APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS AND PASTORS POLICY

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1 PURPOSE OF POLICY

In establishing the Church, God has made clear that the leadership of the local church is to be undertaken by elders and pastors. While Eastside's Constitution establishes the process for identifying and electing elders and pastors, in accordance with Biblical principles, there are opportunities to enhance the process by encouraging further due diligence and consistency.

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. …
(Acts 14:23)

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.
(Titus 1:5)

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore and overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wide, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.
(Timothy 3:1-7)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:11-13)

1.1 This policy sets out Eastside's approach to the appointment of elders and pastors.

1.2 Based on biblical teaching, Eastside believes that elders and pastors are provided by Christ to the Church but should be identified and tested based on key qualifications. Eastside also believes in a plurality of elders to lead the Church.

2 Application

2.1 This policy applies to the appointment of lay elders and pastors at Eastside. It is intended to compliment the Constitution and to the extent of any inconsistency, the Constitution will prevail.

2.2 This policy governs the decision-making of the existing elders of Eastside in recommending an individual for appointment as an elder or pastor to the congregation for a vote, in accordance with the Constitution. It also establishes processes associated with newly appointed elders and pastors.

2.3 Unless specified otherwise, for the purposes of this policy 'lay elder' refers to elders who perform the function of an elder on a voluntary basis while 'pastors' are elders who receive financial compensation and perform specific duties, as set out in cl6.4 of the Constitution. When used alone, the term 'elders' references both elders and pastors.

2.4 As pastors are also employees, this policy is not intended to override any parallel processes associated with employment arrangements or provisions under employment and human resources regulation.

2.5 This policy is not intended to establish the strategic vision of the eldership and pastoral team at Eastside but rather establishes processes to assist with appointment. Decisions on the composition and size of the eldership and pastoral team are outside the scope of this policy.

3 Guiding Principles and Actions

Appointment of Lay Elders

3.1 It is the responsibility of the existing elders within the church to examine a proposed candidate for the office of lay elder against the criteria listed in the Constitution. These consist of two types of criteria: a) standing criteria (i.e. godly man, member of good standing, credo-baptised), and b) character criteria (i.e. meeting biblical criteria). While the eldership can develop specific tools and processes to support this assessment, these cannot contradict the minimum requirements of the Constitution, including the requirement to meet biblical standards. In the event of any inconsistency, biblical requirements and the Constitution will prevail.

3.2 Regardless of other qualifications, an individual should not be considered appropriate for the office of lay elder if they have been a member at Eastside for <12 months. Except in exceptional circumstances, an individual should also not be considered appropriate for the office of lay elder where they are not involved in a growth group.

3.3 In proposing a candidate, the following steps are involved:

3.3.1 ***Initial candidate proposal*** – this can be an elder or pastor in an elders meeting or a member of good standing in writing. A person can only be accepted for initial nomination if they meet the standing criteria in the Constitution and, on face value, appear to meet character criteria.

3.3.2 ***Initial consideration of candidate proposal in an elders meeting*** – if there is no objections to the proposal of the candidate, the candidate will progress to elder observation. Consideration of the candidate should occur within 3 elders' meetings of their initial proposal.

3.3.3 ***Elder observation*** – the individual will be exposed to the work of the elders, including the following elements: a) attendance at elders' meetings, b) involvement in ministry (if not already), and c) reading and/or writing on theological/ecclesiological books and papers. The period of elder observation should continue for a period of at least 3 months.

3.3.4 ***Consideration of candidate in an elders' meeting after observation*** – if the candidate is considered appropriate for further examination, they will progress to elder examination.

3.3.5 ***Elder examination*** – the candidate will be examined in more detail on a) character qualification, and b) doctrine, including theology and ecclesiology. This must be undertaken by at least two elders and involve at least one interview with the candidate. Where the candidate has a wife, the wife should also be examined through an interview, either with or separate to her husband. The period of elder examination should not be less than 1 month.

3.3.6 ***Formal proposal of elder*** – if the proposed candidate and their wife agree to becoming an elder, the eldership will vote on the formal proposal of the candidate as an elder. The proposal must be unanimously approved at an elders meeting.

3.3.7 ***Consideration by membership*** – at the next members' meeting after the formal proposal of the candidate passes, the eldership must present the proposed candidate and present their views as to why the candidate is suitable. The membership will then be invited to consider the member and raise any concerns. If any concerns are raised as to standing, character or other matters, these are to be considered in good faith by the elders and raised with the candidate as appropriate.

