

Deacons and Elders



at CrossWay Milwaukee

updated August, 2021

At CrossWay Milwaukee, we believe that in the New Testament, God instructs the local church to appoint people to two leadership offices: deacon and elder. This handbook is intended to be an introduction to our understanding of these two offices, as well as the process we use to officially appoint them to this service. This is not meant to be exhaustive, but to give a broad overview for anyone in our body. As you page through this manual, should questions arise we would love to hear from you and are available to discuss these matters. May the deacons and elders who serve the Lord at CrossWay Milwaukee do so in a way that is honoring to Him and strengthening for His people.

For His glory,
The CrossWay elders

DEACONS

THE ROLE

The Bible contains a number of qualifications that someone must meet in order to serve as a deacon; but it does not provide a job description of exactly what a deacon does. The word itself gives us an indication as to what the office of deacon is all about. Our word “deacon” is derived from the Greek word “diakonos” which has the general meaning of “servant.” (See John 2:5, 9; Rom 15:8; Col 1:23; Eph 6:21; 1 Thess 3:2).

The Greek noun describing what a “diakonos” does is “diakonia” which is often translated as “serving” or “ministry.” (See Luke 10:4; Acts 6:1; Rom 15:31; Eph 4:12; Heb 1:4) The verb form of the word “diakonos” is “diakoneo” and it means “to serve.” (See Matt 20:28; Luke 22:26; John 12:26).

Thus, based simply on the definition of the word itself, it is safe to conclude that the primary emphasis of diaconal ministry is serving. *Deacons are servants within the church.*

But that definition only gets us so far because every Christian is supposed to be a servant. Jesus is our ultimate example of this. He told us that He did not come to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45); He told us to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34); and He said whoever would be first must be slave of all (Mark 10:44). Based on those verses and many more like them, we conclude that anyone who considers themselves a follower of Christ must think of themselves as a servant. It’s a basic part of the “job description” of what it means to be a Christian.

So what it is that sets the office of deacon apart from the rest of us who are also supposed to be serving? Deacons are individuals within the church who are recognized as being especially gifted and effective at serving and who serve in such a way that their serving helps the church as a whole to be more effective at accomplishing her mission.

Deacons are exemplary in their serving by setting an example of selfless service to the rest of the congregation. And they are empowering in their serving. By this we mean that deacons are not expected to do all the work of serving but to serve in such a way that others are equipped and encouraged to serve as well.

Broadly speaking, the church engages in two types of serving: internal and external. By internal we are referring to needs within the household of faith. As a church body we have a holy responsibility and privilege to care for the needs of one another. These needs include many different things such as physical, spiritual and emotional needs.

By external needs we're referring to the staggering amount of need that exists outside of our church family. We believe that as followers of Jesus Christ we have a holy responsibility and privilege to seek to meet the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs that are on display all around us. Of course, as one local church we can't do everything. But by God's grace and through His power we are able to be ambassadors for Christ, loving others with the same love that has been poured into our hearts.

To fine tune our definition from earlier then: *"Deacons are servants of the church who lead by equipping our church to meet the internal needs that exist within our church family as well as the external needs that surround us."* This is our understanding of what deacons do.

Diaconal ministry at CrossWay could take a wide range of forms. Examples might include: coordinating and leading the Sunday morning volunteers, bookkeeping, overseeing building maintenance, coordinating care for members of our church family, overseeing our compassionate outreach to the elderly, homeless, and single parents.

For the specific list of the deacon team's current duties and areas of oversight, see the [Deacon Responsibilities](#) document.

THE QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications for diaconal ministry are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-10. They are as follows:

Dignified—Deacons must be honorable and conduct themselves in a manner that is worthy of respect.

Not double-tongued—Communicating in a way that is honest and forthright.

Not addicted to much wine—We take this to include not being addicted to alcohol or anything else that would be harmful to one's health or judgment.

Not greedy for gain—The life of a deacon must demonstrate a generous heart towards others and a freedom from bondage to riches.

