

Frequently Ask Questions About Amending the By-laws regarding the selection of elders.

Any time there is a change there are always questions. Questions are good in that they help clarify what the changes are, why they are being made and what they will do. While the list below is certainly not exhaustive I have done my best to anticipate what some of the questions might be. If there are questions that you have that are not answered below please talk to the current elders or myself or Hugh. Most of all I would ask you to be in prayer regarding this proposed change.

Matt Malott

Why are you making a change in the length of service for an elder?

The primary reason for this change is continuity. A man is currently selected to serve for three years and then he must take a one year sabbatical before he is eligible to be selected again. Sometimes it takes a new man as long as a year to get acquainted with previous elder decisions, current practices and policies as well as just becoming comfortable in the role as an elder. That leaves two years in his term and then he is off the board. Under the current system every year the elder board changes. As the minister of the church that is frustrating. I believe it will be to the church's advantage to have men on the board for longer periods of time before they take a sabbatical year.

Why are you changing the procedure for selecting elders?

Currently elders are presented to the church on the last Sunday in February each year in order for the church to have the opportunity to affirm the choices of the elders. Unfortunately the truth is that often this is not discussed until that affirmation Sunday looms near. Then there is a rush to sort out who might be a good elder to present to the church. In the new system there will be no deadline to meet and the process will be one where all through the year discussions about new elders will take place.

The new by-laws do not identify the procedure for selecting elders. What is it?

The procedure for selecting elders is in a separate document that will be a part of a procedures and policy handbook that is being assembled. The specific procedure is not a part of the by-laws because it will always be a work in progress. As the elders use the new procedure they no doubt will discover changes that would be helpful. They will have the ability to make changes without having to amend the by-laws each time.

Does an elder have to serve six years?

No, but an elder has the potential of serving for six consecutive years. At the end of the first three years the elder has the option of continuing on for another three years or choosing not to continue. Of course circumstances sometimes make it necessary for an elder to resign in the middle of his term. When this happens the remaining elders have the option of appointing someone to finish the term of the departing elder.

Who are the current elders?

The current elders are Paul Rabenold, Dale King, Alan Smith, Richard Doud and Bill Stoltzfus.

Why don't we get to vote?

In the Bible we are never told of a vote about who will be an elder. The only selection process described is the appointment of elders by an individual (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The ministry of the elders is so important that the New Testament teaches that only the best qualified men were to be placed in that position. We believe it is best to have the elders of the church decide who should join them as an elder.

Doesn't the church get a say in who will be an elder?

The church will be involved. While it will be the responsibility of the elders to take notice of men who might serve, any member of the church can go to a current elder and suggest the name of a man they believe would make a good elder. It would then be up to the elders as to whether they would pursue that suggestion. Also there will be a 30 day period where any member of the church can speak with an elder if they have an issue with someone the elders have chosen. So, in some ways the church will have the opportunity to have more input than with our current system.

You keep identifying the elders as "men". Why don't we have women elders?

The issue is not whether women are capable of leadership. There are examples of women in leadership positions in the Bible, but not as elders. One of our operating principles is that we do our best to follow the teaching of the Bible. It is clear in the qualifications of elders in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 that the position of elder is to be filled by men. For example, in both Timothy and Titus one of the qualifications is that an elder be the "husband of one wife", something a woman cannot do. New Life Christian Church encourages the leadership of women but we believe the scriptures are clear that elders are to be male.

How are men who are serving as elders now affected?

As soon as the by-laws are changed the new system will be in effect. Those who are serving will continue to serve without interruption. When their present term of 3 years is up they may opt to continue serving for another 3 years if they desire.

How many elders will New Life have?

The New Testament church needs as many elders as it takes to accomplish the ministry of the church. When elders are mentioned in the Bible the word is always plural indicating that a church is to have more than one elder. In following the New Testament, NLCC's by-laws provide that there must be at least two elders but does not mandate a certain number. As the church changes the need for elders will change. The number of elders, above two, is at the discretion of the elders.

Are the ministers of the church elders?

Currently they are not. There is nothing in the by-laws that prohibit a minister of NLCC from being an elder. If the elders decide that a minister would make a good elder, the minister would go through the same selection process as anyone else.

What will keep the eldership from becoming a "good ole boy" club?

As stated earlier, there is no perfect system and any system to select elders has the potential of corruption. There is a provision in the by-laws that allows the church to remove elders. We hope and pray that NLCC never comes to that point. To have a crisis like that would indicate that the church has greater problems than just the desire to remove elders.