

Recognizing Elders

Every odd year, our members recognize men in the role of elder. The qualifications listed below are presented to our congregation, who are then asked to give names of men who fit them and are already doing the work of an elder in our congregation. Those names are given to a search committee, who then pass along their recommendations to the elder board. The board reviews the list and interviews the potential candidates before finalizing a list of candidates to be voted upon by Lakeland's members during a congregational meeting.

You can find a full description of the elder nomination process process in Article VIII of Lakeland's consultation, which is included in this PDF.

Qualifications from Titus 1:5-9 & 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Blameless This means that "no ongoing blame attaches to the man" This over-arching qualification does not mean sinlessness, but that he makes right what is wrong. The details of "blamelessness" are seen in four categories.

1. Family or home-life qualifications

Husband of but one wife May mean "has not been divorced" but we take to mean "one woman-ed man," faithful in marriage. While this passage assumes marriage, it does not require it.

A man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient While his children are not perfect, they are submissive and do not "blatantly and regularly disregard the instructions of their parents." We take "children" to be "pre-adolescent" & living at home. While this passage assumes children, it does require them.

2. Interpersonal qualifications

The ministry of an elder is the leading of people

He is not...

overbearing He is humble, not arrogant or overpowering in his engagement with people.

quick tempered He is not inclined to anger quickly, but is patient, longsuffering, able to absorb and respond wisely to others in.

given to drunkenness He does not get inebriated or is not unwise, uncaring, or unhealthy in the use of alcohol.

violent He does not responds to frustration with force but is a peacemaker. 1 Tim 3:3 adds to this that he is to be **gentle**.

pursuing dishonest gain not a lover of money or lacking integrity in in financial dealings.

quarrelsome Able to engage in controversial dialogue without being quarrelsome.

He is...

hospitable, warmly welcoming others with the love of Christ.

Good reputation with outsiders His relationships with neighbors or co-workers is not only good, but consistent.

3. Personal integrity qualifications

The ministry of an Elder is chiefly a spiritual work, done by spiritual means. Therefore consecration of heart and life are vital.

One who loves what is good He delights in the goodness of God and His good works.

Self-controlled He is not "carried away" or "mastered" by passions and appetites.

Upright He is, in this sense, "law abiding."

Holy His life, speech, habits, relationships, and pursuits are generally characterized as consistently God-honoring.

Disciplined Does not give in to lethargy or laziness but able to focus to carry out a task.

4. Doctrinal – Scriptural qualifications

The ministry of an Elder includes oversight of the doctrine of the body (1 Tim 4:16).

Holds firmly to the trustworthy as it has been taught He is doctrinally sound, well versed in the Scriptures, able to discern truth from error Biblically.

Able to teach The Elder's role is a shepherding role but the chief tool of the Shepherd is the Word of God. Therefore an Elder is someone God uses to strengthen people's faith through the ministry of the Word of God formally or informally. The "recipients" of this teaching might also be adults, teenagers, or children.

relationship differences in the manner set forth in Matthew 18, the committee, with consensus ratification by the Board, has the right and responsibility in obedience to the Scriptures to disfellowship such a one. In any case, the committee shall present to the offender a written recounting of the unbiblical conduct and/or doctrine, and shall provide the offender an opportunity to demonstrate to the committee that he or she is not engaging in such conduct or espousing such doctrine. The accused shall have the right to present his or her defense in person (or waive such a right, either explicitly or by default) at a duly called meeting of the committee. If, after a fair and impartial hearing of all the accessible witnesses (who function as eye witnesses or as investigators) and a review of all the facts ascertainable, the committee, by a consensus vote, determines that the accused has engaged in and remains unrepentant about such unbiblical conduct or espousing such unbiblical doctrine, the committee shall, with Board consensus ratification, initiate disfellowshipping of the offender. If the accused is absent from this meeting, a record of the proceedings, including the findings and discipline conditions determined by the committee, shall be hand delivered or sent to him or her with proof of mailing. The committee's ratified determination, along with a brief description of the sin and the required nature and time frame for repentance of such sin to avoid disfellowship, must then be presented only to the membership at a promptly and duly called Congregational Business Meeting. The committee, with consensus ratification by the Board, will determine the nature, extent and means of any discussion of the matter at the meeting. The membership will then be given the opportunity to prayerfully interact with the individual to encourage his or her repentance before actual disfellowship takes effect. If the defined period elapses without the offender repenting as required, he or she shall then be disfellowshipped with such enacted discipline being promptly announced to the membership (*Matthew 18:15-20*).

