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## Choosing New Elders

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New elders are added to a session when a congregation or session determine that more leaders are needed for the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation. Recently, our congregation decided to add new elders to the session. As a member, I received a list of all members in the congregation and was invited to nominate several people.

God calls people to eldership. Part of that process is that others see gifts of leadership in people in the congregation. But how was I to choose? I knew that elders must be professing members of the congregation. I knew that they should have gifts for this service, but how was I to decide from a long list of 608 members, many of whom I did not know? Even if I belonged to a congregation with 150 members, how would I decide who had gifts to be an elder? Here's what I did. If you think this was a helpful process, feel free to use it, too.

- Step one:** I read the *Book of Forms*, our Presbyterian guideline for how-to and procedures. In sections 105-113, all the duties and responsibilities for elders are outlined.
- Step two:** I got out my hi-lighter, grouped and categorized the gifts that are collectively needed on a session. These I called "Gifts for the ministry of eldership."
- Step three:** With my congregational list in one hand and my list of gifts from step 2 in the other, I went down the congregational list. I paused by each person I knew and, if I saw in them any of the gifts listed on my sheet, I put a check beside that person's name.  
*I was not looking for "the perfect elder." I was looking for people who, by the end of the process, had a cluster of checks by their name, a cluster of gifts.* These I nominated.

### Gifts for the ministry of eldership

- A person of good character who is an example to others of how to live in their "speech, conduct, love, faith and purity." *Book of Forms 106:1*
- A person who is free to meet regularly. (Although I thought one woman in our congregation was a good candidate, I did not put a check beside her name for this item because I know she currently cares for both her elderly mother and grandchild. Regular meetings would be impossible for her.) *Book of Forms 109*
- A person who is able to see the "big picture" of life in the church. This person can look beyond the details of individual programs and issues and see an overview of the congregation. This person can answer, "What is best for the whole congregation?" *Book of Forms 109.1*
- A person who has concern for the property and facilities which the church owns or in which people gather for worship. *Book of Forms 109.2*
- A person who is good at discerning the character of other people, who understands systems and how they work, who has a good knowledge of leadership styles and when they are needed for specific tasks. *Book of Forms 109.3*
- A person who enjoys administration because it helps in the smooth operation of a congregation. *Book of Forms 109.4 & .5, 110.5, 110.7, 112.1*
- A person who is comfortable and natural in sharing his/her faith. *Book of Forms 109.4, 112.2*

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- A person who is grounded in and respectful of the Reformed faith, tradition and government, even though he/she may not have grown up in that tradition. *Book of Forms 110, 112.7*
  - A person who has gifts for teaching others about the Christian faith and the Presbyterian tradition. *Book of Forms 110.1, 112.5*
  - A person who appreciates, understands and enjoys the sacraments—baptism and communion—and is willing to take part in the rituals of the church. *Book of Forms 110.4, 111.1*
  - A person who is trustworthy and can hold confidences. *Book of Forms 110.6, 110.8*
  - A person who relates well to people of all ages, is a good listener, can ask clarifying questions, and offer support. *Book of Forms 110.2, 110.8, 112.6*
  - A person who is open to God's Spirit leading the church in new ways and new directions. *Book of Forms 111.1*
  - A person who is skilled or gifted at personnel matters and in building good teams. *Book of Forms 111.2, 112.3*
  - A person who cares for the beauty and order of worship. *Book of Forms 111*
  - A person who has knowledge about and is engaged in activity in the local community. *Book of Forms 113*
  - A person with a strong sense of financial stewardship and deep commitment to responsible financial management. *Book of Forms 113.2, 113.5, 113.6*
  - A person with a strong sense of the global mission of the Christian church. *Book of Forms 113.1, 113.6.1*

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