



**TRAILHEAD**  
CHURCH

# Trailhead Church Elder Candidate Information

## Introduction and Overview

When you read through the New Testament, you will find that every church was led by a group of men called elders. These men were also called overseers and functioned as pastors. These three terms (elder, overseer, and pastor) are interchangeable and refer to the same leaders. We believe this pattern of having elder-led churches is not only descriptive in the Bible, but prescriptive for us. In other words, we believe the Bible tells us that we, as a church today, should also be led by a group of qualified, gifted, and called elders.

When Trailhead Church started in January 2011, it was led by a provisional board of three elders made up of Pastor Steve and two other Pastors who serve at other churches. This provisional elder board transitioned in 2014 from this team to a local board of elders made up of Pastor Steve and other men who were identified from within Trailhead Church. As the church continues to grow and mature, new men will need to be recognized and called to join this elder team.

Recognizing the right men is essential. The Bible sets high standards for those who would become elders. It is a highly demanding position that requires a man to excel in both spiritual character and leadership competency. So it is essential that we cast the vision clearly for the kind of man God calls elders to be.

The terms used in the Bible for those who lead the church help because they aren't just titles – they describe functions. These men are called “elders” because they come to the body with a mature wisdom of experience, enabling them to be counted on to give good counsel. They are called “overseers” because they are good leaders and can be entrusted with the responsibility for the health, growth, and direction of the church. They are called “pastors” because they are called to love the people of the church, shepherding them like sheep into a joyful and submissive relationship with God, personal maturity, and healthy relationships with each other. This makes little sense if our understanding of church leadership is a few businessmen sitting around a table making decisions.

According to the New Testament, elders lead the church, teach and preach the Word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish the church in sound doctrine, visit the sick and pray, and judge doctrinal issues. To use biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church. Elders must have the wisdom to work on the big picture of the local

church while at the same time have the spiritual strength and endurance to walk with real people through the real mess of life.

Selecting elders is, therefore, one of the most important tasks (if not the most important task) a church or a pastor can engage in. The stability of any church and their ability to grow will be determined by the maturity of their founding and future elders.

This is why Trailhead Church takes eldership so seriously. As you will see as you look over this document, Trailhead's eldership process takes at least a year to complete and will test a man's character, his competency to lead, and his chemistry with the church culture and leadership team.

Make no mistake, spiritual leadership in the church is difficult. The men who believe they are called to lead Trailhead Church as elders will be rigorously tested. They will be pushed to confront every aspect of their sin in the power of the gospel. They will be challenged to manage their personal lives, marriages, parenting and vocation in addition to their elder training.

This is not a game. This is eternal work. If you think God is calling you to join us in this noble fight, consider the cost and let's confirm your call.

### **Process and Commitment**

Since recognizing elders is so vital to the health and future of the church, the utmost care, prayer, and assessment will be taken to insure that only called, qualified, and competent men are appointed to this position of leadership. This is why Trailhead requires elder candidates to undergo a process of testing, training, and examination that lasts a year before the final interview and possible installation. We believe this is a responsible step since Trailhead Church's stability and future growth will be determined by the maturity of the recognized elders and their ongoing commitment to select other effective shepherds to help lead the flock in the future.

Anyone choosing to enter the eldership process must count the cost of pursuing such a weighty position. Acceptance as an elder recruit is **not** a guarantee of eldership. It is acceptance into a process in which a man will be tested and trained for leadership. By entering into the process, the applicant and his spouse both recognize and gladly enter into the demands and challenges of this process.

### **Overview of Timeline**

It will take around a year from the beginning of the process, where a man is invited into the eldership process, to the point where they would be publically recognized and commissioned as a fully functioning elder.

The following summarizes the timeline and responsibilities of this process:

Candidates must self-nominate and apply to become elder candidates (one month window)

- Potential applicants self-identify themselves as interested
- Pastor Steve and the Provisional Board pray over the applicants
- Some applicants will be invited to complete the application process

Elder Candidates meet monthly with Pastor Steve and complete monthly tasks (10 months)

- Candidates attend monthly elder / candidate meetings
- Candidates and spouses attend quarterly meetings
- Candidates will lead a community group (or serve in an equivalent form of discipling disciples)
- Candidates will complete monthly required reading
- Candidates will submit response and position papers as assigned
- Candidates will, to the best of their ability, be available to take on anything else they are asked to do

Elder Candidates are publically announced and installed (one month)

- Candidates and spouses will finalize process with an interview
- Candidates will be publically announced and public response will be requested
- Candidates will be publically installed as elders

### **Who Should Self-Nominate?**

A man must feel a sense of calling to eldership. It is not a responsibility into which one should be pushed or manipulated. As a result of this, men must self-nominate to be considered for elder candidacy. Some men may feel uncomfortable doing this because it feels prideful to them. This is not the case since (1) scripture says it is a good thing for a man to aspire to the work of an overseer (1 Timothy 3:1), and (2) the man who self-nominates is simply requesting that he be considered for testing and training and is not assuming his readiness or even that he will be asked into the process at this time.

