



THE CHURCH AT SOUTH MOUNTAIN

Qualifications for Elders

The New Testament teaches that the church is to be led by a plurality of qualified men who unanimously, equally, and autonomously shepherd the local church. Elders, as the spiritual overseers of the church, are to determine church policy (*Acts 15:22*); ordain others (*1 Tim. 4:14*); rule, teach, and preach (*1 Tim. 5:17*); exhort and refute (*Titus 1:9*); and act as shepherds, setting an example for all (*1 Pet. 5:1-3*). Those responsibilities put elders at the core of the New Testament church's work. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 give the following qualifications for one who holds the office of an elder.

He must be above reproach. All other qualifications support this one as the single, overarching qualification. To be above reproach speaks of having an unquestionable and irreproachable character. There must be no blight of any kind of sin that taints his reputation or puts his character in question. That's not to say that he's perfect, but there must not be any obvious defect in his character.

He must be a one-woman man. He is to be devoted solely to his wife. He is to love, desire, and think only of the wife that God has given to him. This does not exclude single men, but is a qualification that speaks of moral purity.

He must be temperate. He must deny any excess in life that diminishes clear thinking and sound judgment. He is to be well-balanced, calm, careful, and steady—not self-indulgent.

He must be sober-minded. He is to be serious about spiritual things, not frivolous. He is to avoid excess so that he can see things clearly; that clarity of thought leads to an orderly, disciplined life.

He must be well-organized. He is to approach all aspects of life in a systematic, orderly manner and fulfill his duties and responsibilities diligently. He is to have a disciplined mind that produces disciplined actions.

He is to be hospitable. He is to show kindness to strangers. He is to be generous and caring towards others, using what he has to serve them.

He must be able to teach. He must be able to communicate God's Word and have the integrity to make his teaching believable.

He must not be given to wine. He is not to have the lifestyle of a drinker or be characterized by a belligerent, negative temperament and quarrelsome attitude that is associated with drunkenness.

He must not be a fighter. He is not to be quick-tempered or resort to verbal or physical abuse. He must be able to handle things with a cool mind and gentle spirit.

He must be gentle. He is to be patient, considerate, genial, forbearing, and gracious. He must not seek to domineer others.

He must not be quarrelsome. He is to be a peacemaker, not contentious or argumentative. He is not to be offensively aggressive nor to insist on his rights. He is to keep his temper under control.

He must be free from the love of money. He is not to have his attention fixed on monetary rewards. He is not to be preoccupied with amassing material possessions or involved in shady business practices.

He must maintain a godly family. He must be able to demonstrate spiritual leadership in the context of his family before he can lead in the church. He is to have an unblemished and exemplary home life, with his children being respectful and under control.

He must not be a new convert. He is to be a mature believer. His character is to be certified by the testimony of those who are not in the church. He should have a reputation for integrity, love, kindness, generosity, and goodness among those in the community who know him.

He must not be self-pleasing. He is not to be self-willed or arrogant. He is not to be a headstrong, stubborn man who demands his way without regard to others.

He must love what is good. He is to be devoted to all that is good and beneficial. He is to be an advocate of everything worthwhile.

He must be just. He is to be upright in his dealings with men. His conduct in relation to others must conform to the standard of right.

© Process for Affirming Elders at CASM

- 1. Assess the need** for additional elders to serve the body. (*Acts 6:1*)
- 2. Inform congregation** of biblical qualifications and encourage participation in identifying those who may qualify. (*Acts 6:2-3*)
- 3. Elders prayerfully review nominations** to discern spiritual fitness according to 1 Timothy 3:8-13. [Five areas are considered: personal character (*u.8*), spiritual life (*u.9*), biblical service (*u.10a*), moral purity (*u.10b*), and home life (*u.12*).]

4. Those who are qualified are then contacted to discern willingness. Once consensus is reached by the elders about the potential nominees' fitness and willingness, the names of the nominees are brought before the congregation for affirmation. A brief period of time (two weeks) is given to the congregation to deal with any unknown issue(s) that might hinder the prospective elder from serving in his role beyond reproach. (Members are encouraged to go to the nominee personally, according to Matthew 18.) This is an attempt to avoid affirming anyone too quickly (*Cf. 1 Tim.5:22, 24-25*). If there is some scandalous or public sin that would disqualify the nominee, the congregation is directed to contact the elders so that those who are unqualified are not ordained.

5. Once the nominee is affirmed by the elders and the congregation, then a six-month training process will follow.

BYLAWS AMENDMENT

Each Elder will hold that position until he is reappointed, his resignation takes place, or he is removed or replaced as set forth in Section 3 below. The appointment period will be for five (5) years and, at the consensus and agreement of the Pastor and the Elders, could be reappointed for (an) ensuing term(s).

While the Bible does not address term limits on elders, we do see a priority placed on the elder's care for himself and his family (*1 Tim.3; Titus 1*). We also see encouragement for a church to work so that an elder's responsibility is a joyous duty (*Heb.13*).

Therefore, we believe it is wise to provide a way for elders in the church to periodically rest from the important and weighty responsibilities that accompany elder leadership. We want to protect an elder's time with his family and most importantly his intimacy with Christ, and we have found that a bit of time away from some responsibilities can be useful for this.

The elder, at the end of his five-year term, will meet with the elder team to discuss the following: level of weariness in serving as an elder; the need for a break; and the needs of the church at that time. Each elder can serve two consecutive five-year terms (ten years total). After ten consecutive years in office, he must take one year off. After that one year, he is eligible to be nominated again by the congregation.