

ARTICLE III (Elders)

It is the genuine desire of First Baptist Church of Swartz to be faithful to Holy Scripture in how we pastor, shepherd, and oversee the church of God. It is our conviction, based on interpretation and study of the whole of scripture, that the New Testament church is to be pastored by a plurality of qualified men called Elders. The New Testament gives us the instruction on how to select, instruct, correct, and protect Elders. Elders are to be the pastors, overseers and shepherds of Christ's church. They are to be the right temperament, not perfect men or sinless, fully committed to apostolic doctrine, and able to instruct and defend sound doctrine. It is our deep conviction for First Baptist Church of Swartz to be pastored by biblical elders. By doing so, we believe we are being faithful to Holy Scripture, led by the Holy Spirit to shepherd the congregation of believers at First Baptist Church of Swartz.

The Elder/Lead Pastor shall be considered a member of the Eldership body, subject to the selection requirements of Article II.

SECTION 1. SELECTION AND ORDINATION PROCESS OF ELDERS

A. Candidate for Eldership

The Elder body will determine how many new elders are needed. The Elder body shall compile a list of prospective elders that meet the qualifications as stated in the Bible. All prospective elders will be given a questionnaire and will be interviewed by current elders.

Once the elders have determined that the elder candidates are willing and qualified to serve as an elder, the elder body will present the prospective names to the existing church staff and deacons. Upon review of these two bodies, the proposed elders will be presented to the church in a regular business meeting.

Prospective elders shall be educated and disciplined for a period of time with the current elder(s). This process will allow for elders to be tested and measured by the congregation to ensure they are fit for eldership.

Notice of an elder election shall be given to the church from the pulpit and be in the bulletin at least two (2) weeks before the election occurs.

Election to eldership will occur by secret ballot. An affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present will be required to constitute election to the office of elder.

Once an elder is confirmed and elected, ordination may occur immediately or at a specified time to allow for family to be present. Once elected and ordained, elders begin serving immediately with the whole of the eldership body.

Each Elder of the Church, including the Elder/Lead Pastor, who has been duly examined, elected, and ordained by the Church shall be recognized by the Church as an ordained minister of the Gospel and is authorized to perform the customary functions of a minister on behalf of the Church, including preaching and teaching, administering the ordinances, and officiating at weddings, funerals, and other religious services. The Church further intends that each such ordained Elder be acknowledged as clergy and an authorized representative of the Church for civil and legal purposes to the fullest extent permitted by applicable federal, state, and local law, and shall possess the rights, authorities, and privileges customarily accorded to ministers under such laws.

SECTION 2. QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

- A. To be considered for eldership the candidate shall have been an active member of this church a minimum of one year before being evaluated, except for the calling of an Elder/Lead Pastor.
- B. A candidate for Elder must be qualified according to the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. These qualifications found in scripture can be summarized in the following categories.
 - 1. Spirit Given Desire – The Holy Spirit gives the elder the desire, or calling, to do his work in pastoring. Acts 20:28
 - 2. Objective Biblical Qualifications - God is clear in scripture about the qualifications for those who lead His people.
 - 3. Moral and Spiritual Qualifications - The biblical qualifications for Eldership are broken into two general categories.
 - i. Moral and Spiritual Qualifications
 - A Good Reputation – Above reproach and well thought of by outsiders, 1 Tim 3:2,7
 - ii. Family Life
 - a. The husband of one wife, the elder's marriage is first in being above reproach.
 - b. Children – If the elder has children, then is a responsible father. He deals with problems by leading and guiding his children.
 - c. His children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. Titus 1:6
 - 4. Personal Self Control – Self Control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23), a self-controlled elder is a Spirit-controlled elder.
 - i. Relational Skills With People

