



Emmanuel
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Officer Nomination Packet

Process for Officer Nomination, Examination and Election

Every year at the time of the Annual Meeting we begin afresh the process of officer selection and training. Here is the plan:

For one month after the Annual Congregational Meeting:

Nominations open. During this time any EPC member may nominate any other EPC member either to the Session or to the Mercy Team. Those nominated should be approached prior to being nominated and be open to serving if elected next April.

Through the summer:

Nominees receive and begin reading assignment in theology.

Fall – Early Winter:

Candidates take a series of classes focusing on theology, orientation, and training for diaconal or session work (as is appropriate). They are examined in theology.

January-February:

The Session, in consultation with the candidates and with the help of work place references, determines whether the candidates are ready to be advanced to the congregation for their consideration as “candidates in process”.

February-May:

The “candidates in process” are formally presented to the congregation through (1) public testimony, (2) written biography, and (3) a “meet the candidates” open forum on a Sunday morning following worship. The session finalizes the slate of nominees in anticipation of the annual meeting in April and informs the congregation of that slate.

May:

At the annual congregational meeting the congregation votes on the slate of those nominees for the Mercy Team and Session whom the elders approved in January. Ordination and/or installation (for elders) and commissioning (Mercy Team members) occurs during a regular worship service as soon as possible following the election.

Emmanuel Presbyterian Church Qualifications for Officers

Should I nominate a particular person to be an officer at Emmanuel? Should I accept a nomination to be an officer at Emmanuel?

The following guidelines, though not the final word on the matter, ought to help as you consider these questions. Some additional reflections follow. A much fuller account of the qualifications occurs in the Officer Training Class.

Qualifications fall into five categories: calling, character, competency, compatibility and comprehension.

Calling: Calling is both inward and outward. A candidate should desire to serve and be recognized by others as possessing the gifts and graces necessary for the task.

Character: Though no leader can expect to be perfect, he or she must be exemplary, modeling in a consistent way the character of Christ. I Timothy 1-3 and Titus 1:5-9 offer a useful summary of character qualifications.

Competency: God calls elders and deacons/deaconesses (Emmanuel Mercy Team) to serve in distinct and varying ways. A candidate should evidence the inclination and ability to fulfill that particular biblical role.

Elder candidates should be able to equip and care for people spiritually and should know their way around the Bible and be able to teach it. They should be comfortable praying with people in need and should be good managers.

MT (Mercy Team) candidates should demonstrate a practical and caring spirit. They should be willing to serve under the authority of the elders and in such a way as to free the elders to focus on their particular responsibilities. At Emmanuel, MT members pray for individuals after services on Sunday, assist elders in membership interviews, assist elders in examining MT candidates, and advocate and care for those in need.

Compatibility: Candidates need to understand and fit into the Emmanuel life and vision.

Comprehension: Candidates need to understand and accept Emmanuel's convictions about theology and church government. This involves commitment to the Bible's authority, to Presbyterian Church government, and to the Westminster standards.

The following are requirements for all nominations.

FOR MT NOMINEES: Nominees should be a Christian **for at least three years** and a member of Emmanuel **for at least six months**.

FOR ELDER NOMINEES: At the time of nomination, an elder nominee should have been a Christian **for at least five years** and an Emmanuel member **for at least one year**.

Note: Elder nominations occur **once a year during the month of June**.

Further Reflections on Nominating and Being Nominated

There is a balance to be struck here. Church leaders must be exemplary (“above reproach” is the phrase in Scripture), which means that neither making nor accepting a nomination should be taken lightly. On the other hand, “exemplary” does not mean perfect. To be an example is to be faithful in what is the norm for every disciple, not to belong to another order of being. Bear in mind that we are a young church, and for that reason our leadership will tend to be younger than what we might find in a suburban context. Please also bear in mind that to accept a nomination is not to accept the office. The purpose of the training period is not only to learn, but also to assess oneself and to be assessed.

Below is the text of 1 Timothy 3, followed by some commentary. This may be of some help as you think and pray about the nomination process.

1 Timothy 3

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.

⁸ Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹ In the same way, their wives [or, the women] are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹² A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Three qualifications stand out whether we are talking about elders or deacons. First, there must be a good public reputation. The fact that a person feels OK about himself or herself—that his or her conscience is clear—is not enough when taking on a public responsibility in the church. Others must feel comfortable as well, and this requires a good public record. A nominee should ask himself or herself—would my boss or those who work for me speak highly of me, of my work ethic and of my public demeanor?

