

MARANATHA BIBLE CHURCH

LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

Section A – Authority

The one supreme authority over the church is Jesus Christ. The church is built by Him and upon Him as its Chief Cornerstone (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20), is under His authority as the Head of the church (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18), and is under His care as its Chief Shepherd (Eph. 5:25; 1 Pet. 5:4). It is in Christ that the body grows and is held together (Col. 2:19). We desire to obey Him, to imitate Him, and to seek His mind in all things.

Section B – Elders

Description

The Scriptures teach that elders are to oversee and shepherd the local church. Elders are spiritually qualified, mature men who are directly accountable to God for the well-being of the church (2 Cor. 5:9, 10; Heb. 13:17).

Scriptural Teaching

We understand the Scriptures to teach the following important principles about elder leadership within the local church:

Pastoral Leadership

One of the most precious images of Jesus is as a Shepherd who cares for the flock (John 10). Elders likewise, must possess a deep desire to do the work of the ministry and to shepherd the flock of Jesus Christ at Maranatha (1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2). This requires protecting the church from false teachers, feeding the flock through the teaching of God's Word, leading the church as overseers, and caring for the practical needs of our people (Acts 20:28-35; 1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Pastoral leadership is about imitating the care and tender compassion of Jesus Christ for His people.

Servant Leadership

Elders are to be servant leaders, not domineering or self-serving dictators. Their desire must be to lovingly serve on the behalf of others in a humble way that genuinely manifests the life of Jesus Christ to the congregation and to a watching world. Jesus Christ is the supreme model of sacrificial servant leadership (Jn. 13:1-17; Phil. 2:3-9).

We believe that church leadership is about people, not power, and that "lording" control over people is a failure to understand the Scriptural concept of eldership (1 Pet. 5:1-4). At Maranatha, the individuals within the elder team itself must work together with a servant

spirit, being patient, listening, handling disagreement, receiving rebuke and correction, forgiving, and lovingly relating to one another.

Shared Leadership

Maranatha Bible Church is led by a plurality, or team, of elders. A consistent Scriptural pattern of shared leadership among elders is evident throughout many of the New Testament Epistles (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). The Scriptures record the existence of a group of elders in numerous local churches and it is never indicated that a church would ever have or need any other form of leadership than that of a plurality of elders.

The Apostles themselves shared the leadership of the first church at Jerusalem, and later with elders (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). Furthermore, Paul never ordained a sole individual to perform the church's ministry, but left a group of elders to jointly serve each believing community. The combined counsel and wisdom of a team of elders helps assure that decisions are not self-willed or self-serving to a single individual. Together, the elders strive to function in unity and harmony in seeking the mind of the Lord.

Male Leadership

We believe the Scriptures provide a model of male leadership within the New Testament church. The primary example of male leadership is found in the person of Jesus Christ as He selected and trained twelve men to serve as the leaders of the first church. In addition, the Apostle Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus also require elders to be men (1 Tim. 2:11, 12; 1 Tim. 3:1-5; Tit. 1:6). At Maranatha, qualified men within the church body share the responsibility of elder leadership as taught in God's Word.

We affirm that, while God in His Word has ordained differences in their function, both men and women are created in the image of God and are joint heirs in the kingdom. The Scriptures provide a strong basis for the value of women, both as persons and as participants in the life of the redeemed community. We, too, value the very significant participation that women have in the life of Maranatha. Our desire is to affirm, support and encourage women in the use of their God-given gifts and abilities to their fullest extent within the biblical guidelines for the glory of God.

Qualifications

The character and effectiveness of the church is directly related to the quality of its leadership. The Scriptures clearly teach that elders must meet certain spiritual and moral qualifications before appointment to office.

The spiritual qualifications for elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4:

An overseer must be...

