

January 28, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is a privilege for us to serve you as elders. With this letter we would like to begin a new process of officer elections by opening nominations from the congregation for the office of elder. Those nominated by you will be given consideration by the Session, and potential candidates will be examined respecting their personal piety and theological understanding, according to the biblical qualifications for office. Finally, the Session will announce to the congregation the names of those men it judges qualified for office at this time, and a congregational meeting will be called for the purpose of electing new elders. Those men elected by the congregation will then be ordained and installed in a subsequent worship service.

At this time, then, we urge you to give prayerful consideration to the question of who among the adult men of the congregation possesses the gifts and graces of spiritual leadership suitable for the office of elder. In 1 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul outlines the qualifications for the office of elder or overseer as follows:

*1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

And our OPC Book of Church Order outlines the duties of the office of elder as follows:

- 1. Christ who has instituted government in his church has furnished some men, beside the ministers of the Word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereto. Such officers, chosen by the people from among their number, are to join with the ministers in the government of the church, and are properly called ruling elders.*
- 2. Those who fill this office should be sound in the faith and of exemplary Christian life, men of wisdom and discretion, worthy of the esteem of the congregation as spiritual fathers.*
- 3. Ruling elders, individually and jointly with the pastor in the session, are to lead the church in the service of Christ. They are to watch diligently over the people committed to their charge to prevent corruption of doctrine or morals. Evils which they cannot correct by private admonition they should bring to the notice of the session. They should visit the people, especially the sick, instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourning, and nourish and guard the children of the covenant. They should pray with and for the people. They should have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word and help him in his labors.*

Your elders would like every member household to take part in this nomination process, sending your nominations for the office of elder to the Clerk of Session, Pastor Justin Rosser, by Sunday, February 23. According to our Book of Church Order, officers in the church must have been a member of the church for at least one year. They must also be able to “sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.” Your nomination of a man indicates your estimate of him as qualified for the office of elder based upon your knowledge of him, and indicates your desire for the Session to conduct a further examination of him in doctrine and life. Your nominations are an important part of the election process.

Mindful as we are of the need for additional elders, we look forward to what God will provide through these prayerful steps we take together as a church. Thank you for your consideration of these important matters in the life of our church.

Sincerely,

The Session of Matthews Orthodox Presbyterian Church