

## Eldership Responsibilities, Qualifications & Selection Process

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### **Eldership Team Responsibilities:**

The principle responsibilities of Elders (Overseers, Pastors) are to provide spiritual leadership, teaching, guidance and protection for the local church. The Elders are set apart to provide Biblical counseling, preaching and teaching in sound doctrine. Their responsibility is to protect the congregation and the mission of the church from false doctrine and teaching. The Elders must be available to the congregation and listen to their concerns and needs. The Elder must view his position as a servant of the Lord God and to the people of God. He must not bring to himself any credit or have any self-serving agenda. An Elder serves on the active Eldership for no more than two consecutive terms of three years. After a minimum one year sabbatical, an Elder may be selected and confirmed to serve for additional terms.

In summary, according to the New Testament, the Elders lead the church, teach and preach the Word, exhort the saints in sound doctrine, protect the church from false doctrine, and to visit and pray for the sick. Elders, in biblical terminology — “shepherd [keep watch, oversee, pastor] the flock of God” — (i.e. lead, feed, guide and guard), the local “body of believers”.

### **Scripture References:**

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. Acts 20:28*

*Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:1-3*

### **Moral and Spiritual Qualifications:**

Elders shall demonstrate qualifications for Spiritual leadership in the church as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, as well as meet the following requirements: An elder must have been an active member of Clayton Baptist Church for at least 3 years and must have consistently demonstrated —

- *Faithfulness in Church Attendance*
- *Faithfulness in Ministry and Service*
- *Faithfulness in Tithing and Stewardship*

An elder must make a *statement of faith* that affirms – Jesus Christ alone is the only way to salvation, and also affirms the *Statement of Faith, Church Covenant and Bylaws* of Clayton Baptist Church.

The Spiritual character, effectiveness, integrity and reputation of any church are directly related to the moral excellence and spiritual maturity of its leadership. The Word of God places such significant importance on having spiritually mature and Biblically qualified church leadership, and also delineates specific standards for evaluating those who desire to serve in this office.

The most important qualification, of which the rest are supportive, is that he is to be “above reproach” or blameless. That is, he must be a leader who cannot be accused of anything sinful in his personal life (i.e., marital, business, professional, social or spiritual life), which could bring legitimate accusation or public scandal, and therefore bring reproach on the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Scriptural Qualifications:**

#### ***1 Timothy 3:1-7***

*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach...*

#### ***Titus 1:5-9***

*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.*

### **Consideration of Spiritual Gifts: (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-10, 28; Ephesians 4:11-13)**

<p><b>Prophecy...</b> meaning to “speak forth” and proclaim (i.e. preach) the Word of God; proclaiming what has been previously revealed in the truth of God’s Word.</p>	<p><b>Administration...</b> to direct, guide (show the way) and govern (i.e. an overseer) the people of God in a Biblical, effective organized manner.</p>
<p><b>Exhortation...</b> to admonish, correct and rebuke or to comfort, edify and encourage the people of God.</p>	<p><b>Leadership</b> (see Administration)... leadership within the body of Christ; an “undershepherd” in Christ.</p>
<p><b>Word of Wisdom...</b> the ability to understand God’s Word and His will, and to make skillful application to the Christian life (i.e. our manner of living).</p>	<p><b>Discernment...</b> Guardians of the truth, who protect the church from demonic lies, false doctrines, perverted cults, and fleshly (i.e. worldly) lust and immorality.</p>
<p><b>Word of Knowledge...</b> ability to understand and speak the truth of God’s Word; understanding the meaning of truth with insight into the mysteries of His Word.</p>	<p><b>Teaching...</b> The ability to clarify, interpret, understand and proclaim sound doctrine, rightly dividing the truth of God’s Word. Pastor-Shepherds must have this gift.</p>

### **Eldership Considerations and Selection Process:**

Each year during the month of September, the active Eldership will prayerfully consider the need to add or replace members (refer to Eldership Terms) of the active Eldership Team. If any church member has prayerfully considered a spiritually mature man who is Biblically qualified and spiritually gifted to serve as an Elder, he/she may send a letter or email (via church website) to an active member of the Eldership Team that states why this individual should be considered.

