinearBible/>

One must properly understand both the Hebrew words **הִצִּיא** (Hatza: to position, to appoint) and **שָׂם** (Soom: to place, to set, to appoint) and the context of Exodus 18:21.

Jethro spoke to Moses and said, “Moses, you shall select the right kind of men and you shall make them rulers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.” When Moses selected these men he did so as the absolute and unquestioned leader of Israel. No one contested that God appointed him as the sole leader in Israel. Also, when Moses selected these leaders, it was done in an absolute autocratic style.

The only discussion he may have had with Israel was for insights into who was qualified to fill these positions. (Even this must be considered speculation) However, Moses did not confer voting privileges to anyone. He and he alone selected the men and put them into their positions.

One may note that this is exactly what the apostles did in Acts 6. So it is safe to say that to some extent the N.T. church did follow patterns set in the O.T.. However, those patterns point to hierarchical oversight. A plurality of leaders? Yes! A plurality of equal leadership? Absolutely not!

If Exodus 18 stopped at verse 21 one could build a case for a plurality of leaders. However, it is not possible to interpret these leaders as being “functionally equivalent” and that they operated in “terms of equality” to Moses himself.

However, Exodus 18 continues to vv. 25-26.

“And Moses *chose* able men out of all Israel, and *made* them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of

fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses but every small matter they judged themselves.” Exodus 18:25-26

Here in v.25 there are two more important Hebrew words. The first word is וַיְבַחַר (Vay-bahar). The root of this word is בַּחַר (Bahar). The Strong’s number for this word is #977. It is used 164 times in the O.T., and 3 times in Exodus. The definition of this word is to choose, to elect, to decide for.¹⁷

The other Hebrew word is וַיִּתֵּן (Va-yiten). It is from the root נָתַן (Natan). The Strong’s number for this word is #5414. It is used 1,811 times in the O.T. and 101 times in Exodus. The definition of this word is to give, put, to set, to bestow, to grant, to designate.¹⁸

According to Exodus 18:25, it was Moses who chose the men and it was Moses who designated them into their places of leadership. Yes, these men were in positions of leadership, but they were all under the authority of Moses. He appointed them and they answered to him.

Interesting note: The Greek language is a highly precise and technically inflected language. It has an incredibly large vocabulary and it is therefore easy to write and intentionally introduce various nuances. However, when compared to Greek, Hebrew is a simple archaic language that is quite in-precise. One word in the Hebrew language may often be translated in a number of different ways. This was important because there were not a whole lot of Hebrew words in the ancient language.

¹⁷

Ibid.

¹⁸

Ibid.

However, when the writer of Exodus writes of Moses' selecting leaders, he uses four different Hebrew words to convey this one concept. In Exodus 18:21 he uses the words תִּזְהַ (Hatza: to position, to appoint) and שׂוּם (Soom: to place, to set, to appoint). And in Exodus 18:25 he uses the Hebrew words בָּחַר (Bahar: to choose, to elect, to decide for) and נָתַן (Natan: to give, to put, to set, to bestow, to grant, to designate).

The writer of Exodus could have chosen any one of these four words to use. Instead, he chose all of them. None of these words can be translated, "appointed by a show of hands." They all convey the idea of one individual exercising authority over the masses.

Moses was attempting to single-handedly offer counsel for over one million people. So, he delegated leadership according to the need. Moses appointed and placed his leaders. He decided who was going to be used and he gave them their responsibilities.

The purpose of this organization was to relieve Moses. It was in fact a hierarchical pyramid structure that was designed to filter out all but the most pressing needs. Below is a table based on a population of one million people. It shows the pyramid hierarchical structure instituted in Exodus 18:21-26

Tier #1	One person (Moses)	Big Problems
Tier #2	1,000 people	
Tier #3	10,000 people	
Tier #4	20,000 people	
Tier #5	100,000 people	
Population	1,000,000 people	Small Problems

Judging from Exodus 18, I will conclude that when Old Paths Baptist Church reaches one million members, then David can in good conscience appoint leaders to handle the little things!

If David follows the “pattern” of Exodus 18:21, He will do the selecting. And once these “elders” are selected, David will use his unilateral God given authority to appoint them, place them, and direct them. Once this is done, they will work within the chain of command that David instituted and they will all be subordinate to him. However, before leaders are appointed, one must ask, “are they needed?”

2. The second O.T. verse your church member listed was **Judges 11:11**. Let’s revisit his statement: **“This election process seems to be patterned after the election of leaders in ancient Israel from among the people.”**

“Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.” Judges 11:11

Yes, Israel selected Jephthah, but was it the Lord’s desire? There is no indication that the “elders” ever sought the Lord or that after being elevated that Jephthah walked with the Lord. Unlike other judges, it does not say the the Lord raise Jephthah. Let’s compare Jephthah’s elevation to leadership with the others eleven Judges:

1. **Othniel:** “the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, ***the Lord raised up a deliverer*** ..., Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother.” Judges 3:9
2. **Ehud:** “the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, ***the Lord raised up a deliverer*** for them, Ehud...” Judges 3:15

