

## ***Elder and Deacon Selection Policy***

*The Elder Board approved this policy in October, 1979.*

### **Recognition Criteria**

- Be recognized by the body as an Elder through observable ministry (Acts 20:28, Elders are appointed among the flock).
- Meet the requirements of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. It is understood that some of these requirements are beyond our human ability, but should be our goal before the Lord.
- Desire the office of Elder (I Timothy 3:1—If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do).

### **Function Criteria**

Northwest Bible Church should be first ministry priority of each Elder (Acts 20:28—Shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood). Each Elder must be willing and ready to make the sufficient time commitment to perform the necessary Elder responsibilities (I Peter 5:1,2; Acts 20:28). Shepherding, directly caring for the spiritual maturity and well being of the body, is to be a ministry of the Elder (I Peter 5: 1,2; Acts 20:28). Each Elder should be prepared to teach and exercise this ministry when need arises (I Timothy 3:2—able to teach; I Timothy 5:17—those who work hard at preaching and teaching).

Since Elders need to give overall leadership to the body, it is important that each Elder have leadership ability (I Timothy 3:2—overseer; Acts 15:6—Elders involved in leadership and decision-making). Each Elder should be continuing to grow and mature (I Timothy 3). Elders are to support programs and activities (I Peter 5:3—be an example to the flock). Elders are to attend and prepare for Elder meetings (I Peter 5:2—shepherd voluntarily, with eagerness). Visitation of the sick and those with needs is to be an Elder function (James 5:15—sick call the Elders).

### **Summary**

Each Elder is to review himself as to qualifications and determine God's will concerning his continuation as an Elder. Each Elder is to be reviewed by other men in the body as to his qualification for office.

### **Elders**

Relationship of Elder to Bishop ... according to Titus 1:5-9 Elder and Bishop, or overseer (NASV) are used to designate the same person. Elder seems to point to the character of the man, while Bishop focuses on the character of the office. Elders were leaders of Judaism.

Elders were in authority in New Testament Church: Acts 11:30; Barnabas and Saul sent to them. Acts 15:2,4,6,22; giving direction at Great Council. Acts 16:4; decree made by them with the Apostles. Acts 20:17; Paul calls the Elders of the church of Ephesus. Acts 20:28; declares they have been made overseers (Bishops) over the church to shepherd it. I

Tim.5:17; Elders that rule well are spoken of. I Peter 5:1-5; Peter tells Elders to shepherd the flock that was among them; as examples, not lording it over them.

The Office of Elder: The office of Elder is indicated very early. Acts 11:30; Ordained in every church. Acts 14:23; Qualifications given. I Timothy 3; Qualifications given plus told to ordain Elders. James 5:14; Sick told to call for the Elders.

Women and the Office: Although women may perform the functions of Elder, Northwest Bible Church does not elect, appoint nor ordain women to this office.

### **Deacons**

Term means servant. Serve in the Body and without; thus, we are all to be in one sense deacons (Eph. 3:7). Acts 6: to serve the tables in caring for the widows to relieve the Apostles of the duty so they could teach the Word and study. These may be the first deacons in the sense of an office in the church. I Timothy 3 in giving qualifications for a Deacon seems to indicate the office had developed. Romans 16:1 seems to indicate Phoebe functioned as a Deaconess.

### **Summary**

That the Elders are to lead the Body seems evident from Scripture. They are responsible for the total welfare of the Body. The Deacons, though occupying an office in the Body, function under the direction of the Elders. There is no way to divide the spiritual and physical responsibilities of a Body between the two offices. The Elders are responsible for all.

## **The Elder Led Church**

### **Scripture Provides for the Office of Elder**

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint Elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5).

In Addition:

Barnabas and Saul gave their offering for Judea’s poor to the Elders (Acts 11:30). The Elders at Jerusalem united with the twelve apostles to deliberate over doctrinal controversy (Acts 15). Both the apostles Paul and Peter directly charged the Elders of the church to pastor (shepherd) and oversee the local congregation (Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:12). At both the beginning and the end of Paul’s ministry, he appointed Elders to care for the churches he planted (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). In the Titus 1:5 passage Paul indicated that a church without Elders was “lacking” and should be “set in order.” Paul states that Elders are “stewards of God” for the local assembly (Titus 1:7). Paul also states that the Elders are the churches overseers (Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1). The Elders are charged with protecting the church from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31, Titus 1:9-11). Elders are men placed in the church as overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). Peter warns the Elders against “being lords over those entrusted to you” (I Peter 5:3). James instructs the saints to call upon the Elders of the church if they are sick (James 5:14). Paul states that Elders “take care of the church of God” (I Timothy 3:5). Scripture specifically indicates oversight by Elders in the churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts 14:20-23); Philippi (Philippians 1:1); the churches on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5); and Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithyma (I Peter 1:1, 5:1).