Holding the mystery of the faith in a clear conscience—Deacons at CrossWay ought to be able to unreservedly, publicly and sincerely affirm the first section of our [Statement of Faith](#), which all members at CrossWay are required to affirm (i.e., the [Membership Affirmations \(2.2\)](#) of our [Statement of Faith \(2\)](#), which can be found in our [Constitution](#)).¹

Tested—Deacons must have demonstrated faithfulness in their spiritual life as well as bearing fruit in leading others in the area of serving.

Blameless—Deacons must demonstrate a pattern of life that is oriented around fidelity to God and humble repentance when they fall short of that standard.

Faithful in all things—Deacons must be people of their word who faithfully follow through on their commitments and diligently labor at their responsibilities.

¹Although deacons are not required to subscribe to everything in the [Church Affirmations \(2.3\)](#) portion of our [Statement of Faith \(2\)](#), we ask that you review this section as well and inform us of any areas of reservation or disagreement you may have. This will be asked in the [Officer Assessment](#).

Not slanderers—Speaking well of others.

Sober-minded—Wise and thoughtful.

Husband of one wife—Deacons do not need to be married, but if they are, they must be faithful to their spouse or they forfeit the right to hold the office.

Managing their children and their own households well—The household of a deacon should be Christ-centered and orderly. We recognize that this will look differently for different families but the principle is that the household of a deacon should not be chaotic and out of control. If a person's household is out of control then that person should focus their attention at home before attempting to fill the role of deacon in the church.

THE CANDIDATES

Any member in good standing at CrossWay is eligible to be considered for the office of deacon. This includes men and women. Rather than using the term “deaconess” we have opted to use the term “deacon” to refer to male and female deacons since the word itself in the original Greek is not gender specific.

Below are 4 biblical reasons why we believe the office of deacon includes women.

1. The Greek word for deacon can be masculine or feminine in the same form. So the word itself does not settle the issue and leaves open the possibility of female deacons.
2. In the middle of the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Paul says in verse 11, "Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things" (ESV). The Greek word interpreted as “their wives” actually means “women”. It could possibly mean the wives of the deacons, but it could also be referring to women deacons. Given the fact that earlier in the passage where Paul lists the qualification for elders he says nothing about qualifications for elder’s wives, we think it would be out of place to assume that he is suddenly inserting qualifications for the deacon’s wives here. We think it’s more likely that he’s referring to female deacons here.
3. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that women cannot be deacons.
4. We believe that Romans 16:1 references a female deacon. It says, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon(ess) of the church at Cenchrae...” As noted earlier, the word deacon is the word for servant. Some people interpret this verse as Paul saying that Phoebe is simply a servant. But when Paul refers to her as “a servant of the church at Cenchrae,” that sounds like more than just saying Phoebe has a servant’s heart. We believe it describes her official role —“servant of the church at Cenchrae”— which would be a deacon.

THE PROCESS

Anyone at any time can “nominate” someone to become a deacon by submitting their name for consideration to the elders.

The elders (in consultation with the current deacons, as needed) will then discuss, pray about, and consider this person as potential deacon candidate. They will consider whether or not this person meets the biblical qualifications. They will also be looking for evidences of passion and gifting in the area of serving others.

If the candidate appears to meet the qualifications then a representative from either the elders or deacons will approach this individual (and their spouse if they're married) to prayerfully consider whether or not they think God is leading them to serve the church as a deacon. This will involve (1) having them read the deaconing handbook (this one), (2) interviewing them, with the involvement of their spouse (if applicable) to inquire, assess, and confirm their qualifications (utilizing the “[Officer Assessment](#)” questionnaire), and (3) at times allowing them to attend a deacon meeting.

As part of the evaluation process, all candidates for the office of deacon will complete a background screening prior to being presented to the congregation.

This screening will normally include a national criminal records search and a sex offender registry check. The purpose of this process is to help ensure the safety of our church family and to maintain the integrity of leadership within the church.