3.3.8 ***Proposal for vote*** – at least two months' prior to the next members' meeting, the elders must present a draft motion nominating the candidate for election as an elder to the membership. However, if there are concerns raised by the membership during the consideration period, the elders can choose to hold off any draft motion until two months prior to the following members' meeting, to allow for a longer consideration period.

3.3.9 ***Decision by membership*** – at the next members' meeting, if the candidate is still considered suitable, the elders are to present the motion to the congregation for consideration.

3.4 If at any point during the elder nomination process, the candidate undertakes activities that are contrary to the character qualifications of an elder or bring the name of Christ or Eastside into disrepute, they should be removed as a candidate.

3.5 The eldership have the discretion to extend the observation, examination or consideration periods at their discretion if a candidate undertakes activities that may indicate unsuitability for eldership but fall short of activities in cl3.4, or if historical sin is brought to the attention of the elders.

3.6 All parties to the elder nomination process are expected to act in good faith and full disclosure, and are to be aware that there are no guarantees that any particular candidate once proposed will progress to a later stage of the process.

3.7 An elder or pastor should not be involved in the initial proposal of a candidate to whom they are directly related. Additionally, an elder or pastor should not be involved in the interviewing of a candidate if they are directly related to the candidate or their wife.

3.8 A proposed candidate should not be in attendance at elders' meetings where their proposal, observation, examination or nomination is discussed, or should be excused from this element of the meeting.

3.9 The process listed in cl3.3 may be modified by unanimous agreement at an elders meeting where appointing an individual who is a former elder or pastor at Eastside. However, as per cl3.1, any amended process must at a minimum test the candidate against standing and character criteria.

3.10 The process listed in cl3.3 does not apply to the reappointment of existing lay elders. In reappointing elders the following process applies:

3.10.1 The elder in question and their wife (if applicable) are to reflect and consider whether they wish to and should continue as a lay elder.

3.10.2 If, on reflection, a lay elder wishes to be considered for renomination, the remaining elders are to reflect and consider on whether the elder continues to meet the standing and character criteria, is supported by their wife (if applicable) and continues to have an appropriate heart for ministry at Eastside.

3.10.3 If the remaining elders unanimously agree on the renomination of the elder, they will be presented to the congregation for consideration at the next members' meeting.

3.11 The process listed in cl3.3 does not apply to pastors.

Appointment of Pastors

3.12 For all pastors, the process for appointment consists of the following steps:

3.12.1 ***Identification of the need for a pastor*** – the eldership must unanimously agree on the need for a new pastor. Once identified, a preliminary position description for the pastor should be prepared and presented to the membership for consideration at the next members' meeting.

3.12.2 ***Appointment of an interview committee*** –at the members' meeting at which the preliminary position description is presented, the elders must notify of the intention to set up an interview committee. The committee should be set up by the elders prior to progressing to further steps. The committee will be made up of the elders together with members. There must be at least three (non-elder) members on the interview committee, including at least one female. The committee can be made up of both volunteers and individuals selected by the elders.

3.12.3 ***Advertising for a new pastor*** – advertising is at the discretion of the interview committee and can include open advertising or direct approach of individuals based on previous knowledge or reference.

3.12.4 ***Qualifications*** – a pastoral candidate will only be considered where they meet the minimum qualification requirements in the Constitution and have the equivalent of at least two years of theological training (whichever is greater), and come with at least one appropriate pastoral reference from the candidate's current church (or from a Christian mentor, where it is not reasonable to obtain a church referral). Where appropriate, the interview committee can ask for more than one pastoral or other character reference. The candidate should also generally be suitable for the position description. If the interview committee wish to consider the candidate even if not suitable against the position description, this decision and reasoning should be documented in an elders' meeting.

3.12.5 ***Consideration of doctrine*** – the pastoral candidate will be asked to provide a statement of theology and beliefs, including philosophy of ministry and ecclesiology. The candidate will also be asked to respond to the affirmation of faith presented in the Eastside Constitution and the secondary position papers published by Eastside. The interview committee should consider these responses together with any examples of preaching by the candidate (e.g. recorded sermons, attendance at a service where candidate is preaching).