- 7.3 **RESTORATION:** The church must forgive and will progressively, if not immediately, restore to fellowship those persons who show satisfactory evidence of repentance as determined by a majority vote of the committee and consensus ratification by the Board (*II Corinthians 2:5-11*).

ARTICLE VIII – LEADERSHIP

8.1 ELDERS

Lakeland elders are those men who demonstrate the Holy Spirit's gifting and calling to provide spiritual oversight, shepherding and organizational governance for the congregation. It is our conviction that an elder is recognized on the basis of biblical qualifications as delineated herein. It is not on the basis of worldly talents, popularity, intelligence, wealth or other possible factors.

- 8.1.1 **Qualifications:** An elder must be a member of the congregation, and be committed to carrying out the listed duties in 8.1.3. The spiritual qualifications are outlined in Acts 20:28, I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. In summary they are:

- a) to have a lifestyle above reproach
- b) if married, to be demonstrating a Biblical pattern of faithfulness to his wife
- c) to be stable in personal characteristics
- d) to be hospitable
- e) to be able to teach and shepherd
- f) to lack worldly characteristics
- g) to be the spiritual leader in his own family
- h) not to be a recent convert
- i) to have a good reputation with non-Christians
- j) recognition by the membership of the Holy Spirit ministering through him at Lakeland

- 8.1.2 **Term of Office:** Elders who are recognized according to this article shall have a term of office beginning on the date he is officially recognized by vote in a Congregational Business Meeting until the

date of the next elder recognition vote approximately two years later. There is no limit to the number of terms an elder may serve.

8.1.3 **Duties:** The duties of the elders are listed in John 21:15-17, Acts 6:2, 4, Acts 20:28-31, Hebrews 13:7, 17 and I Peter 5:1-4. In summary they include:

- a) the ministry of the Word by ensuring that the church is being fed through insightful and accurate biblical teaching in both public meetings and individual contacts
- b) guarding the doctrine of the church by establishing Scripturally sound policy and doctrinal positions to be held by the church and by confronting false teaching and behavior contradictory to biblical truth and implementing appropriate corrective measures when needed
- c) a commitment to regularly pray for the church and its members
- d) overseeing the pastoral staff and activities of the church by monitoring mission effectiveness and ministry alignment while providing discernment and direction regarding the purpose, goals and priorities of the church and ensuring that the life of the church is being well managed by competent, godly leaders
- e) providing, developing and overseeing shepherding of individuals within the church while encouraging ministry to the poor and distressed
- f) being an example for the church
- g) chairing, if not facilitating, preparing for and/or participating in the Congregational Business Meetings
- h) recommending deacon candidates to the membership for initial recognition, and reappointing deacons for additional terms
- i) selecting pastoral staff Board members and their term of office on the Board
- j) meeting together on a regular basis for carrying out their duties

8.1.4 **Recognition: A)** The Holy Spirit appoints elders over the church (*Acts 20:28*). The church may recognize any willing man whom it sees as possessing the qualities and doing the work of an elder as one called by the Holy Spirit. Normally, recognition of all new and current elders, except the pastoral staff invited to serve on the Board as provided in 8.1.4B, will be by a membership recognition process held every two years. During January of each odd year the Board will appoint a nominating committee to consist of the senior pastor, at least two other elders, and at least two members of the congregation. There must be at least one committee member for every 25 households comprised of one or more regular attenders, including members. During February of each odd year, information/instruction will be given to the congregation as to the qualifications and responsibilities of elders. The committee will receive a suggested list of candidates from the Board and will request suggestions from regular attenders, including members. They will review the names submitted to them and compile a list of men whom the majority believe are capable of serving as elders. They will submit this list by April 1st to the Board who will render a final determination of appropriate candidates after further examination. The Board will submit to the congregation the list of elder candidates they have unanimously approved by no later than the second Sunday in May. Prayerful consideration of all currently serving and proposed elder candidates will be encouraged. The members will then be asked to vote by ballot on or before the second Sunday in June at a Congregational Business Meeting. Any candidate who receives a "yes" vote from at least 75% of those members present and voting either "yes" or "no" on that candidate will be deemed recognized as an elder. Abstentions involving any candidate will not count in determining the minimum 75% vote required. The Board will propose and manage its own size by considering factors like current and anticipated need and the availability and willingness of qualified men, since not all men who are actively shepherding are expected to be elders.