- ii. Gentle – Forbearing, patient, not insisting on the letter of the law, understanding people’s complexities
 - iii. Upright – Righteous in character, behavior, conduct and attitude
 - iv. Not Quick-Tempered – Able to control one’s anger
 - v. Not Quarrelsome – Not argumentative with those who disagree
 - vi. Not Arrogant – Not “puffed up”, humble servant leaders
 - vii. Hospitality and Loving Good – Elders are to be compassionate, generous, caring people. Acts 20:35 35
5. Personal Integrity
- i. Above Reproach – Overarching quality of being blameless
 - ii. Be an Example to the Flock – An example of godly Christian behavior
 - iii. Not Greedy for Gain – Not a thief or misappropriates funds of the church
 - iv. Upright – Living in accordance with God’s righteous standard
6. Holding Firm to the Trustworthy Word as Taught – Doctrinally sound and living the truth of the Gospel
- i. Holy – A devout Christian, firmly committed to God and His Word.
 - ii. With upright heart he shepherded them (the nation of Israel) and guided them with his skillful hands. (Psalm 78:72)
 - iii. Spiritual Maturity – An elder cannot be a recent convert. He must have life experience, know the Word of God, and show to be the kind of person who can lead God’s people.
 - iv. Not to be a recent convert or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 1 Timothy 3:6

SECTION 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

The overall concept and picture of biblical eldership is found in the illustration of shepherding. The image of shepherding is broken down into 4 aspects, the feeding of God’s people, the protection of God’s people, the leading of God’s people, and the caring for/healing of God’s people.

A. Feeding or Teaching the Church

It is the Elders’ duty to teach the Church and its leaders the whole counsel of God.
Jeremiah 3:15

B. The Protection of the Church

C. Protection from False Teachers

D. Protection From Internal Fighting

E. Protection From Sin

F. Leading the Church

Elders shall lead the congregation with diligence and zeal (Rom. 12:8; 1 Tim. 5:17), exercising their gifts to guide, equip, and oversee the flock. They will communicate clearly, set a Christ-centered global vision (Matt. 28:19–20), and ensure accountability in ministry (Eph. 4:12). Leadership must be marked by humility, effective collaboration, and wholehearted commitment, avoiding passivity and striving for excellence in all matters (Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 13:4–7).

G. Healing and Caring for Practical Needs

H. Caring for Sick People

I. Weddings, Pre-Marital and Martial Counseling

J. Funerals

K. Praying for People

L. Helping the Weak

SECTION 4. EVALUATION, TRAINING AND DISCIPLESHIP OF ELDER CANDIDATES

To be completed by each person who is considered for ordination as an elder and is willing to serve if elected. The substance and contents of the questionnaire and discipleship materials and methodology may be altered at the discretion of the Elders without notice to the Church or approval from same. The current questionnaire and discipleship documents shall be available in the Church office to the Church body for viewing.

SECTION 5. COVENANT

If elected to serve to as an Elder of Swartz First Baptist Church, I hereby covenant to accept and discharge the responsibility assigned me by my church to the best of my ability.

SECTION 6. DISCIPLINE AND PROTECTION OF ELDERS

The purpose of this section is to uphold the holiness and integrity of Christ's church by providing a biblical process for addressing sin among elders. Scripture commands that accusations be handled with fairness, impartiality, and love, ensuring both justice and restoration where possible. This policy is grounded in the authority of God's Word (Deut. 19:15–20; Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Tim. 5:19–21; Gal. 6:1).

A. Accusations

No accusation against an Elder shall be considered unless supported by credible witness(es) (Deut. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19).

B. Investigation

All allegations must be examined thoroughly, fairly, and impartially (Deut. 19:15–20; Matt. 18:15–16).

C. Confrontation and Rebuke

1. If allegations are confirmed, the elder shall be confronted privately and given opportunity to repent (Matt. 18:15–16).
2. If unrepentant, the elder shall be publicly rebuked before the congregation (1 Tim. 5:20) and removed from office.
3. Unrepentant sin may result in disfellowship (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4–5).

D. Restoration

A repentant elder shall be forgiven and restored to fellowship (2 Cor. 2:5–11). Restoration to office is not automatic and depends on meeting biblical qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9).

E. Guiding Principles

All actions must reflect humility, gentleness, and love (Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 13:4–7), and be carried out without prejudice or partiality (1 Tim. 5:21).