<i>above reproach</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6, 7)	accusations not likely to be believed because of overall character
<i>husband of one wife</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6)	a man devoted to his wife
<i>temperate</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8; 2:5)	clearheaded, not self-indulgent, self-

	controlled
<i>prudent</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8)	not impulsive, self-restrained, balanced
<i>respectable</i> (1 Tim. 3:2)	an ordered life
<i>hospitable</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8)	an open heart and an open house
<i>able to teach</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7)	able to transmit spiritual truth
<i>not addicted to wine</i> (1 Tim. 3:3; 5:23; Tit. 1:7)	no indulgence that would undermine witness
<i>not pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious</i> (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7)	not quick-tempered or irrational
<i>free from the love of money</i> (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2)	not money hungry
<i>one who manages his own household well</i> (1 Tim. 3:4, 5)	home reflects Christian character
<i>having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion</i> (Tit. 1:6)	children are believers
<i>not a new convert</i> (1 Tim. 3:6)	not a new believer
<i>good reputation</i> (1 Tim. 3:7)	known for good and right, a good reputation from those outside the church
<i>God's steward</i> (Tit. 1:7)	one who is directly accountable to God
<i>not self-willed</i> (Tit. 1:7)	not stubborn, headstrong, overbearing, having own way
<i>not quick-tempered</i> (Tit. 1:7)	not known for outbursts of anger
<i>loving what is good</i> (Tit. 1:8)	pursues beneficial things
<i>just</i> (Tit. 1:8)	fair, impartial
<i>devout</i> (Tit. 1:8)	personal holiness
<i>holding fast the faithful word...that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict</i> (Tit. 1:9)	stable in the faith, and is able to teach and defend the truths of God's Word
<i>exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily</i> (1 Pet. 5:2)	not out of obligation, but desires to serve
<i>not as lording it over but proving to be examples</i> (1 Pet. 5:3)	not controlling, but as Godly models

We cannot place biblically unqualified men into office. Only morally and spiritually qualified men can serve as elders. Elders must also have a passionate heart to care for God's people and must pursue the responsibilities involved in leading God's flock. They must be willing to work diligently so that the body of Christ will be equipped for the work of service. But in addition to a personal desire to be a shepherd, Scripture demands that a prospective elder meet certain qualifications.

All elders must be in unreserved agreement with the Statement of Doctrine of this church. All elders must also be members of this church and must attend its corporate worship services faithfully as well as be actively involved with its members.

The Process for the Placement of Elders

Because of the overriding concern of the New Testament for godly men to serve as elders, we take eldership at Maranatha seriously. The critical task of placing new elders in office shall include the following steps: preparation, identification, examination, training, appointment, and installation.

Preparation

Our Lord Jesus Christ spent a significant part of His public ministry preparing for the future. He patiently poured His life into twelve men, training them to be the future leaders of the church. He was a master teacher and mentor. Like the Lord, the Apostle Paul also was a discipler of men. He had men such as Timothy and Titus who he discipled and expected these men to train others: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,” (2 Tim. 2:2).

We believe that the key to reproducing leadership is to clearly plan for it. The development of spiritual leadership for the church occurs through an intentional process whereby individuals are discipled and trained by other spiritual men within the church. This equipping and building up of the body of Christ is through the teaching of God’s Word. We understand that effective, qualified leadership may take years to develop. However, for the church to have doctrinally sound and competent leaders to serve, then the elders must actively train, guide, and pray for quality men now.

In addition to discipling individuals, the elders will ensure that the entire church family is taught the Scriptural principles for church leadership. The elders will evaluate the necessity for this instruction periodically.

Identification

The elders will seek to identify potential elders within the church by considering those men who are, in part, already doing the work of an elder. We believe that a God-given desire will motivate certain men within the church to diligently study the Scriptures, to instruct others in the Word, and to sacrificially care for and serve others within the congregation. The elders observe and identify those men who develop in spiritual maturity, godly character, faithful service, doctrinal soundness, and spiritual giftedness.

The elder team welcomes requests for new men to be considered for office. Although requests may be made at any time, the congregation will be called upon annually to confidentially identify potential elders during the annual meeting.