The Function of the Elder is to: rule (take care of, manage) the church of God (I Timothy 3:4-5, 5:17); teach (I Timothy 5:17); lead by being an example to the flock (I Peter 5:3); guard the body of truth from unsound doctrine and error (Titus 1:9); and oversee the church as a shepherd of His flock (John 21:16 “Tend my sheep” (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 5:1-3).

### **Characteristics of an Elder**

Personal Desire: “This is a faithful saying: if a man desires the position of Elder, he desires a good thing” (I Timothy 3: 1). This desire is not sinful or self-seeking, but is the result of God’s Holy Spirit. A man becomes an Elder because the Holy Spirit creates within him a love for the local flock and a desire to shepherd the Lord’s people.

Qualifications: The New Testament is clear that only scripturally qualified men can be appointed as Elders. Scripture demands that a candidate for Eldership meet certain objective qualifications (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).

Examination: “But let these (Deacons) also (like Elders) first be proved” (I Timothy 3:10) and also, to Elders: do not lay hands on anyone hastily (I Timothy 5:22).

## ***1.01 Elder & Deacon Selection Procedures***

### **Qualifications for Elder**

In Titus and I Timothy the qualifications of an Elder become a part of the Scriptures for the guidance of the churches themselves in such appointments:

- Above reproach—Elders must be blameless, presenting no patterns of Scriptural disobedience or grounds for accusation.
- Husband of one wife—An Elder must be a “one woman man.”
- Temperate—Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, free from excesses.
- Prudent—Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
- Respectable—Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and good behavior.
- Hospitable—Elders must be unselfish with their personal resources. They must be willing to share blessings with others.
- Able to teach—Elders must be able to communicate the truth of God and exhort sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way (II Timothy 4:2, 2:24).
- Not addicted to wine—Elders must be free from addictions and be willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
- Not pugnacious—Elders must be gentle and characterized by forbearance and tenderness—not have a quick temper.
- Uncontentious—Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.

- Free from the love of money—Elders must not be stingy, greedy or out for sordid gain. They should not be preoccupied with money or with amassing material goods, but rather should be a model of giving.
- Manage own household—Elders must have a well-ordered household, a healthy family life and faithful children (those under the authority of the parents).
- Not a new convert—Elders must not be new believers. They must have been Christians for long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and the depth of their spirituality.
- Good reputation with outsiders—Elders must be well respected by unbelievers and must be free from hypocrisy.
- Not self-willed—Elders must not be stubborn, insensitive or prone to force their will on others. They must be more interested in service than in self-pleasure.
- Not quick-tempered—Elders must be able to exercise self-control and patience in difficult situations.
- Loves what is good—Elders must desire the will of God in every situation.
- Just—Elders must be fair and impartial. Their judgment must be based on Scriptural principle.
- Devout—Elders must be reverent, continually desiring to be separated from sin. They must be devoted to prayer, the study of Scripture and the guarding of their own spiritual walk (Acts 20:28).

### **Guidelines for Elder Nomination**

Elder nominees must be members of Northwest Bible Church. Elder nominees may presently be Deacons, but it is not necessary to be a Deacon or to have been a Deacon to become an Elder. Deacons do not automatically become Elders. Elders are nominated by serving Elders but may be suggested by a member of the body or by specific ministries. Elder nominees must be proven leaders and are usually selected, after observation for a significant period of time, to represent the entire church.

### **Deacons: The First Office Holders**

#### **Scriptural Foundation**

Acts 6: 1-4—Now in those days when the number of disciples was multiplying there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to ministry of the word.”

In those days of the early Church (around 63 A.D.), in the first Church Community the number of disciples was growing so fast as to outgrow the Church Leadership—The Twelve Apostles. There was a synagogue custom, evidently adopted by the Christian Jews, that on

each Friday collectors went to the shops and homes and collected money and food for the needy. Later that day the collection was distributed. Those temporarily in need received enough to enable them to carry on and those in permanent need received enough for the coming week. The Hellenist Jews spoke Greek and the spiritually snobbish Aramaic speaking Jews looked down on them as foreigners. This contempt may have led to the neglect, possibly intentional, of the widows of the Greek-speaking Jews. The Apostles felt that they should not be dispensing alms but should be spending their time in “prayer and the ministry of the word” The result is that “the seven” were appointed to ease the burden of a multiplying ministry. It is worthy to note that:

“The Seven” were never referred to as Deacons (Diakoneo, waiter, Deacon, minister, servant). “The Seven” were chosen not to be teachers or speakers but for practical service. Philippians 1:1—”Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi with the Elders and Deacons.” Paul wrote Philippians near the end of his imprisonment and the date is sometime after the “two year period” referred to in the last verses of Acts. It is the only reference to the office of Deacon in Philippians.