In October, the active Eldership will meet to prayerfully consider any necessary changes to the active Eldership and, as required, interview potential candidates for the active Eldership Team. On the last Sunday in October, the Eldership Team will present new candidates for the active Eldership Team to the church membership for prayerful consideration and encouragement.

Finally, on the second Sunday in November, any new (or returning) candidate(s) for the active Eldership Team will be presented to the church membership, at a scheduled Church Conference meeting, for a vote of acclamation and confirmation. The confirmed Eldership candidate(s) will be ordained, if not previously ordained, and begin their term of active Eldership service at the beginning of the year.

### **Function of the Senior Pastor [Undershepherd]**

The Senior Pastor leads the Eldership Team as the “undershepherd” of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd (*1 Peter 5:4*) for the body of Christ. He serves the local church by:

- Leading and shepherding [oversee, guard, keep watch] the flock of God, as one who must give an account (*Acts 20:28, Hebrews 13:17; 1 Pet 5:2*);
- Preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God’s Word (*1 Timothy 4:11-16*); and
- Caring for the needs of the flock, like a father cares for his family (*1 Timothy 3:5*).

Being accountable and responsible, the Senior Pastor has the authority to carry out the Biblical calling and expectations of the Chief Shepherd for the body of Christ.

### **Why have a “plurality of Elders” in the local church?**

There are many pragmatic reasons why the church should have Elders. However, the principle reason to have a plurality of Elders [Eldership Team] to pastor, oversee and shepherd the local church is because the New Testament repeatedly gives that directive and example in Scripture.

A “Plurality of Elders” [Pastors, Overseers, Shepherds] for the local church will –

- Help to carry the substantial burden and responsibility of pastoral ministry for the church
- Bring a rich diversity and variety of experience, knowledge and gifts to pastoral ministry
- Provide peer relationships to balance the strengths and weaknesses in spiritual leadership
- Provide important and necessary accountability and protection for the spiritual leadership
- Provide sufficient time for the Senior Pastor to spend in prayer and study of God’s Word
- Provide additional *spiritually gifted leadership* to meet the needs and requirements within the local body of believers, in the following areas of church ministry and pastoral care:

**Plurality of Elders** (continued)

1) administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; 2) exhortation and teaching of sound doctrine; 3) Biblical counseling and church discipline; 4) interview and instruction of prospective candidates for church leadership and membership; 5) oversight for all church ministry programs; and 6) spiritual leadership for equipping the saints for discipleship, evangelism, stewardship, teaching and other Biblical church ministry programs.

**Biblical References:** *Acts 16:4–5, Acts 20:28–29, I Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:17 and I Peter 5:1–3.*

**Transition Term Process for Eldership Terms:**

The Eldership Team shall consist of pastoral [staff] members and non-pastoral [laity] members. All shall conform to the Biblical qualifications for the office of Elder. The active Eldership will consist of three, five or seven team members. A majority of the Eldership Team shall be Church lay members who are not paid pastoral staff members. No Elder shall serve as an active Deacon during his tenure on the active Eldership Team.

During the first four years of establishing an Eldership Team, to serve at Clayton Baptist Church, the non-staff lay-members of the Eldership Team will serve different lengths of initial “transition period” terms (e.g. 4, 3 and 2 year) on the active Eldership Team, as shown below –

- *1<sup>st</sup> Elder ordained will serve an initial 4 year term*
- *2<sup>nd</sup> Elder ordained will serve an initial 3 year term*
- *3<sup>rd</sup> Elder ordained will serve an initial 2 year term*

**Eldership Terms & Transition Timeline:**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<i>Senior Pastor</i>	_____										
<i>Associate Pastor</i>	- - - - -										
<i>1<sup>st</sup> Lay Elder</i>	Single 4-Year Term			Second 3-Year Term						- - - - -	
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Lay Elder</i>	First 3-Year Term		Second 3-Year Term				- - - - -				
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Lay Elder</i>	2-Year Term		Second 3-Year Term				- - - - -				