Examination

Potential elders will be considered first by the elder team. Those who have exhibited an ongoing desire to serve, who have a sufficient understanding of the teaching of God’s Word, and who appear to meet the spiritual qualifications as found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, will be individually interviewed by the elder team. The elders shall inquire of the man’s character and doctrinal knowledge as well as request information from the man’s family and friends

during the evaluation. The evaluation shall include a written questionnaire pertaining to character and doctrinal qualifications as well as a verbal review by the current elders.

Since the qualifications for eldership are to be taken seriously, the congregation also is to be involved in the examination process of its spiritual leaders. The selection of a potential elder will be announced to the congregation prior to his appointment to office for affirmation by the congregation. The announcement will include accompanying instructions so that the man is evaluated according to the Biblical qualifications. Any objections as to the man's character will be evaluated by the current elders. The elders will determine if the accusations are Scripturally based and if he should be dismissed from consideration.

Training

To further prepare potential elders for leadership at Maranatha, these men will be requested to review the qualifications and responsibilities of eldership, read materials on church leadership, review the philosophy of ministry, strategy, and vision of Maranatha, receive instruction on decision making and problem solving, and attend the elders' meetings for Bible study and prayer.

Appointment

The Scriptures teach that elders are to be appointed. New Testament elders were appointed by other spiritual leaders within a local church. At Maranatha, elders are appointed by other elders who are serving in the church. A prospective elder may be appointed only after the candidate has been examined by the elders and the congregation and received training to equip him for the responsibilities of eldership.

Installation

The installation of new elders shall occur during a worship service or congregational meeting. The congregation will be presented with those elders who have been appointed to office and the new elders shall be charged with the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands. The congregation is encouraged to pray for the work of the new elders' ministry.

Responsibilities

Leading

The elders lead first by setting an example of personal godliness for others to follow: "...nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock," (1 Pet. 5:3). They are to be men who are respectable and above reproach. Besides modeling godly living, the elders also manage, or rule, the church: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor..." (1 Tim. 5:17). Some specific ways the elders of Maranatha lead and provide direction for the church are by

- taking an active leadership role in the worship services of the church
- being involved in every ministry of the church including attending meetings, offering insight, making decisions, and helping to set goals
- evaluating the effectiveness of all programs periodically
- writing and periodically evaluating a philosophy for every ministry of the church

- holding elders' meetings regularly, for which there shall be a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary selected from among themselves
- making decisions on behalf of the church
- studying God's Word and drafting position papers on various issues
- developing a vision statement for the church
- planning for the needs and growth of the church
- reviewing and making proposals to amend the Constitution as necessary

Overseeing

The author of Hebrews wrote, "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls," (Heb. 13:17). In 1 Peter we read that elders are to "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight," (1 Pet. 5:2). Elders are overseers of the church. They are responsible for watching over the members of the church family as well as supervising its affairs. The elders carry out this responsibility by

- regularly reviewing the church membership
- praying, caring for, and encouraging each individual of the church body
- directing and facilitating the serving ministry of the deacons
- supervising the placement, ministry, evaluation, and termination of church staff
- reviewing and approving programs, outreaches, policies, and curriculum of the church
- forming and overseeing church committees, advisory councils and sub-committees as necessary
- preparing and presenting an annual budget for congregational affirmation (the new budget must be available to the congregation at least two weeks before the annual meeting)
- approving, or disapproving, fund raisers, and overseeing all expenditures
- scheduling the congregational meetings and other events of the church
- overseeing the management of the facilities and property of the church
- acting as a board of trustees for legal purposes

Teaching

Throughout the New Testament, we see a great emphasis on the importance of teaching God's Word. Before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to teach others (Mat. 28:20). The Apostles were teachers, and the early church devoted itself to teaching (Acts 2:42). Paul exhorted Timothy to give attention to "the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and teaching" (1 Tim. 4:13).