Secondly, there has to be testing over time. A new Christian, or a newly renewed Christian, should not be asked to assume public responsibility in the church. And if he or she is asked, he or she should decline. How much time is enough time? There is no easy rule for this, though it is reasonable to say that elder candidates should have been in the faith, as adults, for at least 5-10 years. The testing time for MTs need not be as long, though someone who has been a serious believer for less than 3-5 years might be wise to decline. Time all by itself, of course, does not necessarily mean much. It is very helpful to ask what has happened during the time since one became a serious follower of Christ. Ask about suffering: has there been suffering? And how has the person (or oneself) weathered suffering? Has one grown in joy or bitterness? Ask also about service: What has one done in the church and how has it been received?

Third, there is self-control and the ordering of one’s private world. If one is married (this is not necessary) how strong is the marriage; is there good communication and problem solving. If one has children, are they out of control, or is there loving order in the home. Is there addictive behavior (Paul mentions alcohol and money as agents of addiction, but there could be others)?

One of the qualifications that is unique to the elder is “aptness to teach”. This does not mean that people with teaching gifts are not great assets to the MT. It does mean that elders, since they are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the church, need to know God’s word and know how to explain it to people.

Emmanuel Presbyterian Church Elders, Deacons, and Trustees

(April 2004)

At EPC the congregation participates in the selection of three different groups of people: Elders (who are elected by the congregation with the advice and consent of the session); the Mercy Team (who are appointed by the session with the advice of the congregation—given largely by the congregational vote); and the Trustees (who are elected by the congregation).

In keeping with our membership in the Presbyterian Church in America our process is grounded in Scripture and consistent with the requirements of our Book of Church Order.

Elders (also known as the session) are responsible for the spiritual oversight and direction of the church. The congregation nominates candidates who are trained and examined by the Session. Those whom the session deems to be qualified are then presented to the congregation for election. Elected elders are then ordained and/or installed. In accordance with the PCA's interpretation of Scripture (particularly 1 Timothy 2:12) only men may serve on the Session. They must be members in good standing and must meet the qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3.

Mercy Team (MT) members assist the elders (who are the de facto diaconate since we do not presently have one) in cultivating the mercy ministries of the church. Like elder candidates, MT candidates are nominated by the congregation. They are then trained and examined by the session and/or those whom the session may appoint. Those who qualify in the estimation of the session are presented to the congregation at the annual meeting for their vote of confidence. The session weighs the congregational vote in its final decision as to whether or not to appoint the candidate. All appointees are formally commissioned in public worship. According to Book of Church Order 9.7, members of the MT may be men or women and must be members in good standing. They should be mature, not young in the faith, and of exemplary public character (the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3 provide a good benchmark).

Though a PCA Church needs only Elders to be a fully recognized church, we nevertheless have chosen to give equal prominence to our MT. This is so because "deed ministry" (associated with diaconal efforts) and "word ministry" (associated with the spiritual and teaching oversight of a church's Session) belong together. Deeds of love without gospel teaching fail to give God glory and show people where love is to be found; but teaching without love lacks credibility and attractiveness. Our Lord was "mighty in word and deed" (Luke 24:19) during his earthly ministry. He intends that we should be the same now that he has gone to glory and sent his Holy Spirit to make us his continuing representatives. The apostles acknowledged this fact by recognizing two offices in the continuing church—elder and deacon.

Trustees have a limited but very important role. Under the authority of the Session they represent the corporation to the state. Trustees, who may be men or women, are elected by the members of the corporation (i.e., the members of the congregation) at a regularly constituted congregational meeting. Legal and/or financial ability and training, while not necessary, are valuable qualifiers for the task.

Rationale for this design

Three questions immediately arise: (1) Why may only men be elders? (2) Why does EPC not have a formal diaconate? (3) Why are we committed to the PCA?

Question 1: Why may only men be elders?

Evangelical Christians disagree on this issue, the debate centering largely on the exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. To make a very complex issue simple, the debate runs along the following lines. Those who favor women elders (“egalitarians”) argue that, where a text is obscure (and they allege that this one is), we should look to texts that are clearer (like Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”) and to the general movement of redemptive history (with Pentecost the Spirit is poured out on “all flesh”—men and women alike). They argue that we should “err on the side” of inclusion until or unless we get a very clear biblical directive to exclude spiritually qualified women from the eldership.

Those who favor the “qualified men only” view (“complementarians”) maintain that 1 Tim 2 is not as unclear as the egalitarians allege and that, taken together with 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, it limits women’s role in the formal ordering of the church. The limit is not with respect to access to God (Galatians 3:28 makes that clear) but with respect to authority in the church, which Paul calls “the household of faith” in which the Fatherhood of God is mirrored in the maleness of the leadership.

