

SERVING AS AN ELDER

an informative guide

Definitions and requirements:

OFFICE OF ELDER (from the EPC book of order)

18-3 Authority and Responsibilities of the Session

In maintaining the spiritual supervision of the local church, the Session has the following authority and responsibilities:

- A. To oversee the worship of the congregation in accordance with the Book of Worship, 129 including the time and place of worship, special services, the music program, and the celebration of the sacraments. This shall not infringe on the responsibility of the Pastor in the selection of hymns, Scriptures, sermon, administration of the sacraments, or other duties that are incumbent on the office of Pastor.
- B. To organize itself within the bounds of this Constitution and lawful acts of the higher Church Courts for the advancement of the gospel and the mission of that congregation. 130
- C. To initiate the ministry of evangelism as the first business of the Church, and to seek to lead persons to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- D. To oversee the discipleship ministries of the church, leading members to maturity in Christ.
- E. To monitor the spiritual conduct of the members, and to take action when appropriate according to procedures set forth in the Book of Discipline.
- F. To remind parents of the responsibility of presenting their children for Baptism, and to provide instruction as indicated in the Book of Worship, Section 3-2.G. To this end Sessions should establish and conduct under their authority Sunday schools and Bible classes, and adopt such other methods as may be found helpful. The Session shall encourage the parents of the Church to guide their children in the catechizing and disciplining of them in the Christian religion. 131
- G. To receive, dismiss, restore, grant affiliation, remove members and keep rolls in accordance with G.8-1, 8-2, and 8-3. The Session may establish a minimum age for the active roll and to vote in congregational meetings.
- H. To determine the budget of the church and the benevolence objectives of the congregation.
- I. To oversee the educational program of the congregation, and to approve its literature.
- J. To oversee the work of the Board of Deacons and to review its minutes at least semi-annually unless otherwise provided for by the Session. It is also desirable for the Session to call a joint meeting at least semi-annually to discuss matters of common interest, although each body must act separately on matters under its charge.
- K. To fulfil its obligations to train and examine those elected to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon as set forth in Sections 12-3; 13-8, 9 and 10.
- L. To determine policies regarding the use of the property and facilities of the congregation. 132
- M. When there is no Pastor, to convene the people for worship on the Lord's Day, offering prayers, praise, reading the Scriptures and teaching thereof. It is also appropriate for a Ruling Elder to preach or to read a sermon by some Minister of the Word of the Church.
- N. To overture Presbytery on matters it believes vital or helpful to the whole Church, and to observe and carry out the injunctions and instructions of the higher courts. The Session shall elect commissioners to Presbytery and shall hear a subsequent report on that court.
- O. To order special offerings, special days of prayer and fasting, special days of worship and other matters that benefits the spiritual life of the people.
- P. To do whatever else may be necessary for the spread of the gospel, the edification of the members, the wellbeing of the Church, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the growth in grace of all duties.

Specific Responsibilities of Elders at FPC:

1. To execute spiritual leadership of the congregation, as a shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4), watchman (Hebrews 13:17) and overseer (Acts 20:28). *See EPC Book of Government 18-3 for more detailed information.*
2. To represent the mind of Christ in leadership and decision-making on behalf of the congregation. *See EPC Book of Government 9-8 for more detailed information.*
3. To be actively involved in the ministry of First Presbyterian Church. Each elder should have particular ministry areas of passion and giftedness and execute leadership in those areas. This will likely mean dedicating 4-6 hours a week to the work of the church.
4. To participate regularly in church services and other church activities, including serving communion.
5. To maintain a daily discipline of Bible reading, prayer and other spiritual disciplines; meditating upon God's Word daily that it may transform your life, and praying daily 1) for the leadership of this church, 2) for the families in the congregation and, 3) for the vision and mission of our church and faithfulness to the Lord.
6. To participate in the twice-monthly Session meetings (one focused on business and one focused on study and prayer) and any other special Session meetings as they are called by the Moderator or Clerk of Session.
7. To promote the purity and peace of the church (see EPC Book of Government 13-2A) by upholding and promoting the decisions of the Session once they have been made.
8. To serve as a chairperson or co-chairperson of one of the Session's committees for ministry based on need and gifting.
9. To attend the annual Officer Training in the fall and the annual Session retreat, usually in January or February.
10. To assist in the distribution of communion on the days that it is being served, including communion to Homebound members.
11. To communicate the vision and mission of the church to the congregation and to help them to understand why and how we minister at First Pres.
12. To intentionally seek out and introduce yourself to guests, helping them as needed, that they may feel comfortable and welcome in this church.
13. To mentor a staff person or other leader in the church as assigned.
14. To pray with the pastor before worship services as assigned.

We know that much of what is identified above is already a part of your life and ministry, and for that we give thanks. However, we do believe that to be an officer of the Church of Jesus Christ is both a tremendous honor and great responsibility. Therefore, we want to encourage you to serve in your position as an officer with diligence and joy as the Lord ministers through you.

Questions for Elder candidates:

- **TESTIMONY:**

How and when did you come to accept Christ?
How has this decision impacted your life?

- **THEOLOGY:**

Have you read and do you agree with:
By-laws of the First Presbyterian Church of Aurora?
Essentials of Faith of EPC?
The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms?

- **PERSONAL PRAYER AND DEVOTIONAL LIFE:**

Please describe your Bible reading / devotion and prayer time.
Do you have any goals for this essential area in your life?
What activities help you grow spiritually (i.e. Sunday school, Bible study, choir, small group, etc.)?

- **QUALIFICATIONS TO BE AN ELDER:**

What are your spiritual gifts?
How do you handle conflict?
If someone in leadership was in need to discipline how would you approach it?
What do you think of accountability? How do you implement it?
Where do you feel elders should lead vs. a lay leader?

- **CALLING AS AN ELDER:**

Why do you feel called to be an Elder?
How do you see yourself in light of the standards in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9?
How do you see your gifts and abilities matching up to the role and duties of an Elder?
How might you utilize your strengths and weaknesses to help you serve?
Where do you see the future of the church, what is your hope?
What is your investment in our young people?
How would you go about (or continue) breaking down barriers between the generations?
How do you separate listening to the Holy Spirit from your own desires and / or the emotion of the moment?

- **PRAYER / VISITATION:**

Are you willing to visit and send cards to those who are sick or shut-in; to pray with them and for them; to bring them encouragement and hope?

- **TIME COMMITMENT:**

Do you believe you would be able to commit the necessary time for meetings and to fulfill your duties and obligations?
Would you be able to adjust your priorities to make this commitment?
Are you will to attend church events to show your support for the ministry staff/volunteers holding it?

References:

FPC Vision: First Presbyterian Church is sent to Aurora so that hundreds of families will know Jesus Christ, grow in faith, care in love, and share in hope.

FPC Mission: First Presbyterian Church exists to glorify Jesus Christ, making Christ-following, kingdom minded ambassadors and missionaries to the City of Aurora and beyond.

Essentials of Faith:

All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these Essentials:

- We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever!
- Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
- The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
- Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.
- The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity; where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord.
- Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly, and bodily—to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).
- The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

These Essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.