New Testament elders are required to be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). We are persuaded that all elders must have a sufficient knowledge of the truths of God's Word and be able to communicate sound doctrine to others (2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:9). Those who "work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17) are worthy of our deep appreciation and respect.

At Maranatha, we believe that the proclamation of the Word of God should always be the heart and focus of the church's ministry. Therefore, the elders are faithfully committed to the accurate, systematic, God-centered preaching and teaching of the Scriptures. Some specific

ways in which the elders instruct others are by -the consistent expositional preaching of the Word of God

- teaching doctrine and the books of the Bible for all ages
- mentoring and training others one-on-one and through Bible studies
- providing teaching seminars and workshops to train others who are teachers
- writing curriculum as necessary
- being men who are individually devoted to regular study of the Word of God (Acts 6:4)

Shepherding

As shepherds, elders strive to protect, lead, feed, and care for the spiritual and practical needs of the flock of Christ. Their ministry of shepherding others within the church family comes from a warm heart which is devoted to loving, self-sacrificing service on behalf of the sheep.

To the elders at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul said to “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood,” (Acts 20:28). Peter likewise exhorted his fellow elders to “shepherd the flock of God among you,” (1 Pet. 5:2). Shepherd elders seek to watch over the church body and defend it from that which threatens the unity, stability and purity of the church. The elders shepherd the flock at Maranatha by

- encouraging and exhorting members toward godliness, love and good deeds
- practicing the “one another’s” of the New Testament
- reaching out to new members and finding places of service
- participating in small group ministry
- lovingly exercising church discipline, being guided always by the principles set forth in Scripture
- helping to resolve conflict and rebuking any who cause division or disharmony within the body
- visiting the sick and caring for the weak and needy (including helping with the dispersal of the benevolence fund)
- comforting the bereaved
- providing counsel for those who are considering marriage or divorce
- welcoming others into their lives and their homes

Guarding

A major part of the work of the elders is to establish and maintain the authority of the Word of God and to guard the local church from false teachers. Paul, writing to the elders at Ephesus, instructed them to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock,” (Acts 20:28). In his letter to Titus, Paul required an elder to be one who is “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict,” (Tit. 1:9). The elders defend the teachings of God’s Word and guard against false doctrine by

- defending the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Scriptures

- maintaining the centrality of the Scriptures in every program and ministry of the church
- diligently studying and exegeting the Scriptures to discover its correct interpretation
- being alert and watching for false teaching
- dealing with those who promote heresy, especially concerning the major doctrines of the Word
- reviewing curriculum
- staying current on contemporary issues and offering a biblical perspective of various topics affecting the church

Praying

God wants those who lead the church to be people of prayer. The first leaders of the church were men who devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14; 6:4). Loving shepherd elders know that caring for people and their needs includes praying for them consistently. Furthermore, anyone who is suffering from sickness is directed to “call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him,” (Jas. 5:14). The elders are committed to praying for the church by

- praying regularly for the church family, individually and corporately during elders’ meetings
- leading in prayer during the worship services of the church
- being available to pray with others at all times
- praying over and anointing with oil those who are experiencing serious health issues

Elders and Decision Making

Decision making at Maranatha involves the collective participation of the elder team. The goal of the elders is to speak and act as a unified team. Therefore, we believe it is important for the elders to work and pray together to achieve oneness of mind.

Elders are to shepherd the flock “according to the will of God” (1 Pet. 5:2), which means that elders have a responsibility of knowing the will of the Head of the church. When conflict arises, eldership often requires much discussion, consideration of various opinions, study of Scripture, and fervent prayer, all with the purpose of becoming of one mind (Acts 15:1-29). At times, elders must defer to one another in matters of preference in order to arrive at unanimity (Rom. 12:10).

We believe that good communication is key to being an effective leader. The elder team will remain open and accessible to the members of Maranatha. The elders will strive to regularly communicate decisions and information, and receive input from the church body as well.

