

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: To Whom it May Concern

FROM: Theresa Lynn Sidebotham, Esq.

DATE: May 13, 2025

SUBJECT: Executive Summary of Leadership Audit

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### **I. Introduction**

This Executive Summary gives an overview of the Leadership Audit performed recently for Christland Church. All staff and pastors were involved in the audit. The audit took into account: a Talent Insight test that evaluated the DISC profile, behavioral traits, and core motivations of all staff; a confidential 360° Evaluation of supervisor, peers, and direct reports; and confidential personal interviews. This audit was directed at identifying any toxic leadership and red flags with leader personalities, but also as a useful tool to help individuals and leaders maximize their potential.

In general, the leadership culture at the Church is excellent, and the reverse of toxic. Some areas of improvement were identified.

### **II. Review of Audit**

#### **A. Description of Leadership Culture**

The leadership culture at Christland is widely described by staff and volunteers as relational, accessible, and rooted in trust. The atmosphere is often characterized as family-like, with a lack of formality or hierarchical distance. Staff consistently noted that they feel personally known, prayed for, and supported by their leaders.

##### **1. Leadership characteristics**

Witnesses spoke highly of the lead pastor, who is described as "fatherly" and "servant-hearted." Several witnesses expressed appreciation for the humility modeled by the senior pastor and others. Witnesses agreed that leaders are willing to acknowledge mistakes, listen to feedback, and walk alongside others rather than dictate decisions. Numerous witnesses also commented on the spiritual depth and sincerity of the leadership, as well as their commitment to biblical teaching and the development of individual leaders.

## 2. Women's roles

While the Church is complementarian, women on the staff feel respected in their leadership. They feel validated and celebrated in their gifting. While women see some room for growth in their roles, they do not feel sidelined or disrespected.

## 3. Conflict and authority

Witnesses felt that conflict among the pastors and staff had been minimal, and that generally, people were willing to work matters through and were ready to apologize when needed.

All witnesses were asked about misuse of spiritual authority, spiritual abuse, or toxic behavior. Uniformly, staff see the pastors as humble and repenting when they are wrong. There is no pressure for staff to conform to positions that people don't believe in (though agreement with basic Church doctrine would be required for church leaders).

Witnesses noted that dealing with sin in the Church required sensitivity. People could not be leaders at the Church if they were not living in accordance with the Church's beliefs. However, they were welcome to attend. Pastors noted that guiding people morally was a balance between honesty and discerning where people were in their own spiritual growth and what they were ready to hear.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While we note that attendees may dislike the doctrine of a particular Church, such as its views on men's and women's roles, it is not spiritual abuse for a Church to maintain its doctrinal standards. Attendees must conform their beliefs to a Church and not the other way around.

#### 4. 360° Evaluation

A summary of the 360° Evaluation created some cultural health indicators (aggregated from all participants): spiritual maturity, excellent; relationship trust, excellent; emotional intelligence, very strong; work ethic, excellent; leadership development, moderate-growing; feedback and coaching, moderate-growing; and sustainability of roles, moderate.

#### **B. Critiques of the Leadership Culture and Structure**

Witnesses mentioned some areas that needed improvement.

##### 1. Leadership issues

Witnesses identified some inconsistencies in the leadership culture. While some staff described their experience as affirming and appropriately guided, others reported feeling under-led or insufficiently supported, particularly those perceived as more mature or capable. Some staff expressed a desire for more structured leadership, clearer expectations, and accountability. Some witnesses noted that there could be more clarification of roles and responsibilities at times

Some witnesses reported that sometimes leaders would listen but not always truly hear or incorporate feedback—what one witness described as the difference between "listening" and "grasping what's being said."

##### 2. Small groups

Many witnesses acknowledged that there is still a ways to go in selection, spiritual formation, and training of small group leaders. They acknowledge that, at times, small group leaders may have misinterpreted theological directives or been a barrier for people to interact with pastors. Some small group leaders in the past might have been authoritarian or rigid. There is a commitment to undertake this training, which has already begun, as well as a commitment to allow church members direct access to pastoral staff without having to go through their small group leaders.

##### 3. Policies and procedures

From a personnel perspective, policies could use some work and development.

#### 4. Harm from attacks

The Church has experienced significant harm from online and media attacks. It has affected not only the growth of the church, but the pastors and staff feel beaten up and exhausted. Essentially, the attacks have been a form of emotional abuse, putting people at risk of burnout. Leaders are grieved that people who have issues with the Church proved unwilling to enter Christian mediation facilitated by trained professionals, to seek reconciliation. Witnesses saw a need for healing, especially for the pastors.

#### **C. Values of the Church**

One value of the Church is that it is multi-ethnic.<sup>2</sup> They expressed,

We are a Church committed to love and unity among people of many ethnicities, races, and nations together in Christ. Our command from Jesus is to reach "all nations" with the gospel, so we seek to heal the wounds caused by the sin of racism and division.

The church best represents Jesus' intention when made up of every race and ethnicity in one unified family.

It is important to note that no witness brought up any specific example of racial discrimination or even prejudice/bias. However, witnesses did express that there need to be more work on understanding in the multi-ethnic context. True communication does not come easily.

#### **D. Recommendations**

1. Formal focus on oversight and feedback of direct reports, with professional development;
2. Review of Talent Insights and 360° Evaluations with each individual;
3. Continued work on employment policies and relevant protocols;

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<sup>2</sup> There are other values as well, such as being intergenerational and complementarian.

4. Enhanced evaluation and continued training of leaders at the small group level;
5. Training in multi-ethnic ministry and communication; and
6. Attention to healing for pastors and staff.

### **III. Conclusion**

In summary, the leadership culture at Christland is described as deeply relational and spiritually sincere, with a strong foundation of personal care and pastoral investment. At the same time, there is room for growth in clarity, consistency, structural support, and responsiveness. While most interviewees expressed a high level of trust and respect for the leadership team, there is a clear desire for continued development in how leadership is practiced and perceived across different layers of the church. On the part of senior leaders, there is a commitment to this development.