

Understanding Eldership at Calvary Baptist Church

Introduction

Elders at Calvary Baptist Church, Inola (CBCI), are entrusted with spiritual leadership and oversight. This guide outlines the biblical and constitutional expectations for elders, including qualifications, responsibilities, and governance structure.

Section 1: Overview of Eldership

Summary:

Elders form the Elder Council, which provides spiritual leadership and pastoral care. The council includes both vocational (paid) and lay (non-paid) elders, with lay elders forming the majority.

Key Points:

- Elders are appointed by the church.
- They provide direction, administration, and pastoral structure.
- Lay elders must outnumber vocational elders.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 1):

"CBCI shall appoint qualified men to serve as an Elder Council... The Elder Council shall consist of both vocational (paid) and lay (non-paid) elders, with lay elders constituting the majority of the council."

Section 2: Authority of Elders

Summary:

The Elder Council is responsible for the policy, direction, and management of CBCI's ministry. Their decisions are subject to congregational affirmation.

Key Points:

- Elders manage ministry operations.
- They appoint ministry teams.
- Policies require a 75% congregational vote to be affirmed.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 2):

"The policy, direction, and management of the ministry of CBCI shall be vested in the Elder Council... Such affirmation shall require a three-fourths (75%) vote of members in good standing."

Section 3: Responsibilities of Elders

Summary:

Elders are responsible for teaching, pastoral care, leadership, discipline, and overseeing ordinances. They are accountable to the congregation.

Key Points:

- Teach and guard doctrine.
- Provide pastoral care and prayer.
- Lead church vision and administration.
- Handle discipline and restoration.

- Oversee baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 3):

"The Elder Council shall shepherd the flock of God as the servant leaders of the church. Their responsibilities shall include:

- a. Teaching and Doctrinal Oversight
- b. Pastoral Care and Prayer
- c. Leadership and Administration
- d. Discipline and Restoration
- e. Oversight of Church Ordinances"

Section 4: Qualifications for Elders

Summary:

Elders must be called by God, meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9), and be members in good standing for at least two years (with some exceptions).

Key Points:

- Must meet scriptural standards.
- Must be a member in good standing for 2+ years unless exempted
- Exceptions considered for prior service in like-minded churches.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 4):

Each elder or elder candidate must have a calling from God... And must meet and maintain the scriptural standards set forth in God's word. The qualifications of an elder are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. All candidates must be members in good standing for a minimum of two years, except for full-time ministerial staff.

Section 5: Elder Council Composition

Summary:

The Elder Council must have 3–9 members, with lay elders in the majority. The Lead Pastor is a voting member.

Key Points:

- Council size is flexible based on church needs.
- Lay elders must outnumber vocational elders.
- Appointments are made prayerfully and without bias.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 5):

"The Elder Council shall consist of no fewer than three (3) and no more than nine (9) elders... The Lead Pastor... shall serve as a voting member of the Elder Council."

Section 6: Vocational vs. Lay Elders

Summary:

Vocational elders are employed by the church; lay elders are not. Both serve on the Elder Council.

Key Points:

- Vocational = paid staff.
- Lay = unpaid volunteers.
- Both have equal voting rights.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 6):

“Vocational elders are defined as those elders who are employed full-time or part-time by the church... Lay elders are defined as those elders who are not employed by the church.”

Section 7: Term of Office

Summary:

Lay elders serve four-year terms, renewable once. After two terms, they must take a one-year break. Vocational elders serve as long as they are employed.

Key Points:

- Lay elders: 4-year terms, max 8 years consecutively.
- Must rotate off for 1 year after 8 years.
- Terms are staggered for continuity.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 7):

“A lay elder... shall serve a four-year term... After serving two consecutive terms... must rotate off... for at least one year.”

Section 8: Discipline and Removal

Summary:

Elders may be removed for spiritual disqualification or failure to fulfill duties. Both the Elder Council and members can initiate this process.

Key Points:

- Investigations are thorough and fair.
- Members can initiate concerns with proper witness.
- A Congregational vote is required for removal.

Section 9: Meetings and Organization

Summary:

The Elder Council meets monthly and maintains open and closed sessions. Minutes are recorded and shared upon request.

Key Points:

- Monthly meetings required.
- Open sessions are public; closed sessions are private.
- Minutes are recorded and accessible.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 9):

“The Elder Council shall meet at least monthly... Meetings shall include both open and closed sessions... Minutes shall be approved... and become part of the permanent records.”

Section 10: Voting and Quorum

Summary:

A quorum (75% of the council) is required for votes. Decisions must pass with at least 75% approval.

Key Points:

- 75% of elders must be present to vote.

- 75% approval needed for decisions.

Excerpt (Article 4, Section 10):

"A proper quorum is defined as seventy-five percent (75%) of the Elder Council... A passing vote must be equal to or greater than seventy-five percent (75%)."

Q&A Section

Q1: Who can become an elder at Calvary?

A: Any man called by God, who meets the biblical qualifications and has been a member in good standing for at least two years (exceptions apply) [Article 4, Section 4]

Q2: How long does an elder serve?

A: Lay elders serve four-year terms, renewable once. Vocational elders serve indefinitely if they are employed [Article 4, Section 7].

Q3: Can an elder be removed?

A: Yes. Elders can be removed for spiritual disqualification or failure to fulfill responsibilities, through a process initiated by the Elder Council or church members [Article 4, Section 8].

Q4: What's the difference between a lay and vocational elder?

A: Vocational elders are employed by the church; lay elders are not. Both serve on the Elder Council, but lay elders must always be the majority [Article 4, Section 6].

Q5: How are decisions made by the Elder Council?

A: A quorum of 75% is required, and decisions must be approved by at least 75% of the entire council [Article 4, Section 10].

Q6: What happens if an elder resigns mid-term?

A: The Elder Council may nominate a qualified replacement to fill the remainder of the term, subject to congregational affirmation [Article 4, Section 7(e)].

Q7: Can members attend Elder Council meetings?

A: Yes, members in good standing may attend open-session portions of meetings as observers [Article 4, Section 9(c)]