

From time to time, New Hope puts out the call to the body to nominate potential candidates to serve on the church's elder team. Our congregation is extremely grateful for these men and women who choose to spend their limited time aiding in the governance and leadership of New Hope Community Church. This document can hopefully serve as an explanation to the finer details of how the New Hope elder team operates and how nominations turn into elder confirmation.

Of primary importance is the understanding that the head of New Hope Community Church is Jesus Christ. He is our leader, our pastor, our priest, our redeemer, and our Lord (among many other things). New Hope seeks to do nothing outside His will or in opposition to His Kingdom agenda. Whatever ministry programs, events, meetings, or service efforts New Hope involves itself in, it must be understood that they are under the Lordship of Christ and we seek His will be done, not our own.

We believe that Jesus has entrusted the management of New Hope to its elder team, who delegates leadership of the church to the Lead Pastor, who then delegates specific responsibilities to staff and lay ministry leaders. The elders' primary responsibilities are prayer and study, and their service of leadership is discharged according to a firm sense of God's leading as discerned in personal meditation and in mutual discussion. The elders meet roughly twice a month. The specific times and locations vary depending on the makeup of the current group. Meetings are filled with prayer, study, discussion, and the discernment of issues varying in shape and degree. To put it simply, the elders keep the body on track and guide the congregation in regards to mission, vision, and values.

While there are many different styles of church governance that Christ's church uses worldwide, the office of elder is not without biblical precedent and we believe that it is the model in which God is calling New Hope to be governed. As far back as Exodus, Israel's elders were used to inform the people of his redemptive plans of deliverance, and then communicate that plan to the Egyptian authorities (Ex 3:16-18). During the years of wilderness wandering, elders were used to lead the people, reminding them of God's commands (Num. 11:16-17; Deut. 27:1). In the book of Acts, the early church used a plurality of leadership, in the form of elders, to send and receive information (Acts 11:30), to discuss matters of theological significance (Acts 15:2), and to send delegations to address specific concerns (Acts 15:22). In 1 Timothy, Paul says that elders who rule well should be "considered worthy of double honor," making special mention that many also preach and teach, and outlines how elders should be held accountable to church (1 Tim. 5:17-20). James even encourages individuals who are sick to come before the elders to be anointed and prayed over (James 5:14).

Perhaps the most commonly quoted New Testament passage concerning elders comes from Paul's letter to Titus:

*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 — if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 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 1:5-9).*

In light of these and other texts, New Hope seeks men and women of integrity to serve on our elder team. It is understandable that, in wrestling with these texts, such responsibility could and should drive anyone who is considering stepping into such a role to humility and perhaps even hesitation at agreeing to serve the church in such a capacity. However, we at New Hope firmly acknowledge that no one is perfect except for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is our hope that the men and women who serve on our elder team feel the love, encouragement, affirmation, and appreciation of the entire church. Elder meeting times are listed in the bulletin and in email communication in order that the body might be praying for the team in real time.

How do elder nominations work? First, anyone who considers New Hope their home church is welcome to submit a name for nomination. Candidates can be submitted to the current elder team, who will then enter a period of discernment and consideration of the nomination. Assuming the team agrees that the process should move forward, candidates will then be informed of their nomination. If the candidate feels called to continue the process, the nomination will be put before the body, and a period of time will be given before the position is confirmed. During that time, anyone who feels that there is a reason why the candidate should not be confirmed is asked to come to the elders privately to discuss the concern. If everything moves forward, the candidate will be confirmed as elder within a month of the nomination.

In this, as in all things related to the life of New Hope Community Church, we seek only the advancement of the Kingdom of our triune God, who exists in community and calls us to do the same.

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