Eldership not Limited by Number

There is no Scriptural limitation upon the number of elders within a local church. However, every prospective elder must have a desire to serve and meet the qualifications. The number of elders will depend upon those qualified and the number needed to effectively shepherd the church. It is our intent to have at least four qualified men to serve on the elder team at Maranatha Bible Church at all times.

Length of Service

Scripture places no limit on the length of service of an elder. Thus, all elders will serve until they decide to resign, until they request a period of rest, or because of personal circumstances. Additionally, the remaining elders may determine that there is some disqualifying cause to warrant one's removal.

During its annual meeting, the congregation will be called upon to complete and submit a written evaluation of elders who desire to continue to serve in the church. All current elders shall be presented to the congregation annually for affirmation and prayer.

Removal¹

Reasons for removal

Certain reasons may require an elder to step down from his position or make his removal necessary:

(1) Sin in which an elder comes under church discipline.

Some sins and offenses which an elder may commit can be addressed and resolved by following the procedure outlined in Scripture (Mat. 18:15, 16; Gal. 6:1). However, certain sins can be serious enough to significantly jeopardize an elder's integrity and, in some cases, destroy the testimony of the church. While every member of the body is called to godly living, the conduct of elders is particularly important since elders serve as examples for others to follow. They must be men who are above reproach and respectable as well as those who have a good reputation outside the church. While elders are not to be the objects of false or frivolous accusations (1 Tim. 5:19), elders are church members just as all others and are subject to discipline according to the guidelines outlined in Scripture. An elder who sins in such a way that he comes under the discipline of the church will be disqualified from continuing to serve as an elder. This removal will be determined by the remaining elders and shall be reported to the church during a church service or congregational meeting (1 Tim. 5:20).

(2) The discovery of biblical disqualification(s) after appointment.

If an elder is found to be biblically disqualified in any area, he must step down or be removed. All elders must continue to meet the requirements as found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:5-9 while serving in the church.

(3) The inability or persistent failure to perform the biblical functions of an elder.

If it becomes clear that an elder is unable, unwilling, or persistently failing to perform the functions of eldership, even after encouragement, warnings, and counsel from the other elders, he must step down or be removed. All elders must have a sincere and diligent desire to serve and must carry out the work of the ministry.

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(4) Unresolved doctrinal disharmony.

Anyone who advocates a major doctrinal difference or causes others to be led astray must not be allowed to continue in the church (1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18). At Maranatha, in the event that an elder holds and insists on teaching doctrinal positions contrary to those in the Statement of Doctrine, and if doctrinal harmony is unattainable through study and discussion with other elders, the dissenting elder must step down or be removed.

(5) Unresolved philosophical disharmony.

No team of elders will be perfectly like-minded in all things. These minor differences often lead to helpful dialogue, inspire fresh thinking, or bring about necessary change. However, if a team is to pull strongly, they must be generally like-minded and moving in the same direction. Being unified in mind and purpose is essential to the church (Phil. 2:2; Eph. 4:3; Tit. 3:9-11). If a single elder insists on pulling in a substantially different and incompatible direction regarding a major matter, and if he remains unyielding and disagreeable despite all attempts to harmonize his position with that of the elder team, he must step down or be removed.

(6) Personal desire to step down.

If an elder becomes personally convinced that he is no longer qualified, or if he no longer desires to serve as an elder, he must be allowed to step down (1 Tim. 3:1). In such cases, before the elder steps down, earnest attempts should be made to encourage the man, who may simply be frustrated, discouraged, or excessively harsh in his self-examination (assuming the other elders and members of the church see him as qualified and effective). Additionally, other personal circumstances may create a situation in which an elder desires to step down from office.

(7) A need for rest.

If the elder team recognizes that an elder has become overburdened and needs rest from his duties, or for health reasons, or for the good of his family, he may decide on his own, or be encouraged by the other elders, to step down for a time of recovery.