The elders will review the results of the screening with appropriate care and discretion. A background check does not automatically disqualify a candidate; however, the elders must determine whether the individual's history is consistent with serving in a position of recognized leadership and trust.

All screening information will be treated confidentially.

Deacons who serve in ministries involving children, youth, or other vulnerable individuals must also comply with any child protection and safeguarding policies adopted by the church.

If the individual prays and determines that this is not something that the Lord has for them right now, then the conversation is over. If, however, both the elders affirm them and the candidate feels led to pursue this ministry in the church, their name will be presented to the church for a vote in order to discern if there are any hesitations or concerns on the part of the congregation. If no concerns arise then the elders will proceed to ordain this person as a deacon at a Sunday morning worship service.

THE DIACONAL TEAM

The diaconal team consists of all the deacons currently serving. The team meets every other month. The purpose of these meetings is to give updates on the current state of diaconal ministry, discuss and pray about possible ministry opportunities, consider how to equip and empower broad congregational participation in serving at CrossWay, and to make decisions related to diaconal ministry at CrossWay. It is expected that all the deacons will make attendance at these meetings a priority.

FAMILIARITY WITH PROCEDURES

In order to serve in unity with the elders and in conformity with our church practice, it is crucial that deacons familiarize themselves with our foundational documents, like our [Constitution](#), [ByLaws](#), and our various [policies](#). If deacons ever have any questions about procedures or policies, they should be sure to ask a representative of the elders.

THE TERMS

Deacons commit to serve in the capacity of deacon for two years. After each two-year term they may either step down and cease to serve as deacon or reaffirm their commitment and continue serving.

If at some point during their service a deacon ceases to meet the biblical qualifications they will step down from serving.

If at some point during their service a deacon comes to the conclusion that serving as a deacon is having a detrimental effect on their household or their own soul, then the deacon will be encouraged to step down for the good of their own family and for the good of the church.

ELDERS

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you."

~ Titus 1:5 ~

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task."

~ 1 Timothy 3:1 ~

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

~ Hebrews 13:17 ~

As seen in the above passages, anyone moving toward eldership in a local church is pursuing a weighty, noble task. They are given the task to "keep watch" over the souls of the flock – God's flock – and they will give an account one day to the great Shepherd. Consider if a president asked you to watch over his son and daughter for a season. You would enter into that calling feeling the weight of it – these are the president's kids we're talking about! In a similar way, God calls certain individuals to watch over the souls of His children during their stay here on earth. It's a weighty calling! But we are also told that if anyone desires to serve the church as an elder, he desires something that is good, something excellent. It's not simply weighty, but it is an honor and joy to serve God and His people in such a way. May we hold these two thoughts in balance as we consider the weighty, noble task of eldering.

Our understanding of the Scriptural teaching on eldership is that each local church is to appoint *multiple* elders to lead her – often referred to as a *plurality* of elders – and that only men are to serve in this office (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Tim. 3:1-7). These men are not to be new believers (1 Tim. 3:6), and must hold firm to the faith so that they will be able to instruct God's people in sound doctrine and correct those who oppose it (Titus 1:9). In other words, an elder must be a man who can skillfully handle the word of God, and he must have a level of spiritual maturity and authority that is recognized by the church.

THE ROLE

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

~ 1 Peter 5:1-4 ~

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert...”

~ Acts 20:28-31 ~

The Bible does not provide us with an official “job description” for the role of an elder. However, we are not left without evidence as to what the role should look like in the life of a local church. We separate the role into two parts: action (what an elder is supposed to do) and motivation (how he is supposed to do it). Both of these categories are important and are to be considered before appointing an elder as well as throughout his service on the team.

ACTION: WHAT AN ELDER IS SUPPOSED TO DO

1. Shepherd – Peter commands elders to shepherd the flock. The shepherding metaphor is used often throughout Scripture, and is meant to communicate several key thoughts.