I Timothy 3: 8-13—Likewise Deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, nor given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested then let them serve as Deacons, being found blameless. Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanders, temperate, faithful to all things. Let Deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well, for those who have served well as Deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote I Timothy around 64 to 68 A.D. after his release from prison. He and Timothy had traveled to Ephesus where the Church was in the grip of false teachers and false doctrine. Paul had delivered out of the church the two main false teachers, Hymenaeus and Alexander, and had moved on to Macedonia leaving Timothy in charge. After giving Timothy the qualifications for Elders and Deacons Paul, in I Tim. 3:15, tells him the purpose of his letter: “... I write you so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

### **Deacons as Servant Officers**

The Diaconate is not a governing office. The term diakonos indicates an office of service. It requires qualifications and examination for entry and entails appointment to an official, public position. All Christians should be servants and serve one another. However, only a few are “servant officers” who must meet certain qualifications and be publicly examined before they can serve. The Diaconate is not a teaching position. The Biblical requirement, “able to reach,” is not required of Deacons. Deacons may however, be gifted teachers.

The office of Deacon is subordinate to the office of Elder which assumes the responsibilities of oversight and supervision of the local church. The Deacon’s responsibilities are more focused so they can concentrate on serving the Lord’s people. The two offices of Elder and Deacon are meant to compliment each other; one is the office of oversight/teaching/managing, the other is the office of service and mercy.

## Qualifications for Deacons

- Men of dignity, reverent, worthy of respect—A Deacon must be known and respected by the congregation (Tim 3:8). Stephen, one of “The Seven”, is described in Acts 6 as full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Paul’s qualification, worthy of respect, corresponds with the Apostles’ qualification in Acts 6:3, “of good reputation.”
- Not double-tongued—Does not display any type of manipulative, deceitful, or insincere speech. The term emphasizes sincerity, truthfulness, and honesty (I Tim. 3:8).
- Not given to much wine—A church leader with a drinking problem will lead people astray and bring reproach upon the church. A man who wishes to demonstrate the love of Christ to others must be free from addictions and willing to limit his liberties for the sake of others (I Tim. 3:8).
- Not greedy for money; not fond of sordid gain—Deacons should not be preoccupied with money or with amassing material goods, but rather should be a model of giving (I Tim. 3:8). They should have a reputation for honest dealings in financial matters.
- Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience—”The Mystery of the Faith” refers to “the revealed truths of the Christian faith” (I Tim. 3:9). A Deacon must hold steadfastly to the Christian faith and live consistently with its beliefs. These “revealed truths” are not to be theological abstractions but are to be a blueprint for daily Christian living.
- Let Deacons be the husbands of one wife ruling their children and their own houses well—Deacons must be devoted husbands, never divorced. They should have a well-ordered household and faithful children (those under their authority) (I Tim. 3:12).
- Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things—A Deacon’s wife must be a dignified woman of respect. She must not be a malicious gossip, but a woman who controls her tongue and speaks wisely and lovingly. She must also be temperate, possessing a stable character, balanced judgment, and self control. A Deacon’s wife must be a faithful Christian woman who fulfills her (I Tim. 3:11).
- Then let them serve as Deacons, being found blameless—Deacons must be above reproach, presenting no patterns of Scriptural disobedience and no grounds for accusation (I Tim. 3:10).
- But let these also be tested—(I Tim. 3:10).
- Paul tells us that these (Deacon candidates), also (like Elder candidates), be tested.

## Guidelines for Deacon Nomination

Deacon nominees must be members of Northwest Bible Church. Deacons are normally nominated by currently serving Elders but may be requested by a member of the body or by specific ministries in which case an effort will be made to get Deacon representation for that ministry. The Deacon nominee must have a servant’s heart and is usually selected, after

observation for a significant period of time, to work in the ministry in which he is currently serving. Deacons serve “as needed” in their ministries. Some ministries may not be represented and others may have more than one Deacon. The Board, Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and church staff make the decision on representation. As part of his Job as Leadership Development Representative to the Board, the Vice-Chairman shall, at the beginning of his term, contact each Deacon concerning his desire to continue serving and report results to the Board.

## **Questions for Elder & Deacon Interviews**

### **Walking by Faith**

- How did you become a Christian? How have you seen the Spirit change your behavior, attitudes, or character? Describe your walk with Jesus Christ over the last five years.
- Are you a “one-woman man”? If married, describe your relationship with your wife and how you are continuing to grow with her. How do your children who are under your authority respect and follow your leadership?
- Are you honoring the Lord in the way you manage your finances? Do you regularly give to Northest? Are you unselfish with your personal resources?
- Describe how you are self-controlled and free of excesses.
- Can you control your temper, be fair and impartial, and let your judgment be guided by Scriptural principle? Are there any unresolved conflicts in your life which need to be resolved before you accept a leadership position? Are you inclined to admit you are wrong if the evidence verifies it?

### **Church Issues**

- Have you ever been under church discipline? Do you believe that you have a good reputation with unbelievers and are free from hypocrisy? Are you satisfied that your life presents no patterns of Scriptural disobedience or grounds for accusation?
- How long have you attended Northwest, when did you join and where have you served? Have you read our Doctrinal Statement and Constitution, accept it and are able to teach it?
- Are you willing to make your service as Elder/Deacon your #1 ministry priority?