Process for removal

In the church, as with any institution, those who are in authority may become the object of gossip and wrongful defamation. In fact, the more diligently an elder becomes involved in others' problems, the greater the risk of facing angry, false accusation. For this reason, the Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses," (1 Tim. 5:19). It is necessary, then, for every member to avoid discussing personal objections with others and to proceed with prayer and caution, remembering that the church was careful in examining each elder before his appointment to office. The removal of an elder could lead to great strife and division. Furthermore, the unnecessary investigation of an elder could cause him to lose credibility among others.

This being said, neither personal loyalty to an elder, fear of strife in the church, fear of reprisal, nor any other concern should prevent a member from revealing a legitimate

problem regarding an elder. The concern should be addressed to the elder team. If the elder recognizes a significant problem regarding his own leadership ability or sees himself as biblically unqualified, he may choose to step down voluntarily. In other cases, assuming the matter is well attested by multiple witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19), the remaining elders shall investigate and remove the elder if necessary. In any event, the discontinuance or removal of an elder must be reported to the church during a church service or congregational meeting. The man may be able to serve in the church in other ways, but restoration to eldership may not be possible.

Spirit of removal

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted, (Gal. 6:1). Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said to “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you,” (Eph. 4:31, 32).

Loving discipline is not only for the protection of the church, but for the reconciliation of a fallen elder as well. Discipline reflects God’s love for His children: “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,” (Heb. 12:6). At Maranatha, the elders seek to remove and shepherd a sinning elder in a spirit of meekness, love, and forgiveness (Matt. 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Cor. 4, 8; Col. 3:12-14).

Section C – Deacons

Description

The Scriptures teach that deacons are to serve the church by caring for the practical needs of the people. Deacons are spiritually qualified men who assist and work under the leadership of the elders in serving the physical needs of the church family.

Scriptural Teaching

We understand the Scriptures to teach the following important principles about the ministry of deacons within the local church:

Scriptural Basis

Acts 6:1-7 provides the first indication of a specific official group of men who were appointed to serve the practical needs of the church. Although the Greek word for “deacon” is not explicit in the text, the concept of a body of servants who lovingly care for the needs of others is very apparent. In this passage we see that men were selected to carry out the task of caring for the needy so that the Apostles could give attention to their first priority prayer and ministry of the Word.

Deacons an office in the church

Writing to the church at Philippi, the Apostle Paul addressed all the saints “including the overseers and deacons,” (Phil. 1:1). The first office is that of the pastoral oversight of elders;

the second is the office of the practical service of the deacons. Likewise, the two offices of church leadership at Maranatha are elders and deacons.

Complementary Ministry

In the New Testament, deacons are always in close relationship with the elders of the church. Like the elders, deacons are required to meet specific qualifications. Like the elders, they must be examined and approved before they can serve. Like the elders, they hold an official position of trust in the congregation.

Unlike the elders, however, deacons are not required to be able to teach and do not govern the church as part of their position. They are servants who relieve shepherding elders of the multitude of practical duties that are required in caring for a congregation. The two offices of elders and deacons are separate but complementary. Although deacons complement the elders, their Scriptural role and responsibilities are distinct. The elders must devote their primary attention to teaching and leading people while deacons must give their primary attention to caring for people's physical welfare. So deacons assist and complement the elders in the overall ministry of the church.

Subordinate Ministry

Because the elders oversee the entire church, they also oversee the deacons. Deacons serve under the direction and leadership of the elders, undertaking those areas of service necessary for the church's functioning that would otherwise prohibit the elders from fulfilling their biblical responsibilities. At Maranatha, the elders delegate certain tasks to the deacons and call upon the deacons to help them with the various functional needs of the church.

Qualifications

The spiritual qualifications for deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-12:

Deacons must be...