First, it communicates leading. In the ancient world a shepherd led the flock to pastures and elsewhere. He would call the sheep, giving instructions. Eventually the sheep could distinguish his voice from other voices out in a field, or any false leaders (shepherds) who might come in.

Second, shepherds protect their flock from harm. Jesus uses this metaphor to compare himself to false shepherds. The false shepherd would flee if a wolf came upon the flock, but Jesus was the true Shepherd who would lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:7-18). Jesus declares that He holds His

people in His hand, as does the Father, and no one can snatch them out. Just as Jesus protects His sheep, so elders (under-shepherds) are to do what they can to protect the flock of God from false teaching.

Third, a shepherd cared for the sheep and ensured their nourishment. The health and wellness of the flock was in large measure dependent upon the shepherd ensuring their needs were met. Also, if a single sheep wandered off from the flock, the shepherd would leave the rest to go and rescue the one – rejoicing when the lost sheep is found and brought back to safety (Lk. 15:4-6). Likewise, elders are called to pay attention to the ongoing spiritual health of the flock of God, seeking to do all they can to provide the church with biblical instruction and striving for an atmosphere of grace where God’s people can flourish.

Fourth, the shepherd corrected and disciplined the flock. Sheep are known to be wandering animals. But if they wander off on their own they are defenseless. Therefore, the shepherd was known to correct the sheep by using his staff. And the sheep was to understand this as loving correction. This is why the psalmist says of the Lord his Shepherd, “Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Likewise, elders are to correct the sheep with loving, restorative discipline. To sum up once again, elders are to serve the church by being like shepherds to their flocks – leading them, protecting them, nourishing them and correcting them.

2. Manage – In 1 Timothy 3:4-5, Paul insists that the elder must manage his own house well, because it will reflect how he will manage the church. Managing the church doesn’t mean the elders do everything, or that they micromanage every activity of the body. Instead, it means that the elder team is to give general oversight and management to their local church. The decisions of the elder team should always be made with the consideration of what is best for the church. In general, CrossWay Milwaukee does not use the practice of voting, but is committed to take clear action steps to gain understanding and feedback from the congregation on issues that significantly affect the life of the body.

3. Teach – When Paul leaves Titus in Crete, he tells him to appoint elders who will “give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). While the gifting or skill of teaching may vary among elders, all elders must do the work of instructing the flock in the faith from the Scriptures. He must also keep watch over the teaching the body receives, which includes other teaching that occurs within this flock, as well as any outside influence that may either help or hinder the growth of God’s people.
4. Demonstrate – In all of life, the elder is to demonstrate to the flock a life lived under the authority of Jesus. An elder is a sheep himself, part of the flock of God. One of his roles is to tune his ear to the voice of the Chief Shepherd, and live out an example for the rest of the flock of what it is like to follow Him. The elder’s character should show that he has been changed by his Shepherd, his service should mimic the Chief Shepherd, and through this process he influences the rest of the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

MOTIVATION: HOW AN ELDER IS SUPPOSED TO DO THE WORK OF ELDERING

Like many things in life, God is not only concerned that elders shepherd the flock, but also how they do so. It is possible to shepherd in a selfish and domineering way, which would have negative effects on the sheep. Peter clarifies this for us with his threefold description of how elders are to shepherd the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Notice the contrasts that Peter makes in the text. These contrasts are real temptations elders face as they serve the flock, and elders must fight against them. Elders must shepherd:

1. Willingly, NOT under compulsion.
2. Eagerly, NOT for shameful gain.
3. Being examples, NOT domineering over those under your charge.

The elder must consider *how* he exercises oversight. The temptations to serve with a poor attitude are real and they are strong. What can help keep his heart in check? Two things according to this passage. First is the important prepositional phrase, “Shepherd the flock *of God*.” This phrase should infuse a fearful awe in the elder. The flock he is to exercise oversight over...is God’s! Second, Peter begins and ends his description of these three attitudes with future

promises of glory: “fellow...partaker in the glory that is to be revealed” (5:1), and, “when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (5:4). The future glory that awaits curbs the temptation to serve in irreverent ways, and moves the elder to serve with endurance and joy.