3. **Shamgar:** “After him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel.” Judges 3:31
4. **Deborah:** “The sons of Israel cried to the Lord... Now Deborah, a prophetess...” Judges 4:3-4
5. **Gideon:** “Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord..., Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him (Gideon) and said to him The Lord is with you O valiant warrior..., ***The Lord ... said, Go... Have I not sent you?***” Judges 6:7, 11, 12, 13.
6. **Tola:** “Now after Abimelech died, Tola... arose to save Israel.” Judges 10:1
7. **Jair:** “After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty two years.” Judges 10:3
8. **Jephthah:** “***The people, the leaders*** of Gilead, said to one another, who is the man who will begin to fight against the sons of Ammon?... ***the elders*** of Gilead went to get Jephthah... The ***elders of Gilead*** said to Jephthah... ***The elders of Gilead*** and ***the people made*** him head and chief over them.” Judges 11:5, 6, 8, 11. (Where is the Lord?)
9. **Ibzan:** “Izban... judged Israel after him.” Judges 12:8
10. **Elon:** “Elon ... judged Israel after him.” Judges 12:11
11. **Abdon:** “Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him.” Judges 12:13
12. **Sampson:** “The ***angel of the Lord appeared*** to the woman ***and said to her***... For behold you shall conceive and give birth to a son... and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” Judges 13:3, 5

There are twelve judges. Jephthah is the only one who was unquestionably called and appointed by the elders and the people. He is also the only judge for whom there was considerable commentary without any real recognition of God. The people did

not pray. They did not seek the Lord. And neither did Jephthah. The only time he asked anything of the Lord, he attempted to bargain with God by offering a human sacrifice.

Since no other Judge was chosen the way Jephthah was, it is invalid to call his selection a “pattern.” At first the Lord selected, appointed, and elevated the judges. We see this explicitly stated with four of the Judges, Othniel (3:9), Ehud (3:15), Gideon (6:13), and Sampson (13:5). One Judge, Deborah is declared to have been a prophetess before she was a judge (4:3-4). Six of the judges are spoken of, but the way they ascended to the position is not mentioned: Shamgar (3:31), Tola (10:1), Jair (10:3), Ibzan (12:8), Elon (12:11), and Abdon (12:13).

The only pattern is that there is no pattern. The only situation among the judges that was truly unique involves the selection process of Jephthah. He is the only one who was explicitly appointed by the people. He is the only one who was promoted by the “elders.”

Of the twelve judges, the Bible offers commentary on six of them. For five of these six, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and Sampson, it is obvious that the Lord intervened and raised them up. Jephthah is only judge for whom there is considerable commentary and no evidence that the Lord appointed him. When reading his account, several noteworthy concerns arise.

First, there is no evidence that the elders ever sought the Lord before appointing Jephthah. It says in Judges 10:10 that “the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord, saying, we have sinned against you...” In 10:3 God declares “I will no longer deliver you.” In 10:15 Israel declared “We have sinned, do whatever seems good to You: only please deliver us this day.” 10:17 states that the Lord

“could bear the misery of Israel no longer.”

So, according to Judges 10, the Lord was prepared to give Israel His choice. But, they did not seek the Lord. They sought each other’s advice. It says in 10:18 “The people, the leaders of Gilead, *said to one another*, who is the man who will begin to fight against the sons of Ammon?”

And, though Jephthah was successful in defeating the enemy, there is no evidence he help Israel to walk with the Lord. He was a leader who was selected by the masses without any evidence of prayer or concern for the Lord’s will and the result of his leadership was the tragic death of his own daughter and a nation that was no closer to God than before he ascended to his position.

Exodus 18:21 and Judges 11:11 were chosen by your church member as examples of O.T. verses that promotes a plurality of elder rulers who were “functionally equivalent” and that they operated in “terms of equality.”

Exodus clearly states that Moses did the selecting and that both before and after the selection Moses was the single unquestioned leader of Israel. The selection of Jephthah in Judges 11:11 is completely unique among the judges themselves. None of the other judges were chosen the same way. His selection cannot even be considered a pattern for the judges themselves. How therefore can anyone argue that the method of his selection can be a pattern for anything else?

The truth is, if I were given an assignment to prove that a plurality of elders who were selected by a show of hands who were functionally equivalent and led on terms of equality with their pastors was unbiblical, I would choose these very verses! They

actually dismantle the very argument your church member is attempting to build.

My response to you was not an attempt to argue against Elder rule. It was merely an attempt to rebut your church member's letter and to build a case against the belief that Elder rule is either the only mandated church government, or the only permitted church government in the Bible.

Simply put, the Bible does not mandate any particular ecclesiastical form. God can bless and use a church regardless of whether it is episcopal, presbyterian, or congregational. As long as it adopts Paul's exhortation in Romans 14:4-5 "Who are you to judge the servant of another. To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind."

As I stated at the beginning. I like the idea of Elder rule. Personally, I like to call them leadership teams, but that is merely an issue of semantics. Though there is no singular mandated ecclesiology in the Bible, I firmly believe that a church government that incorporates a leadership structure with a team approach is healthier than either an autocratic hierarchical, or a democratic congregational rule.