<i>men of dignity</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	serious; respectable conduct
<i>not double-tongued</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	not deceitful in words; no inconsistency in speech
<i>not addicted to much wine</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	not controlled by alcohol
<i>not fond of sordid gain</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	not one who loves money; not greedy
<i>holding to the mystery of the faith</i> (1 Tim. 3:9)	one who knows what he believes and why
<i>tested</i> (1 Tim. 3:10)	tested and approved character
<i>beyond reproach</i> (1 Tim. 3:10)	no charge of wrongdoing is likely to be believed because of overall character
<i>husband of only one wife</i> (1 Tim. 3:12)	a man devoted to his wife
<i>good managers of their children and households</i> (1 Tim. 3:12)	has his home in order

Women must be...

<i>dignified</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	serious; respectable conduct
<i>not malicious gossips</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	not slanderous or libelous
<i>temperate</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	clearheaded, not self-indulgent, self-controlled
<i>faithful in all things</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	in all of lifeto their husband, family, church, and God

All deacons must be in unreserved agreement with the Statement of Doctrine of this church. All deacons must also be members of this church and must attend its corporate worship services faithfully as well as be actively involved with its members.

The Process for the Placement of Deacons

The process for the placement of deacons shall be the same as for the placement of elders: preparation, identification, examination, training, appointment, and installation. Potential deacons are required to attend deacons' meetings for Bible study and prayer and may be requested to read material to prepare them for the serving ministry of the church. The potential deacons shall be examined by the elders. Deacons shall be appointed and installed into office by the elder team.

Responsibilities

Through the deacons, the local church's charitable activities are effectively organized and centralized. The deacons distribute funds and provide relief to the needy as agents of mercy. They help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the elderly, the homeless, the shut-in, the refugees, and the disabled. They help people in their everyday activities. They assist people in their homes. Their work, though often difficult and tiring, is most precious in God's eyes. He is deeply concerned about the poor and needy. "This is pure and undefiled religion..." declares James, "to visit orphans and widows in their distress..." (Jas. 1:27). Caring for the needy is essential to authentic Christianity.

Some examples of ways deacons at Maranatha serve are

- through greeting and visitor follow-up of those who attend the worship services of the church
- by providing an ushering ministry in which people are seated and which helps with the collection and counting of the church's offerings
- by arranging and providing transportation, and overseeing parking needs
- by helping with those who are moving
- by receiving requests and helping families with limited personal home needs
- by visitation ministry to the sick, widowed, and elderly of the church
- through managing and dispersing the benevolence funds to those with financial need
- by modeling servanthood before the church body by distributing the Lord's Table

Because service needs change, the role of deacons should remain flexible. The tasks may change, though the focus will remain on serving the church family.

Communication With the Elders

Our desire is for the leadership of the church to work together in a harmonious and purposeful way. However, with any organization where two or more groups hold official responsibilities, conflicts and tensions may sometimes arise. The work of shepherding elders and deacons frequently overlap, and the better informed elders and deacons are about their ministries and the church, the better their relationship will be. Only through effective communication, love, and mutual trust can conflicts be avoided.

While maintaining their distinctive roles of ministry, elders and deacons should be closely communicating with one another and serving in unity. At Maranatha, this is facilitated by the appointment of a chairman from among themselves who is to be in regular contact with an overseeing elder.

(The deacon chairman will also assist fellow deacons by looking for areas of service, praying regularly for the other deacons, training them as they seek to serve effectively, scheduling and moderating deacon meetings, helping to find other church members to help the deacons with tasks, and by encouraging deacons in their ministry to the church body.)

As church leaders, the elders seek to provide leadership for the serving ministry of the deacons. Sometimes, the elders may need to clarify what the deacons duties will be, as confusion may cause many deacon-related problems. It is our desire at Maranatha to provide clear direction for the serving ministries of the deacons so they will not be left frustrated or without knowing what the shepherding elders believe God desires.

To maintain close relationship and good communication, the elders and deacons at Maranatha meet together on a regular basis for prayer, for study of the Scriptures, and to address any concerns which may affect the serving ministry of the deacons.

Number and Length of Service

There is no Scriptural limitation upon the number of deacons within a local church. However, every prospective deacon must have a desire to serve and meet the qualifications. The number of deacons will depend upon those qualified and the number needed to effectively serve the church.