THE REQUIREMENTS

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be..."

~ 1 Timothy 3:1-2 ~

When Paul instructed Timothy about appointing elders to oversee the church in Ephesus, he gave clear descriptions of what those men should be like. We have already covered the requirements for a man to qualify for this office. Now we'll take a closer look. Some of the requirements stated below are commanded in Scripture (which will be noted) and others are the parameters we have put in place in order to appoint elders that are a good fit for this local church. We separate them into four categories: character, abilities, engagement, and theological.

Character requirements

We believe it is essential that an elder meet these qualifications in order to be appointed to the office and continue to do so throughout the terms of his service (all are stated in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9):

1. Above reproach
2. Husband of one wife
3. Sober-minded
4. Self-controlled
5. Respectable
6. Hospitable
7. Gentle
8. Manage his own household well
9. Children are submissive
10. Good reputation outside the church
11. Children are believers and not open to the charge of wildness or rebellion
12. A lover of good
13. Upright
14. Holy
15. Disciplined
16. Not a drunkard
17. Not violent
18. Not quarrelsome
19. Not a lover of money
20. Not arrogant
21. Not quick-tempered
22. Not greedy for gain

In all of these qualities, it is about direction, not perfection. Nonetheless, an elder should live these qualities in such a way that he is an example to the flock, for these qualities are to be increasing in all of God's people.

Ability requirements

In the two New Testament passages that outline the requirements for elders, only one gift, or ability, is listed: able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). In Titus, Paul further explains that this is a requirement for an elder because one of his roles is to instruct the flock in sound doctrine, as well as to protect the flock from false doctrine and to correct those who contradict the truth. The way this looks and the level of effectiveness will differ between elders. However, at minimum, an elder must be able to communicate biblical truth effectively, so that the body recognizes it as bringing clarity rather than confusion. Furthermore, the Titus passage implies that he must know the Scriptures well enough to recognize false teaching and be able to explain what is true according to the Scriptures.

We also believe that an elder should be able to lead. Again, this comes from the shepherding metaphor. This implies that an elder is able to interact with people in such a way that others are willing to follow. Leadership styles differ among leaders, but as suited to their gifting, they should be able to help people move from "point A" to "point B" effectively.

Participation requirements

The following are not commanded in Scripture, but we believe they serve as helpful filters as we pursue elders who fit well with CrossWay Milwaukee. In order to be considered for eldership, the man must:

1. Be a member in good standing for at least 1 year.
2. Has already demonstrated an ability to shepherd the congregants of CrossWay in a way which has been recognized by the flock. In other words, he is already doing the work of eldering, and the installment is a formal recognition of this.

3. Show consistent attendance in the rhythms of ministry at CrossWay. This doesn't mean that he must be at every gathering of the body, but that he eagerly makes a steady effort to do so for the good of the church and his own soul.
4. Regularly support CrossWay financially. He should believe in the mission of CrossWay, demonstrate it in his giving, and be affirm this to the team.
5. Be willing to comply with any safeguarding policies adopted by the church, including screening procedures and leadership training related to the protection of minors and vulnerable individuals.

Theological requirements

At CrossWay Milwaukee we have a two-tiered [Statement of Faith \(2\)](#) (this can be found in our [Constitution](#)) The first level, [Membership Affirmations \(2.2\)](#), is a set of essential beliefs that a person must affirm in order to be accepted into membership (substitutionary atonement, the Trinity, etc.). This level is intentionally broad, allowing folks from different theological persuasions on secondary issues, to worship and fellowship with us.

The second level, [Church Affirmations \(2.3\)](#), is required for all members of the elder team. It is more detailed and goes deeper into secondary theological topics. We do believe secondary topics are important and have an effect on the health of a local church and on individuals. We also believe that having theological unity among the elders is important. Therefore, each elder must affirm this more detailed section of our [Statement of Faith \(2\)](#) in order to become and remain an elder at CrossWay Milwaukee.

