

Electing Officers...

Questions and Answers

Highlands Presbyterian Church

A Redeemed Community, Reaching Out...

...At the Intersections of Life and Culture

Introduction

Electing officers is a great privilege and responsibility for a congregation in the Presbyterian Church in America. The following questions and answers (drawn from our Book of Church Order) are provided to assist you as you participate in the nomination and election of officers.

Question: *How is a Presbyterian church governed?*

Answer: The ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the Church are elders and deacons.

Within the class of elder are the two orders of teaching elders (pastors) and ruling elders.

The elders jointly have the government and spiritual oversight of the Church, including teaching.

The office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of service both to the physical and spiritual needs of the people.

- It is one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus;
- It expresses also the communion of saints, especially in their helping one another in time of need.

In the discharge of their duties the deacons are under the supervision and authority of the Session.

In accord with Scripture, these offices are open to men only.

Question: *What are the qualifications of an elder?*

Answer: The man that fills this office should possess a competency of human learning and be blameless in life, sound in the faith and apt to teach.

He should exhibit a sobriety and holiness of life that becomes the Gospel.

He should rule his own house well and should have a good report of them that are outside the Church.

See I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 3:5-9

Question: *What are the qualifications of a deacon?*

Answer: The office of deacon is spiritual in nature. Therefore, those chosen to this office shall be men of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgment.

See I Timothy 3:8-13

Question: *What do elders do?*

Answer: It is the duty of the elders:

- To watch diligently over the flock committed to his charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein;
- To exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the Church generally when called thereunto;
- To visit the people at their homes, especially the sick;
- To instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, and nourish and guard the children of the Church;
- To set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples;
- To pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock.

All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them by divine calling, and are to be discharged as official duties of their office.

Question: *What do deacons do?*

Answer: It is the duty of the deacons:

- To minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress;
- To develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed;
- To have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and keep in proper repair the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation;

In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation.

Question: *How are additional officers elected?*

Answer: Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon in the following manner:

At such times as determined by the Session, communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the Session. **(January 2007)**

The congregation should keep in mind that each prospective officer should be an active male member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

After the close of the nomination period, nominees for the office of ruling elder and/or deacon shall receive instruction in the qualifications and work of the office. **(February – June 2007)**

Each nominee shall then be examined in:

- a. his Christian experience, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
- b. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* Preface III, *The Constitution Defined*),
- c. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and

- d. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (*BCO* 24-5) **(July 2007)**

If there are candidates eligible for the election, the Session shall report to the congregation those eligible, giving at least thirty (30) days prior notice of the time and place of a congregational meeting for elections. **(Elections in August 2007)**

The number of officers to be elected shall be determined by the congregation after hearing the Session's recommendation.

Question: *Does nomination to office guarantee that a man will become an officer?*

Answer: No. Each man nominated for office will be invited to participate in a 5 month training program, and then be examined for theological understanding and readiness for office by the Session.

If a man passes his examination, is willing to serve in the office recommended for him, and has a wife (if married) who indicates her willingness to support his service as an officer, then his name will be included on the slate of proposed officers to be placed before the congregation for election.

Question: *How do I submit a nomination?*

Answer: After due prayer and consideration of the duties and qualifications of office, you may nominate one or more men to be considered for elder or deacon. To do so, you must:

- Complete a Nomination Form (which you may clip from this booklet, download from the church website, or pick up at the Welcome Table in the lobby). Please note that you must obtain the signature of the nominee indicating his acceptance of the nomination.
- Turn in the Nomination Form to the church office or at the Welcome Table by Monday, January 29, 2007.
- You may nominate as many men as you wish but please use a separate form for each nominee.

Officer Nomination Form

I wish to nominate _____
(print name) for office at Highlands Presbyterian
Church.

- I have prayed about this nomination.
- I believe that this nominee meets the qualifications of Scripture and our denominational standards (as summarized in this booklet) to hold office in the church.
- I have observed this nominee demonstrating the character, gifts, and aptitude necessary to perform the duties of an elder or a deacon effectively, if elected.

Your signature: _____

Print your name: _____

For the Nominee:

- I accept this nomination and will prayerfully consider participating in officer training.
- I understand that I must be trained and examined in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America before being placed before the congregation for election.

Nominee's Signature: _____