The men of Trailhead who have completed the membership process (or are in process) and have been at Trailhead for at least 6 months are free to self-nominate [here](#). You can also copy and paste this address into your browser:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?fromEmail=true&formkey=dHhpMDZiWDVxanUtMnBPTnd4NVhEOEE6MQ>

In addition, Pastor Steve may approach a man to discuss the possibility of calling. This is not an attempt to persuade a man into eldership, but a test of

calling. The goal is to seek out whether or not a man has ever questioned a calling to eldership, but may have been reluctant to come forward and self-nominate for a variety of reasons. Please consider the following calling, character, and competency requirements before self-nominating:

### ***Calling***

Each elder candidate must demonstrate clearly and persuasively to the existing elder board that he has been called by the Holy Spirit to the office of Overseer. This will be done by explaining in writing the purpose of the candidate's aspiration to this office and explanation of God's leading in his life.

Before confirmation as an elder candidate, this calling must be evident and confirmed in the hearts and minds of the existing elder team.

### ***Character***

To be considered for eldership, a man must exhibit the highest degree of Christian character according to the qualifications of Scripture (1 Timothy 3.1-7; Titus 1.5-9).

No man is perfect (except Jesus) and no man will be able to say he is absolutely above reproach in all areas listed in both mind and action at all times. That said, we believe that the character requirements listed in these letters are not some kind of general ideal to which elders should aspire but may not actually meet. Elders aren't perfect, but their lives should be exemplary and worthy of imitation because the character qualities listed in these chapters describe their lives now and are increasing in their experience as they continue to grow in faith and sanctification.

Paul told Timothy that an elder should be "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2). This is a general phrase that should be understood by looking to the rest of Paul's list. For an elder to be "above reproach," then, requires him to be described in this passage with a present and increasing experience of the character qualities listed.

To be above reproach means that an elder must be:

- A man – masculine leader
- Not a new convert – mature in the faith
- Husband of one wife – a one-woman man; sexually pure
- Has obedient, believing children – must have demonstrated faithful and fruitful pastoring in his own home first
- Manages family well – provides for, leads, organizes, loves
- Temperate – mentally and emotionally stable
- Self-controlled – disciplined life of sound decision-making

- Not given to drunkenness – without addictions
- Not motivated by a love of money – financially content, responsible, and upright
- Respectable – worth following and imitating
- Hospitable – opens home and life to strangers (non-Christians) to witness for Christ
- Not Violent – even tempered
- Gentle – kind, gracious, loving
- Not Contentious – peaceable, not quarrelsome or divisive
- Good reputation with outsiders – respected by both those in the church and non-Christians

### ***Competency***

The Scriptures demonstrate that Elders serve by leading and their primary responsibilities involve the spiritual oversight of the congregation. One of the key benefits of having many leaders over the church is that each elder brings a unique strength to the team. Each elder is not expected to be as competent as the other elders in every area, but every elder is expected to bring unique strength to the elder team. For example, while every elder will be able to teach, not every elder will be expected to teach from the pulpit at our Sunday gathering.

While elders will differ in the strength they bring to the team in these areas, every elder will bring a basic competency to the team in these areas:

- Prayer and Scripture study (Acts 6:4)
- Ruling and Leading the church (1Timothy 5:17)
- Managing the church like a family (1Timothy 3:4-5)
- Joyfully and eagerly caring for people in the church (1 Peter 5:2-5)
- Discipling people as those who will give account to God (Hebrews 13:17)
- Living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13:7)
- Humility and confidence in self-knowledge and leadership (Acts 20:28)
- Discernment and courage to protect the church (Acts 20:28-31)
- Teaching biblical truths correctly and effectively (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1Timothy 3:2)
- Praying for the sick (James 5:13-15)
- Grounded in sound doctrine and refuting false teachings (Titus 1:9)
- Working hard (1Thessalonians 5:12)
- Rightly using money and power (1 Peter 5:1-3)
- Discipling people through repentance and disciplining unrepentant Christians (Matthew 18:15-17)

### **What Happens Next?**

Once a man has prayerfully considered God's call to eldership at Trailhead, he should fill out the self-nomination form. Application does not guarantee

candidacy since each of the candidates will need to be considered individually and discussed with the current elder team.

Should a man be invited to become a candidate, he and his wife will be asked to read a description of the process and commit to it joyfully as a privilege and duty. The rest of the process will be explained at that time.