Both portions of our [Statements of Faith \(2\)](#), grounded in and guided by Scripture, have served to teach, unify and guard the church. As elders of CrossWay Community Church, we gladly affirm these truths and own our responsibility to actively believe and live in accordance with them.

In the event that an elder no longer affirms a position he is to bring this to the team. At that time the team will evaluate the doctrine and situation and take the necessary steps forward.

Philosophical requirement

Both our more in-depth [Philosophy of Ministry](#), and simpler, more public-facing [Purpose & Pursuits](#) articulate our core beliefs, convictions, and values about how to conduct ministry as a church. Each elder should not only be familiar with these, but heartily agree and subscribe to them.

Familiarity requirement

In addition, in order to lead well and in unity with the other elders, each elder must know, understand, and be familiar with our foundational documents, like our [Constitution](#), [ByLaws](#), and our various [policies or position papers](#).

Ongoing accountability

The team of elders not only pastor the church, but also ought to pastor one another. Part of the benefit of a plurality of elders is that its designed so that each of the elders can be held accountable by the others. We expect our elders to check-in and care for one other.

As a way of facilitating such regular accountability and ongoing assessment, the elders all receive an annual check-in. Each elder conducts an in-depth interview of another elder and his wife (if applicable) utilizing the "[Office Assessment](#)" (questionnaire), as during the candidacy process.

What happens if the requirements are no longer met?

"Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear."

~ 1 Timothy 5:19-20 ~

We believe that all elders are to be held accountable for keeping all the requirements of serving in this office. In the event that an elder is no longer able to meet the stated requirements, he is expected to make this known to the elder team. If he does not bring the news forward yet it is known by another, we believe it must be talked about according to the instructions of Jesus in Matthew 18. Each case will be carefully evaluated on its own, but below are some general guidelines:

1. **HE IS PLAGUED WITH AN ONGOING DEFICIENCY IN REQUIRED CHARACTER** – The elder team (or the elder team and select members from the church) will do an assessment of how long the issue has persisted and evaluate the depth of struggle. This assessment would include an evaluation of things such as the actual sin, his ability/inability to fight against it, the effects it is having on his family, the ripple effect it may be having on the team and the church. Based on the evaluation the team will agree upon the next steps. This is usually done apart from the individual being considered. Some options include:
 - a. He continues on for a set period but with an intentional plan for growth. His current eldering/work load may be changed if deemed appropriate.
 - b. He steps out of eldering for a set period, during which he seeks counsel. Eventually the team reconvenes to evaluate his status and progress in order to determine if and when reinstatement will be healthy.
 - c. He completely steps out of eldering.

2. **HE QUESTIONS/NO LONGER HOLDS A DOCTRINE AS STATED IN THE ELDER STATEMENT OF FAITH** – The team will meet with him to understand his thinking on the topic and discern how teachable/willing to listen he is. Based on this evaluation the team will agree upon the next steps. Some options include:
 - a. He is immediately removed from eldering
 - b. He is temporarily removed while he considers this doctrine further, most likely alongside another elder.
 - c. He remains serving in the same capacity but continues to work through the doctrine that he is struggling with. This may include shifting some of his duties to free up some additional time for study and reflection.

3. **HE IS NO LONGER ABLE TO TEACH** – The team will gather to discuss this with him. Based upon their evaluation they will decide upon the appropriate steps forward.

4. **HE IS ACCUSED OF NO LONGER SERVING ACCORDING TO 1 PETER 5:1-4** – If someone from the congregation or beyond brings an accusation of some form of abuse from him (physical, verbal, authority), immediate investigation by the team will take place. If a longer investigation is required he will most likely be asked to step out of eldering until a final conclusion can be reached. If any illegal activity has taken place the appropriate legal authorities will be notified. The team will then determine the next steps.

