

Core Leadership Positions for MCC

Process & Biblical Qualifications

Introduction

One of the principles of our church government is that as a member, you are responsible for choosing the individuals you will submit to and trust to lead you. Because we are a Bible-centered community, we look to the Bible to guide us in how we raise up leaders as we do in everything else in our church. While there are a number of ways in which people lead, serve, and minister in our church, the Bible has two clear leadership positions that are mandated for the church, namely elder and deacon. These are the two offices that carry the label of "ordained offices" in the church because they are both specifically mandated by the Scripture and carry the practice "of laying on of hands" (see Acts 6:6 & 1 Timothy 4:14) in association with this position. You see Paul mention these offices in his letter to the Philippians 1:1, "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons".

Our Method for [Ordaining Church Officers](#)

The method for ordination of church officers is modeled for us in Acts when the Apostles realized that they needed more leaders to serve and lead the church. They told the church, "choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). After the church chose men, the apostles "prayed and laid their hands on them". The Scriptures make your participation an essential part of this process of God calling individuals to positions of leadership. This is one of the principles of presbyterianism that I really love and appreciate (in addition to the belief that it best reflects the teachings of scripture), that all authority in a church should be given through the voice of the church. Or "the power to elect persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society" (taken from the [Book of Church Order](#) which is part of the constitution of our church)

Biblical Qualifications for the Office of Elder

The Bible explains that the church is to be organized along the following lines. First we are to have elders. These men are nominated by the members of the congregation, trained and examined by the existing elders, and then elected by the members to shepherd and lead this

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church. The qualifications for elders are explained in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an elder, he desires a noble task. Now the elder must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”

What you’re looking for in an elder is a man who is characterized as a shepherd-leader. A shepherd is committed to knowing people deeply, and pursuing people patiently. Like the "Parable of the Lost Sheep", he is a man who will risk of himself for the sake of the one who is lost, with the hope that they will be found. They are men to whom you can entrust your spiritual brokenness, because you know they believe in a gospel that brings redemption, reconciliation and healing in your life. As a result they are faithful to bring the gospel into your lives. Furthermore, an elder is a man who knows the Bible and is eager to bring that Bible to bear in the lives of God’s people. Above all else, he is a man committed to revealing Jesus in your life, and it is for that reason that you want to nominate men for whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is very evident in their own lives.

Biblical Qualifications for the Office of Deacon

The second type of ordained officers are deacons. The role of the deacon is explained in Acts 6.

Acts 6:1-7

“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.”

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Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”

Whereas elders lead us by shepherding people in the church through teaching and prayer, deacons lead us by serving in the church through financial stewardship, mercy, and organization. Together, both elders and deacons reflect Jesus’ ministry that was characterized by both word and deed. Like elders, deacons are to be men for whom the gospel of Jesus is very evident in their lives. Their qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

“⁸Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹²A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.”

What you’re looking for in deacons is men who believe the Gospel in a way that motivates them to serve others. They’re men with a heart for others and a willingness to sacrifice time, money, and their schedule to make Christ visible to the needy in this world. They are men who walk in the footsteps of the Good Samaritan, eagerly seeking to be a help and an agent of physical redemption in people’s lives. Deacons are men who take stewardship of God’s resources very seriously as a means of expanding His kingdom.

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Women's Leadership In the Church

In addition to elders and deacons, the elders of Midtown Church created a leadership team of women known as the "Women's Shepherding Team". This group of women seek to live out the many biblical examples that we see within the Scripture where women shape, speak, and lead in the context of the local church [Here are just some of the examples: Acts 21:8-9 (gift of prophecy); 1 Corinthians 11:5 (prayer ministry in church); Acts 18:26 (teaching); Acts 2:17 (daughters who prophesy); Titus 2:3-4 (discipleship)]. In Philippians 4:3, Paul references women who "labored side by side with me in the gospel together". In our context, the Women's Shepherding Team is commissioned to labor alongside the session as a reflection of this calling to "labor side by side". Their specific purpose is two-fold: **Primarily, the purpose of this team is to assist the elders in the shepherding of women at Midtown Community Church. Secondly, they are a voice for the women of Midtown in the overall vision and mission of the church.** Due to the calling of this team to assist the elders in shepherding women, the desire is for this to be a long-term calling (at least three years). Commiserate with the weight of this calling, we have decided to make the process of commissioning this group to be similar to the process for elders and deacons. Therefore, we are inviting all members of Midtown Community Church to nominate women whom they feel to be qualified for the women's shepherding team. They will function similarly to elders (though still serving under their leadership), so as you consider who to nominate, I would think and pray along those lines. Also available is a document titled "Women's Leadership Proposal" that was created by the Session with the input from existing women in our church which helps to explain the women's shepherding team more fully. Please read this document to understand the nature of this leadership team more fully.

Your Role In This Process

- First, please pray that God would raise up godly leadership in our church.
- Second, pray that God would give you a clear picture of who He is currently using as leaders in the area of shepherding and service.
- Third, look for people who are already serving in these capacities but without the title of the office to go with it. We don't want to invite individuals to lead us in shepherding or serving who aren't already

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doing so within our church. If you personally have a desire to serve as an elder, deacon, or WST in the future, begin by testing your gifts now.

- If you feel that you know someone who exhibits the attributes of elder, deacon, and/or women's shepherding team, contact them to make sure they are a member of Midtown Community Church and to ask them if they'd be willing to go through the training.
- If they are willing, please go to the following web link and fill out an online nomination form: www.midtown-church.org/nominate.

Training Process

After the window for nominations have been completed, we will begin a training process with the nominated individuals which will involve regular meetings for the purpose of developing character (spiritual life), competency (discerning ministry gifts), and content (theological education). After the training has been completed, all willing nominees will take a written exam and then be examined orally by the existing elders of the church. If approved by the Session, The Women's Shepherding Team will immediately be appointed in this capacity and commissioned by the elders of the church. In the case of elders and deacons, if approved by the Session, they will be recommended to the congregation of Midtown Community Church for election. If approved by congregational election, these men will be ordained by the elders of the church.

Please feel free to call us with any questions you have about the process. And please pray that God would give our church clear direction as to who we should empower to lead us as a church. Let me or any other member of the Session know if you have any further questions.

For His Kingdom,

Lindsey

On Behalf of the Session Of Midtown Community Church