

What is Shepherding All About?

Interview with Ken Jones, our Pastor for Shepherding, about Shepherding @ OMPC

What is this new Shepherding System at OMPC? The Shepherding ministry approach is where every OMPC member is assigned a shepherding elder who will periodically check to see how the member family is doing. By the way, if you do not know who your shepherd is, please contact Shelly Gentry sgentry@ompc.org, the Administrative Assistant to Shepherding, for this information.

What Scriptures support this shepherding approach? Jesus himself taught us that a good shepherd knows the names of his sheep (**John 10:3**) and the Apostle Peter told elders to shepherd their assigned flock (**1 Peter 5:1-5**).

How do the numbers break down at OMPC? We have about 850 family units here in our 2, 800+ membership family at Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church that are shepherded by 8 Shepherding Commissions made up of 70 shepherds, 25 Deacons, and 59 Women Shepherding Team members, 25 Women's Mercy team members along with 9 Resource Pastors. *This is a 140 member ministry team dedicated to follow Jesus, the Chief Shepherds example, who showed His compassion for His people by shepherding and caring for them well* (**Matthew 9:36**).

What are the blessings of the Shepherding Process? Each OMPC member is regularly contacted by our church leadership in a relationally authentic way in order to provide better communication and caring within the church body. In this light, it helps a large church function more like a smaller family unit **making sure everyone is seen, known, and connected**. Also, it authorizes the elder to shepherd, which means he may need to gently guide church members to reach out with their spiritual gifts **in order to show grace to others in need** within our church family or our community.

Is the shepherding elder supported and trained in this ministry role? Yes, each shepherding elder is supported in their follow-up care for their assigned church members by a Shepherding Commission of fellow elders that includes a Resource Pastor. Shepherd-elders receive **on-going equipping** each month in their respective calling as a shepherd as well (Psalm 78:72). In addition, the Women's Shepherding

and Ministry Teams and the Deacons receive regular training. Often, all these groups receive their training together to enhance their fellowship and comradery.

It makes sense for OMPC to go in this direction because many other churches within the PCA denomination are going to this system. What makes OMPC different? There are a number of important features, but the most notable is that each Shepherding Commission (there are 9 of them at this time) will coordinate with a **Shepherding Emergency Response Team (SERT)** comprised of elders, mercy deacons, under-shepherds, and members of the Women Shepherding and Mercy Teams to assist them in comprehensively responding with *grace-driven compassion* to OMPC member family needs. This is what is called *mutual aid* where everyone gets back-up and does not feel like they are ministering in a silo. It provides more effective coverage for our church family.

What Scriptures support the SERT aspect of the shepherding process? We see in Philippians the Apostle Paul, for the sake of the gospel and for people, **served side by side** with elders (1:2), deacons (1:2), and women (4:2).

Would you please tell us a story that captures this Shepherding Vision in a nutshell? Imagine coming home to find your house broken into by a burglar. You are devastated because your valuables were stolen and your home vandalized. You feel insecure and numb. Once you notify the police and your family and friends, who would you call in the church? Well, we sincerely hope you would want your shepherding Elder to know so he could pray for you and to spiritually support you. He would also be able to let the SERT team know about your troubling ordeal in order for the deacons and the women shepherding and mercy teams, with God's wisdom, to devise a response plan to undergird you through this struggle. Contemplate the blessing of knowing a grace-driven team made up of elders, deacons, and commissioned women **mobilized to gather in Christ's name for the sole purpose of tailoring a loving response to your family's crisis. Not just one Good Samaritan helping you, but a team of Good Samaritans responding. This vision compels us to more and more love, serve, and shepherd in God's grace.**

How does Shepherding fit into the overall Purpose, Vision, and Values at OMPC? One of our core values at OMPC is to be a place of strength and restoration – a community where we can be honest about our brokenness as we call one another to the hope that is promised in Christ. A robust shepherding approach

will help us implement this value on a daily basis as well as to help us achieve our vision of being a church that is Engaging Every Neighbor with the Surprising Power of Grace. It does so by making better connections between all of the membership and our church leadership team, and it provides ongoing intentional equipping to that end.

What is the general description for what a Shepherding Commission does?

We call it the **4 C's of Shepherding**: Connecting, Contacting, Collaborating, and Care. From **Connecting** regularly with the other Shepherding Commission (team) members, we believe will flow a consistent **Contacting** of the members of our congregation. In situations that need extra attention, the Shepherding Commission members will **Collaborate** together asking the Holy Spirit to give them the wisdom to best **Care** for our church family and community.

How do you hold accountable your Shepherd Leaders? Each month our leaders attend a regular Shepherding Commission Meeting where they report what ministry endeavors they are engaged in with the aim of seeking collaborative wisdom from the other leaders. Also, our shepherds adhere to the *OMPC Shepherding Ministry Ethics and Vows*, which makes sure we are all following the church's Vision-Framework, ministry ethos, biblical theology and standards of care.

What Do Our Monthly Shepherd-Leadership Meetings Look Like? We follow the **7 I model** (Invocation: Inter-relational; Information; Inspiration; Intercessory; Instruction; Implementation): We start off with a prayer of **Invocation** and then enjoy a high energy **Inter-relational** dinner together with lively conversations. From there we have a time of relevant **Information** sharing and then, usually our senior pastor, leads us in an **Inspiration** time of vision-casting. At that time, we also may sing worship songs together. We then enter into a substantial time of **Intercessory** prayer for the world and our congregation. Before we transition to meet as Shepherding Commissions, we are engaged in a time of **Instruction** where usually one of our pastoral staff members equips us with skills to be better shepherds. Finally, we break into our separate shepherding groups as this is our pathway to **Implementation** in order to do the process work of making shepherding plans, holding accountability discussions, and coordinating crisis response supports to those in need.

What is the idea behind the title, Pastor for Shepherding? Most church's call such a position the Shepherding Pastor or Pastor of Shepherding. However, our

Session was very intentional in calling it the Pastor *for* Shepherding because they desired to stress that this position is not supposed to do all the shepherding. Rather this pastoral position is commissioned to equip others in our congregation to do the noble work of shepherding God's flock. The preposition *for* is embedded in the title to remind us of the truth of Ephesians 4:1 that God calls pastors to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

What is Mutual Aid in Shepherding? The idea comes from the law enforcement world where one officer is back up by another at the scene of the crisis. Biblically mutual aid is the principle that a threefold cord is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:112). Shepherds need others to back them up in their shepherding ministry. As Jesus said to minister two-by-two (Luke 10:1), so we endeavor to make sure that shepherds do not minister in silos, but are engaged with and supported by other servant-leaders. **We are one team; one ministry, with One to glorify.** Developing a Holy Spirit team-synergy is key for a wise and effective shepherding ministry.

What are the Layers of Shepherding? The Women Shepherding Team, led by the Women's Ministry Director, and the Deacon's Mercy Team, coordinated by the Mobilization and Mercy Pastor, both augment the Shepherding Elders as they all make caring contacts with our households. This threefold cord bolsters our ability to wisely keep up with the needs of a robust shepherding system.

What book would you recommend if we wanted to learn more? *Read The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* by Dr. Timothy Z. Witmer who is Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary.

If we would like to ask more questions, who do we contact? Contact Ken Jones, OMPC's Pastor for Shepherding, at kjones@ompc.org.