3.12.6 ***Interview of candidate*** – if, after consideration of the candidate's qualifications and doctrine, the interview committee agree to consider the candidate further, they are to be interviewed by at least one pastor and one lay elder. Where appropriate, other members of the interview committee should be involved in the interview process. Where the candidate has a wife, she should also be interviewed, either individually or with her husband, but separate to the initial interview with the candidate.

3.12.7 ***Interview committee recommendation*** – after the interview of the candidate, the interview committee is to present a final recommendation on the candidate. The recommendation must be by majority vote.

3.12.8 ***Offer*** – if a candidate is recommended for appointment by the interview committee, the elders are to vote in an elders' meeting on whether to accept the candidate. If there is a unanimous vote in favour, a final position description should be developed and the candidate tentatively offered the position, subject to congregational consideration and election.

3.12.9 ***Proposal of candidate*** – if the candidate accepts the tentative offer, they will be formally proposed to the membership at the next member's meeting together with the reasons why the interview committee believes they are suitable. The candidate will also be invited to speak at an Eastside service, after their proposal but before a vote. This should occur within one month of the member's meeting if possible. The congregation will then be invited to consider the candidate further.

3.12.10 ***Proposal for vote*** – at least two months' prior to the next members' meeting, the elders must present a draft motion nominating the candidate for appointment as a pastor to the membership. However, if there are concerns raised by the membership during the consideration period, the elders can choose to hold off any draft motion until two months prior to the following members' meeting, to allow for a longer consideration period.

3.12.11 ***Decision by membership*** – at the next members' meeting, if the candidate is still considered suitable, the elders are to present the motion to the congregation for consideration.

3.13 Once appointed, a pastor will be subject to a probation period of 12 months. Prior to the end of the 12-month period, the elders must conduct a review of the pastor and inform the congregation that a review is being undertaken. This review must involve all the elders but should be led by lay elders. The results of a review can be one of the following:

a) Elders unanimously agree for the pastor to pass probation – the probation will be passed from the date of the decision and should be communicated to the congregation as soon as possible.
b) Elders unanimously agree for the pastor to not pass probation – the probation will be cancelled from the date of the decision and the pastor's employment dealt with as per their employment contract.
c) Elders agree by majority to extend the pastor's probation – the probation will be extended for a period of 6 months after which a review is to be undertaken. NOTE, probation can only be extended once before a decision to pass or not pass is made.

3.14 In the event of disagreement between the elders in conducting the review, this is to be resolved as per the Dispute Resolution Policy. Regardless of decision, it is to be communicated to the congregation as soon as possible and no later than the next members' meeting.

3.15 Any interview committee established under cl3.12 will be established only for the duration of that particular pastoral call process. It will be at the discretion of the individual interview committee how frequently they wish to meet and their internal decision-making processes.

3.16 Where the eldership is not unanimous in relation to any decision-making step within cl3.12.8, the eldership can, by majority vote, chose to return to the same step or a previous step for reconsideration after a period of time. Any continued disagreement is to be resolved in accordance with the Dispute Resolution Policy.

3.17 The process listed in cl3.13 does not apply to the reappointment of existing pastors. In reappointing pastors, the following process applies:

3.17.1 The pastor in question and their wife (if applicable) are to reflect and consider whether they wish to and should continue as a pastor.

3.17.2 If, on reflection, a pastor wishes to be considered for renomination, the remaining elders are to reflect and consider on whether the pastor continues to meet the standing and character criteria, is supported by their wife (if applicable) and continues to have an appropriate heart for ministry at Eastside.

3.17.3 If the remaining elders unanimously agree on the renomination of the pastor, they should set an appropriate term for the pastor's reappointment and then will present the pastor and term to the congregation for consideration at the next members' meeting.

4 Relationship to Constitution and Other Policies

4.1 To the extent of any inconsistency between this policy and the Constitution, the latter prevails, except as required by law.

4.2 Pastors and elders and their wives are encouraged to act as a united front wherever possible. Any disputes or disagreements amongst pastors and elders are to be resolved in accordance with the Dispute Resolution Policy as appropriate.

4.3 Where this policy requires unanimity and this is not reached, this will be treated as a dispute for the purposes of the Dispute Resolution Policy.

4.4 Any breaches of this policy are to be handled in accordance with the issue / incident requirements of the Risk and Compliance Policy.