

ELDERS AT COVENANT CHURCH:

Elders are the highest level of authority and accountability at Covenant Church. Elders are chosen by the congregation, rise up from the grassroots of membership, representing the congregation's God-given diversity as we live out Christ's calling for His Church.

At Covenant, Elders serve in two primary ways, governing and shepherding.

Governing the church is not entrusted to one pastor or elder, but to a community of elders who make up the Elder Board along with our lead pastor. The governance board delegates ministry strategy decisions and specific operational tactics to the staff and provides broad oversight to ensure Covenant's vision and values. Covenant's Elder Board has a minimum of seven elders and our lead pastor. The Executive Pastor serves as an ex-officio member of the board, serving as a primary liaison to staff.

The second way elders serve is through shepherding and discipleship. Shepherding and discipleship function together and serve as the primary ministry of an elder. The majority of elders will be freed from direct governance responsibilities allowing for this focus in serving the members of Covenant. Shepherding is carried out not by elders alone, but by ministry teams which will often have elder representation. We stand in need of more elders to partner in leading member care. This consists of everything from membership interviews, crisis care and response, leading groups, coaching group leaders, and setting a pace-setting example in all things.

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS:

- Nominees must champion the vision and values of Covenant Church. Covenant's Vision and Values are a priority distinctive for our elders.
- Nominees for elder must have served as leaders/volunteers in a ministry or initiative of Covenant Church. Please specify how they have served if possible.
- Elders must have a fluency in applying the scriptures to life in a way that encourages, strengthens, comforts and equips others.
- Nominees should hold to the system of doctrine of Covenant Church. Elders are required to have a high level of agreement with Covenant's doctrinal standards. Elders must also embrace the sense of proportion in terms of Covenant's absolutes, convictions and preferences.
- Nominees should be good team players, show evidence of leadership, humility and be credible witnesses to those who know them inside and outside of church life.
- Nominees should have the time beyond their regular ministry commitments to attend two additional meeting or ministry opportunities per month and serve an average of at least eight to ten hours a month. Shepherding Elders should serve out of their gifts and passions in a wide-range of possible ministries. All elders should expect to be called upon to serve in times of crisis and special demands that will have a wide range of needs.

- Covenant's understanding of elders in the New Testament is that elders were male leaders. We understand women were active in various leadership roles and that men and woman are equal in gifting, intellect and all areas of ministry. Our Elders partner in shepherding ministry teams with women staff, and leadership and our Elder Board actively seeks input and partnership with our women's ministry staff and lay leadership.
- Nominees should be known and endorsed by at least one member of staff.
- Nominees for elder cannot nominate themselves or be nominated by family members.
- Nominees must be members.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF AN ELDER

The biblical teaching on church leadership begins and ends with the character of the individuals who are called to the leadership team of the church. Perfection in any of these areas is not called for, but an elder must consistently possess a threshold of exemplary character in the following areas:

Specific Character Qualities: (1 Timothy 3:2–7 and Titus 1:6–9)

- **Above reproach**—Elders must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free from patterns of sin.
- **Husband of one wife**—Elders, if married, must be devoted husbands, fulfilling their vows to uniquely love, honor, and cherish their wives.
- **Temperate**—Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, and free from excesses.
- **Prudent**—Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
- **Respectable**—Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and honorable behavior.
- **Hospitable**—Elders must be unselfish with personal resources, willing to share blessings with others and ready to befriend the stranger, taking initiative towards people that refreshes them.
- **Apt to teach (literally “Teachly”)** —Elders must be able to communicate the scripture naturally in conversation and to apply it to strengthen, encourage, and comfort people.
- **Not addicted to wine**—Elders must be free from addictions and willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
- **Not pugnacious or quick-tempered**—Elders must be gentle, patient, and able to exercise self-control in difficult situations.
- **Uncontentious**—Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation and must have a sense of proportion that majors on majors and appreciates that gospel-shaped ministry seeks to be known by what we are for, not what we are against.
- **Free from the love of money**—Elders must be generously supportive of Covenant with their financial gifts, prioritizing Covenant in their stewardship. In

lifestyle, elders must not be greedy, or preoccupied with amassing material things.

- **Manage own household**—Elders must have a well-ordered household and a healthy family life, leading their household in an authentic way.
- **Not a new convert/not a new believer**—Elders must not be new believers. They must have been a Christian long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of spirituality.
- **Good reputation with outsiders**—Elders must be well-respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.
- **Not self-willed**—Elders must not be stubborn, or prone to forcing their opinions on others or abusing authority. They must be servant-minded, quick to repent, quick to forgive, and approachable.
- **Loving what is good**—Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.
- **Just**—Elders must desire to be fair and impartial. Their judgments must be based on scriptural principles.
- **Devout**—Elders must be devoted Christ followers, seeking to be conformed to His image. They must be committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture and the guarding of their spiritual walk.
- **Holding fast the faithful Word**—Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, and continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
- **Gospel Culture**: Elders are the frontline for protecting, modeling, and shepherding church life so that it is shaped supremely and winsomely by the gospel.

FIVE CATEGORIES OF QUALIFICATIONS

- **Calling**: Calling is both inward and outward. A candidate should desire to serve and should be recognized by others as possessing the gifts and graces necessary for the task.
- **Character**: Though no leader can expect to be perfect, he or she must be exemplary, modeling in a consistent way the character of Christ. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9 offer a useful summary of the character qualifications.
- **Competency**: Elders must have the inclination and the ability to fulfill the particular biblical role placed upon them. Elder candidates should be able to equip and care for people spiritually and should know their way around the Bible and be able to teach it with natural fluency. They should be comfortable praying with people in need and should have hearts that move towards people with compassion and graciousness treating people with warmth and hopefulness.
- **Compatibility**: Candidates need to wholeheartedly embrace Covenant's Vision and Values and understand its distinctive application to ministry.
- **Comprehension**: Candidates need to understand and accept Covenant's convictions about theology and church government.

Elders who are nominated will go through training in following areas:

1. Covenant's Vision and Values
2. Covenant's Distinctive Theological Commitments
3. Covenant's Governing Structure which is in conformity with the governing structure spelled out in the PCA Book of Church Order.
4. Covenant's Leadership and Service Opportunities
5. Dynamics of Healthy Ministry and Vision
6. Practical Elder Ministry Equipping

After training is completed, nominees will be interviewed by groups of elders in order to be recommended to the congregation. The recommended candidates will be voted on by the congregation and those who are elected will be ordained and set apart as elders