

What is the Session?

The Session is the name for a group of elders who collectively guide the church on behalf of the membership. As a collective whole, they make important decisions to keep our church healthy and sound in our mission. Elders (Greek *presbyter*, hence our denominational name), is called by the congregation to lead the congregation. Individually, they don't have governing power, but function as mature Christian shepherds, helping the flock through difficulties and encouraging growth.

Elders:

- Responsibility to prayerfully watch over the flock
- Provide oversight of the church's ministry, finances, pastoral leaders, and theological integrity to the fullest extent possible
- Periodically pray for members who request healing prayer
- Provide spiritual guidance and wisdom to congregants, especially church members living within the region of their Neighborhood Care Team
- Pray after Sunday worship services (10 to 20 minutes) with individual congregants who are seeking prayer
- Conduct periodic membership interviews (about 1 hour per interview)
- Serve as a representative of the church by helping at the Sunday Welcome Table, New at RWS class, and other large church events
- On rare occasions, become involved in complex church discipline cases

Commitment

- Attend monthly Session meetings, typically on Monday evenings, with occasional extra meetings
- Willing and able to meet congregants for spiritual care, sometimes at their homes, hospital or other places
- Collaborate with other members of the Neighborhood Care Team to care for those who are in our church community
- Periodically join a smaller Session committee, participate in joint Redeemer Network meetings, attend regional Presbytery meetings, or lead an RWS event

"Most churches make the mistake of electing as their officers the competent, the confident, and the successful. What you really need in your leaders are people who have been broken by a knowledge of their own sin and restored by an even greater knowledge of grace." – Dave McCarthy

What is the Diaconate?

The Diaconate is a ministry of mercy that supports Redeemer congregants who are undergoing hardship, such as job loss, relational crisis, and other life challenges. We seek to demonstrate the transforming power of the gospel and healing love of God in times of suffering. Deacons and deaconesses walk alongside them through prayer, spiritual guidance, emotional support, and in many cases, practical and financial assistance.

Deacons and Deaconesses:

- Provide practical assistance and care to Redeemer members and regular attenders who are in challenging circumstances by serving on diaconate cases (approx. 2 to 8 hrs per case per month), which includes:
 - Working with a Diaconate partner to love and know the person you are serving well
 - Collaborating with the Diaconate partner and the person you are serving to craft an appropriate Care Plan and goals Implementing the Care Plan by meeting and praying with the person you're serving, exhorting him/her, and encouraging personal accountability towards his/her goals
 - Maintaining administrative tasks and communications with the Diaconate staff
- Pray after Sunday worship services (10 to 20 minutes) with individual congregants who are seeking prayer
- Conduct periodic membership interviews with elders (about 1 hour per interview)
- Serve as a representative of the church by helping at the Sunday Welcome Table, New at RWS class, and other large church events
- Optional: Serve on the Diaconate Committee which oversees the Diaconate Mercy Fund

Commitment

- Attend monthly diaconate meetings (none in the summer), which includes ongoing theological and practical skills training
- Collaborate with other members of the Neighborhood Care Team to care for those who are in our church community
- Once voted in by the congregation, deacons and deaconesses commit to an initial **three-year term** and have the option to renew their commitment each year thereafter

"In many ways, diaconal ministry (mercy ministry) is one of the primary ways for the world to see a visible example of the heart of God. The faith to be bold in stepping into the lives of the poor and the weak to give 'a cup of cold water,' a boldness to not ignore or dismiss the cries of those whose sufferings are great... and the wisdom of the Spirit in knowing how to help them." – Tim Keller

Nomination and Discernment Process

- Fill out an application and undergo initial interview (December to January)
- Complete theological training (3 virtual sessions, January to February) and practical skills training (3 sessions in person, March to April)
- Undergo a theological exam (April)

Five Categories of Qualifications

The following guidelines, though not the final word on the matter, ought to help as you consider whether or not to nominate a particular member to serve in the position of a deacon, deaconess, or elder of the church.

- **Calling:** Calling is both inward and outward. A candidate should desire to serve others and should be recognized by others as possessing the gifts and graces necessary for the task.
- **Character:** Though no leader can expect to be perfect, he or she must be exemplary, modeling in a consistent way the character of Christ. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9 offer a useful summary of the character qualifications.
- **Competency:** God calls elders, deacons and deaconesses to serve in distinct and varying ways. A candidate should evidence the inclination and ability to fulfill that particular biblical role.
 - Elder candidates should be able to equip and care for people spiritually and should know their way around the Bible and be able to teach it. They should be comfortable praying with people in need and possess management skills.
 - Deacon and deaconess candidates should demonstrate a practical and caring spirit. They should be willing to serve under the authority of the elders and in such a way as to free the elders to focus on their particular responsibilities.
- **Compatibility:** Candidates need to understand and support the Redeemer vision and values.
- **Comprehension:** Candidates need to understand and accept Redeemer's convictions about theology and church government. This involves commitment to the Bible's authority, to Presbyterian Church government and to the Westminster standards.