

**Third Avenue Baptist Church**  
**January 27, 2010, Members Meeting**

***Question: Since Many Men Evidence the Basic Biblical Qualifications of an Elder, What Do We Look for That Leads Us to Nominate Certain Individuals and Not Others?***

There are many considerations regarding the nomination of someone to serve as an elder. Below are some characteristics we as elders use try to discern who meets the qualifications best within our congregation.

***Likeminded.*** While someone may join our church so long as they have no settled disagreement with our statement of faith, an elder must be convinced of all the doctrines laid out. Additionally, on secondary but important contemporary cultural issues that demand clarity and which greatly affect the culture and vision of the church, the elders need a higher degree of likemindedness than that of the congregation generally.

***Proven Pastoral Care and a Servant of the Church.*** Does an individual exercise pastoral care? Teaching is one means of this, but not the only means. To be an elder, an individual should be known as an active discipler of others. He must be pro-active in spiritually pouring into others in regular conversations, meeting with others outside of our corporate gatherings, hospitality, and so on. He should also be perceived as a servant of the church, willing to meet whatever needs arise primarily out of a love for Christ and the church, not so that he can one day be may be an elder. In short, he must already be doing the work of an elder with Christ-like humility.

***Congregational Credibility.*** Many men may have biblical qualifications, generally speaking. However, some men will naturally teach, counsel and lead with more widely recognized authority in a particular church. They will be viewed and looked to for their wisdom and insight more than others. There's no magic formula for how this happens, it simply does. Though not every elder put forward will have equal authority among all members, he should have some level of perceived authority among the vast majority of members, such that the vast majority can agree he is currently doing the work of an elder within the church.

***Forward Thinking.*** We are an old church with a young congregation. We're a relatively small church with big churches moving ever closer to us. We're one church among many here in Louisville. We're a growing church in aging a building. We're an active church, trying to build ministry, but we're also a transient church making long-term ministry challenging. We are at a crucial stage of ministry building and determining what sort of church we want to be. Therefore, we not only need elders who can carry out day-to-day shepherding duties, we also need elders who understand where we are, the challenges we face and can help us think realistically through long-term vision and direction.

***Longevity, Both Past and Future.*** An individual should demonstrate a commitment over time to the life and ministries of the church. In terms of the future, willingness to serve

one three-year term is the bare minimum requirement for nomination. The prospect of future longevity is important for stability. Therefore, the likelihood of serving more than one term is desirable. If there are two possible and fairly equal candidates, one who intends to leave, one who intends to stay long-term, the long-term candidate is preferable.

***Interpersonal Dynamic of Elder Board.*** Elder boards are made of real people. Consequently, there is an interpersonal dynamic at work that can make a board more or less productive, unified, and effective. On paper someone may have qualifications, do elder work, yet is not an ideal fit given his personality and other personalities on the board. This takes wisdom and discernment on our end.

***Complimentary Gifts among Elders.*** A variety of gifts are obviously helpful as issues affecting the life the church arise and the range of those issues are many and diverse. All elders should exercise pastoral care, but some will be better at counseling, some will be better at leading in evangelism, some will have better financial sense, some will be able to think more clearly about complex issues, some will be better at communicating and persuading the congregation of our plans. In short, we need a variety of gifts on the board.

***Congregational Representation.*** As the church grows, it's increasingly important that we have a board that represents the congregation well. Too many men from one subgroup of the church could be counterproductive. It could make it more difficult to know the broader pastoral needs of the church and to care well for our members. It also could damage credibility as people wonder if we're a bit of a "good 'ole boys" club.

***Unanimity among the Elders.*** Given the close working relationships and the sharing of lives that occur among elders, it is vital that each elder trusts and has confidence in the judgment, wisdom, and reliability of every other elder. Therefore, a candidate must have unanimous support among us before we present him to the congregation.