THE EXPECTATIONS

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

~ James 5:14 ~

"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

~ Titus 1:9 ~

While at various points the biblical authors give a specific task to elders, we also recognize that Scripture does not give a full description of what an elder is to do in the life of the church. Here we do our best to give a clear picture of what we are asking and expecting of an elder while serving at CrossWay Milwaukee.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Pursue the Lord by means of the spiritual disciplines
2. Be an example of fighting the fight of faith
3. Remain in good standing with the theological commitments
4. Gain and maintain familiarity with the church's Constitution, ByLaws, Church Covenant, as well as any current policies, position papers, and ministry implementations.
5. Do the work of shepherding God's flock
6. Gather around the sick to anoint them with oil and pray for them
7. Keep open communication with team concerning personal life issues
8. Use discernment when talking with wife and congregants about church and eldering matters
9. Be willing to confront false teaching with a humble and firm spirit
10. Be willing to pursue, correct, warn and/or discipline a member of the flock who is turning from the Lord
11. Remain in good standing with character requirements
12. Be able to express ideas clearly and interact with others in a helpful manner

13. Strive for unity on the elder team, be willing to let his ideas go and wholeheartedly stand behind another plan
14. Elders should be familiar with the and follow the church's safeguarding and reporting procedures when allegations involving minors or vulnerable individuals arise

SPECIFIC TIME COMMITMENTS

1. Commit to the time frames of eldering, along with the sabbaticals
 - a. Staff elders = indefinite as long as on staff.
 - b. Non-staff elders = At the end of every three-year increment, at the discretion of the elders, a non-staff elder shall take a one-year sabbatical. During this year he is still considered an elder at CrossWay, but he is relieved of the majority of eldering duties.
2. One meeting per month. The estimated average meeting time is from 7:00pm-9:30pm. These meetings often include praying for the church, discussing specific individual needs, and considering the broader direction of CrossWay.
3. Approximately 1 hour of elder related emails each week.
4. Preparation time for any involvement in the Sunday morning worship service (participation will vary between individuals).
5. Attend one overnight elder retreat per year (when conducted). The time commitment is typically Friday evening through Saturday afternoon.

THE PROCESS

*“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands”
~ 1 Timothy 5:22 ~*

Scripture does not give us a recipe of all the steps to follow before appointing an elder. However, we are told to not be hasty in doing so. The following are the standard steps we take at CrossWay, assuming the man meets the requirements already stated above and the elder team agrees that this man should be considered for eldership:

1. Initial conversations, orientation, & evaluation:
 - a. Someone from the elder team will connect with the man to have an initial conversation, discerning if it even makes sense to take a step toward eldership.
 - b. The candidate will read through the eldering handbook (this one).
 - c. The candidate and his wife (if applicable) will undergo an initial interview with representative(s) of the elder team, utilizing the [“Officer Assessment”](#) questionnaire. This assessment is to be completed by both the candidate and his wife (if married). Here we intend to assess the man’s qualifications for office, as well as identify any areas of growth he might need before becoming an elder.
 - d. As part of the evaluation process, all elder candidates will complete a background screening prior to entering the final stage of candidacy. This screening will normally include a national criminal records search and a sex offender registry check.
 - e. The purpose of this screening is to help ensure the safety of our church family and to maintain the integrity of spiritual leadership within the church.
 - f. The elder team will review the results with appropriate care and discretion. A background check result does not automatically disqualify a candidate; however, the elders must determine whether

the individual's history is compatible with serving in a position of spiritual authority and trust.

