

## [Excerpt from Bethany Baptist Church's Constitution]

### *Section C – Leaders of the Church: Elders*

Jesus Christ, as Head of the Church, mediates His rule over the Church by giving elders to shepherd, oversee, and lead the church. These elders are directly responsible to Jesus Christ for the governing of the church according to His Word<sup>1</sup>.

The New Testament Scripture is clear about those who have the responsibility of rule, oversight, and care of the church. These men are called pastors, elders, overseers, or bishops. All four titles are used to refer to the same spiritual office of leadership in the church and are interchangeable. Whether in a formal staff position or not, all men affirmed to this biblical role are equally elders<sup>2</sup>.

#### 1. Qualifications of Elders

God gives elders to the church<sup>3</sup>. The following evidences demonstrate this:

- A deep desire to pastor<sup>4</sup>.
- A lifestyle characterized by moral integrity<sup>5</sup>.
- Confirmation of gifting for ministry by other believers<sup>6</sup>.

##### a. Biblical Qualifications

An elder must possess the biblical qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:6–9, and 1 Peter 5:1–5.

##### b. Other Qualifications

An elder shall be a member of Bethany Baptist Church and in full agreement with the statement of faith and church covenant.

#### 2. Duties

Elders are given to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ<sup>7</sup>.

The primary biblical duties of an elder are as follows:

- To study, teach, and preach the Word<sup>8</sup>.
- To pray<sup>9</sup>.
- To protect the church from false doctrine<sup>10</sup>.

Additionally, as overseers they must be able to lead; as shepherds they must be able to teach, feed, and protect; and as elders they must be able to model spiritual growth in grace, equip the saints, and be ready to serve. It is God who makes men pastors by maturing, gifting, and

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 20:28-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; 1 Peter 5:1-2

<sup>2</sup> Acts 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:11

<sup>4</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1

<sup>5</sup> Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3

<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 2:1-2; 3 John 12

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 4:11

<sup>8</sup> Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 4:13, 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:15, 4:2

<sup>9</sup> Acts 6:4; James 5:14

<sup>10</sup> 1 Timothy 4:16; Titus 1:9; Acts 15:1-35, 20:28-30

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burdening them for such a ministry. It is the responsibility of the leadership as well as the whole church to recognize those whom the Holy Spirit gifts and qualifies as elders<sup>11</sup>.

### 3. Recognition

This is the process by which an elder is recognized:

- a. Upon the elders' affirmation of a man's desire to be recognized as an elder, he shall be thoroughly evaluated by the elders according to the qualifications of the office and gifting to Bethany Baptist Church.
- b. With unanimous agreement, the elders may present a man to the membership as a candidate for elder.
- c. For a period of time, not less than thirty days, the membership will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider the man's qualifications.
- d. If members feel that he may be unqualified for any reason, they should go to him in love and discretion, and privately discuss their concerns<sup>12</sup>. If, after a discussion with the candidate, the members feel that their concern is unresolved, then they should approach the elders with their concern. This process may cease if the candidate chooses to withdraw himself or the elders deem him unqualified.
- e. After the time of consideration, the elders shall call a special meeting for the purpose of a formal affirmation of the membership regarding the man under consideration. This process shall affirm the elders' evaluation and the man's unique giftedness to this church. Recognizing an elder requires affirmation of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of members present and voting by written ballot.

The number of elders shall be as many as are qualified and recognized. If the number of recognized elders is fewer than three, the remaining elder(s) will involve the deacons in the evaluation, recognition and re-evaluation process.

Upon affirmation, an elder shall be licensed by the church to the gospel ministry, as recognized by the State of Michigan, and the license shall be valid as long as he remains an elder at this church. The license terminates when a man is no longer an elder of this church.

### 4. Re-Evaluation

An elder shall serve indefinitely unless he becomes spiritually disqualified, incapable of serving, resigns, or desires a temporary leave for personal, health, or other reasons.

A thorough re-evaluation of each elder will be conducted at least once every five years by the rest of the elders to determine that he continues to be biblically qualified and fit for service as an elder at Bethany Baptist Church. The elders shall inform the membership that such an evaluation is taking place. As a result of this evaluation a man may be encouraged by his fellow elders toward

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<sup>11</sup> Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Peter 5:2; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 5:3; 1 Timothy 4:12

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 18:15-18; Titus 1:7

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areas of spiritual growth, specific study or service, and accountability or mentoring. The results of this evaluation will be made known to the membership.

Any accusation or action against an elder must be presented to the elders in accordance with scripture<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Timothy 5:19-20