If at any time there are fewer than three elders or an inadequate number of elders to fully carry out the duties required, the present Board will submit directly to the congregation the names of suggested elder candidates. These candidates will serve as elders until the next, regular, odd year recognition vote, if

approved by at least 75% of the members present and voting either “yes” or “no” on that candidate at a Congregational Business Meeting. This meeting must be held no less than two weeks and no greater than six weeks after the suggested names have been submitted to the congregation. If an elder who has resigned or taken a leave of absence during his term of office for non-character reasons later requests to serve out the remainder of his term, he may be reinstated by the consensus vote of the Board.

B) The Board may invite pastoral staff members who are not recognized as elders according to 8.1.4A to serve on the Board. While serving on the Board, such pastoral staff members shall be elders.

- 8.1.5 **Board Functioning:** The Board will be self-organizing in that it will elect its own Chairman and Secretary and delegate the other various functions and areas of responsibility of the Board. The Board will appoint and maintain adequate committees, subcommittees and personnel as needed for effective and efficient service to the church. The Board shall approach decisions in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit, seeking earnestly to reach a unanimous decision without coercion. As a last resort, unless otherwise stated herein, the Board will decide matters on the basis of a super-majority. Non-staff elders must constitute at least half of any majority vote when the vote is not unanimous.
- 8.1.6 **Board Meetings:** The Board shall meet a minimum of once each month of the year with all elders being notified in advance by the Chairman of the Board or his designate of the time and place for every meeting. Additional meetings may be held whenever called by the Senior Pastor, Board Chairman or any two members of the Board. Special circumstances, as agreed to by the Board, will be sufficient reason for suspending the requirements of this section for any one-month period.
- 8.1.7 **Quorum and Order:** In order to have a quorum for any official, binding vote, all Board members must have been notified in advance of the meeting and a majority of Board members must be present. In order to facilitate orderly and satisfactory meetings, appropriate and accepted rules and procedures will be used.
- 8.1.8 **Visitors:** The meetings of the Board are not open to the public. However, the Board has the right to invite relevant individuals to attend their meetings. At times when non-elders are present and personal matters are discussed which would deserve confidentiality, it is the responsibility of the elders to ask non-elders in attendance to be excused.
- 8.1.9 **Reprimand or Termination of Ministry:** See section 8.5 “Reprimand and Termination Procedures.” The following reasons for termination of service or reprimand will be accepted:
- a. resignation
 - b. continued behavior which violates the Biblical qualification for the office
 - c. continued agreement with doctrine which violates the Statement of Faith (Article V) or policies of the Elder Board
 - d. continued ineffectiveness of his ministry as demonstrated by failing to carry out successfully the duties set forth in 8.1.3 and/or other similar biblical duties

8.2 SENIOR PASTOR

The senior pastor/elder, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall faithfully execute the work of a shepherd by guiding and serving Lakeland’s congregation.

- 8.2.1 **Qualifications:** He must be qualified to be an elder. In addition, he must be gifted in and have a philosophy of equipping as articulated in Ephesians 4:11-16.
- 8.2.2 **Term:** There is no set term of service.
- 8.2.3 **Duties:** In addition to those obligations already stated for elders (8.1.3), the senior pastor shall:
- a) give himself to the studying, preaching and teaching of God’s Word and to prayer (Acts 6:4)
 - b) be an example to the believers in his personal, family, and public life (1 Timothy 3:1-7)
 - c) equip believers to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12)
 - d) ensure that the congregation is led in: 1) worship and prayer, 2) the study of the Scriptures, 3) the administration of the ordinances, 4) watching over the spiritual needs of the body, 5) seeking the salvation of unbelievers and 6) fulfilling the purpose of the church