- g. All screening information will be treated confidentially.
2. A six-month – two-year long candidacy (training & assessment) period. This timeframe is separated into two periods:
 - a. An initial period of assessment and development (a minimum of four months):
 - i. This period will occur in more of a “behind the scenes mode,” meaning the congregation will not be notified (though we recognize the necessity of the man and his family discussing this trial period with close friends within the congregation). This time is designed to allow the candidate to get a sense of the role, gain some experience, and allow him, his wife (if married), and the team some opportunity to assess whether or not he will be a good fit.
 - ii. All candidates will undergo an in-depth examination, testing both their theological maturity and ministry competency. During this initial stage of candidacy, the man will begin the “Preparation” portion of this examination process (see [Elder Candidate Ordination Exam](#)).
 - iii. In addition, the man will receive any other needed training or attention to development and growth during this time. Note: There is no set regimen that all candidates must follow for this. Rather this additional training is to be tailor-made to the identified needs of each particular candidate.
 - iv. Towards the end of this period, the man along with the elder team will discuss matters to see if everyone desires to move forward. Upon a positive response, the next stage (below) will occur.
 - b. A subsequent period of final confirmation (a minimum of two-months):

- i. During this period, the candidate will complete the final stages of his examination process (see “Examination” in [Elder Candidate Ordination Exam](#)).²
 - ii. The candidate and his wife (if applicable) will again complete the “[Officer Assessment](#)” questionnaire and undergo a follow-up interview with representative(s) of the elder team confirming the man’s development and qualifications.
 - iii. The congregation will be notified of the candidate and informed that the next two months (minimum) are the final leg of his training and assessment period. The congregation will be asked for their prayers and counsel if they have anything relevant they would like to share about the man and/or his family.
 - iv. The congregation will be given opportunity to ask the candidate any questions (e.g., doctrinal, ministry-related, personal character, etc.) in a specifically held public meeting.
- c. Throughout this entire candidacy period, the elder candidate will:
- i. Attend and participate in elder meetings, At the elder meetings, the perspective elder is encouraged to engage, as it aids in the evaluation process for the individual and the elder team. However, when final decisions are being made, they he will not yet exercise any voting authority.
 - ii. Complete any training assignments, or development plans, under the oversight of an existing elder. The assignments will be designed to assess different aspects of competency (see “Requirements” above), equip in areas of weakness, and ensure there is understanding of specific theology and ministry philosophy.
 - iii. Meet regularly with an existing elder to talk through experiences at the elder meetings and/or email interaction, etc. These meetings are to provide time to reflect on the

² In certain cases, such as where additional assistance may be useful, the elders can elect to bring in trusted elders (pastors) from other churches to help with this examination process.

progress, as well as ongoing assessment, of whether the individual – with consideration of his spouse and family, when applicable – will be a good fit to serve as an elder at CrossWay Milwaukee.

3. Upon being elected to office by a decision of the elders and an affirmation vote from the congregation, the man is to be installed (ordained) as an elder at a Sunday morning gathering.

Duration

The general length of time a potential elder will be in the development phase is between six months to two years. If, during any stage of the process, it becomes evident that it will take longer than two years, a new plan shall be discussed. That may mean continuing to work on some portions of the plan, but not the full load, with the intention of fully entering back in, in the future.

CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning of this booklet, if you have any further questions, comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact an elder – we would love to discuss any of these matters with you. We close with this one thought: the elders strive to serve Christ in this office to the best of our ability, for His honor and the good of His flock. Yet, we also recognize that we make mistakes along the way. We sometimes unintentionally speak in unhelpful ways and make decisions that we would change if given another chance. While that grieves us, it does not break us, for the simple fact that it is not the elders who are building Jesus' church – that is ultimately His job. He promised He will build it, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. In His kindness and wisdom and power, He still chooses to work through broken vessels, and He is not limited by our limitations and failures. Hallelujah! The mission doesn't ultimately land on any of our shoulders. None of us determine whether the mission is successful. This is the Father's mission, the Son's mission, the Holy Spirit's mission, and in this we shall rest. We look to our great God to bring ultimate fulfillment.

*“May the Lord direct your eyes into the love
of God and into the steadfastness of Christ”
~ 2 Thessalonians 3:5 ~*

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”
~ 2 Corinthians 13:14 ~*