For better or for worse, the PCA is complementarian. This means that we may not admit women to the Session as long as we elect to remain in the PCA. Our practice is to be as inclusive as we can be while maintaining constitutional integrity. In other words, we welcome suitably gifted women to undertake any ministry that a suitably gifted non-ordained male may undertake (leading a home fellowship group, serving as a trustee, serving on the EMT, teaching adult Sunday School to men or women, helping distribute the communion elements, praying in public worship, conducting training seminars, etc.).

Question 2: Why does EPC have the MT instead of a Board of Deacons?

This is the only way that we can enable men and women to work together as equal partners in the mercy ministries of our church while remaining faithful to the requirements of our Book of Church Order.

The BCO requires that, if a PCA church has a Board of Deacons (this is not required—5.10), the membership of that Board must be male only (BCO 7.2). Should the church not have a Board of Deacons, official diaconal oversight falls to the Session (BCO 5.10), who “should select and appoint godly men and women of the congregation to assist” them (BCO 9.7). We view the MT as this group of appointees.

Many in the PCA believe the BCO to be in error when it excludes women from the diaconate. Much hinges on the translation of 1 Timothy 3:11, part of a section dealing with deacon qualifications. Some translate the verse, “In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect...” as if what is intended here is the qualifications of deacons’ wives. Others point out that “their” is not in the Greek and that the word translated “wives” can as readily be translated “women”—in which case the text would be translated, “In the same way, the women [i.e. the female deacons] are to be women worthy of respect...” Strongly favoring this rendering are two factors: (1) “our sister Phoebe” is called a deacon in Romans 16:1, and (2) 1 Timothy 3, which sets forth the qualifications for both elders and deacons is surprisingly silent on the qualifications for elder wives. Why, we reasonably ask, would Paul have listed qualifications for deacons’ wives without also listing the qualifications for elders’ wives? The best explanation is that he is setting forth qualifications for three groups—elders, male deacons, and female deacons.

Our Book of Church Order reflects, perhaps unintentionally, something of the debate. For while it maintains that women may not be deacons (because it is an ordained office of the church), it also asserts that deacons do not have ruling authority (“the office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of service both to the physical and spiritual needs of people”—BCO 7.2).

Because EPC is committed to the PCA, we are not free simply to disregard our Book of Church Order. But the Book itself provides us with an option that is more in keeping with our understanding of what the Bible teaches. And this option is the one we have chosen to pursue at EPC.

Question 3: Why is EPC committed to the PCA?

Someone once said to a friend, “I am looking for the perfect church.” His wise friend said, “If you find it, be sure not to join; for on the day you do so, it will cease to be perfect!” No church this side of heaven is all that it should be—at any level, whether doctrinally, or relationally, or organizationally.

This is as true of the PCA as it is of any church. This said, we have good reasons for the affiliation we have made. First, the PCA is connectional—which means that we are accountable to a broader body than ourselves. Part of what this means is that EPC members can have the comfort of knowing that their pastor and elders are not free-lancers, but are themselves under the authority of their own peers when it comes to what they teach and do. Being connectional also means that we do not have to “re-invent the wheel” every time a controversial issue on doctrine (say, infant baptism) or church government asserts itself. We can get on with the “main thing”—discipling the nations and loving our neighborhood—without getting bogged down discussing things endlessly among ourselves.

Secondly, the PCA is evangelical and reformed, deeply committed to the authority of Scripture and the centrality of Christ over the whole of life. In other words, the peers to whom your leaders must be in mutual subjection believe the right stuff!

Thirdly, the PCA believes in elder rule—which means that the local church is not a one-man show. There are checks and balances not just from church to church, but also within the leadership of our own church.

Fourthly the PCA, particularly the presbytery to which we belong, has a vision for the extension of God’s kingdom. The PCA is theologically orthodox, but not simply that. We want the truth to get out and change our city and our world. We want to see churches planted, communities transformed, and disciples made. Emmanuel exists because the PCA fronted the money and brought a pastor to the city to start us.

Emmanuel Presbyterian Church Officer Nomination form

Preamble:

You may use this form to nominate one or more people to office. Please note that in order to nominate someone to the Mercy Team or to the Session you must be a member in good standing at EPC and the person you are nominating must also be a member in good standing. Please note in addition that you need to secure the permission of the person you wish to nominate before doing so. Please submit the following to an elder or electronically to sstrickman@emmanuelnyc.org.

Person making the nomination:

The name of the person(s) you wish to nominate and the office(s) for which you would like to make your nomination(s):

<u>Name</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Permission Granted</u> (please write "yes")
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Signature of the person making the nomination