All deacons will serve for as long as the elders deem necessary or until they decide to resign, request a period of rest, or step down because of personal circumstances. Additionally, the elders may determine that there is some disqualifying cause to warrant a deacon's removal.

During its annual meeting, the congregation will be called upon to complete and submit a written evaluation of deacons who desire to continue to serve in the church. All current deacons shall be presented to the congregation annually for affirmation and prayer.

Removal

A deacon may step down, or can be removed by the elders, for the reasons listed for elders above. In any event, the discontinuance or removal of a deacon must be reported to the church during a church service or congregational meeting.

Section D – Congregation

Congregational Response

Toward spiritual leadership

Firstly, in his appeal to the believers at Thessalonica, Paul wrote: “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another,” (1 Thes. 5:12, 13). This describes a close relationship involving respect, love, cooperation and appreciation. The congregation is to understand that the elders are to be highly esteemed and honored because of their work and because they represent the Head of the church. This respect calls for members to handle issues biblically concerning elders (1 Tim. 5:19).

Secondly, the congregation is called upon to submit to and follow the instruction of their spiritual leaders, realizing that the Holy Spirit has made them overseers of the church. The effectiveness of the elders as leaders is measurably affected by the response of the people they lead. Only when believers listen and submit to their spiritual leaders does the local church have any chance to be the growing, loving, joyous family God intends it to be. The author of Hebrews wrote, “Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you,” (Heb. 13:17). The result of submission on the part of those who are led is deep, satisfying joy on the part of those who lead.

Thirdly, the local church is responsible for providing for the needs of those diligently devoted to ministry: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching,” (1 Tim. 5:17, 18).

Lastly, the congregation is directed to pray for its spiritual leaders: “Pray for us...,” (Heb. 13:18). The elders desire to faithfully and lovingly lead the people of Maranatha, and request the prayers of all members as they seek to shepherd the flock of Christ. Like the appeal of the Apostle Paul, the elders’ plea is, “Brethren, pray for us,” (1 Thes. 5:25).

Toward one another

As members of the body of Christ, the congregation is called to love one another (Jn. 15:12; 1 Jn. 4:7-21), to live in unity and peace (2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:1-3), to meet together and encourage one another (Heb. 10:23-25), to serve and equip one another using each one’s spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-13), to pray for one another (Eph. 6:18), and to financially give to support the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7). As followers of Christ, believers are commissioned to preach the gospel (Mk. 16:15) and to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20).

Congregational Meetings

Congregational meetings allow us to review the current ministries and outreaches of the church as well as present upcoming ministry opportunities for the church family to consider. The church body may be called upon to offer input which may help the church fulfill its objectives. The shepherding elders may use this time to make known the needs of the

church. As the leaders of the church, the elders may cast a vision for the church's future and request the congregation to pray together for the spiritual growth and development of the church. Congregational meetings are intended to be times of corporate fellowship and encouragement as well.

The New Testament indicates a model of mutual communication and working together of elders and the whole church (Acts 6:5; 15:22, 25). At Maranatha, there are important issues and circumstances that arise which require the involvement and wisdom of the whole congregation. Since many of the actions of the elders as leaders have a significant effect on the entire church, their intention is to consistently involve the congregation in the decision making process. Some of the items in which the elders will ask for input, prayer, and affirmation from the congregation are

- the annual church budget as prepared under the supervision of the elders
- large loans and purchases over \$20,000
- the employment and termination of pastoral staff
- the disposition or acquisition of all real church property over \$20,000
- changes to the Church Constitution, including the Statement of Doctrine
- other items which pertain significantly to the ministries of the church and as determined by the elders

The elders will schedule and lead the congregational meetings of the church, of which there shall be a minimum of three annually. All meetings will be conducted in an orderly and courteous manner which reflects our love and kindness for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. All those in the church body are requested to attend.