



City Life Church Pastor and Elder Process

This process is for the assessment and installation of a pastor or elder at City Life Church. This process uses the term “Elder” throughout but is to be used as the pastoral ordination process as well. When being used for pastoral ordination, elders can modify this process as necessary.

Step 1: Identification

Potential elder identification happens either by the current elders identifying the qualities of a potential elder and deciding to initiate a conversation with him or by a man expressing his desire and sense of calling to the current elders.

Step 2: Exploration Meeting(s)

This meeting is with the potential applicant and at least two current elders. This is a meeting simply to hear what the potential elder candidate is thinking, feeling, and sensing and to answer questions about eldering at City Life. Also, this elder process should be shared with the potential applicant at this point if it has not already been shared.

If the current elder team already has concerns or reasons that the potential applicant is not going to be a pastor in the near future (next year or two), these issues should be discussed and addressed before the written assessment. The current elders or the candidate can request additional meetings if they have questions or concerns that they believe should be discussed before the written assessment.

Both the current elder team and the potential applicant must agree that there may be a possible call to eldership for the potential applicant to move to the next step. If this agreement can be reached, the process will continue. If this agreement can't be reached, the process will cease.

When the current elders and potential applicant decide to move forward with the written assessment, the elders will recognize the man as an “elder applicant.”

Step 3: Written Assessment

The applicant will complete the Written Assessment for City Life Elder Process. This is to help assure the applicant understands the office of elder and to help the current elders and the applicant assess the 5 C's of character, competence, calling, chemistry, and capacity. When the applicant completes the assessment, he should submit it to the current elders. This can be done by emailing it to aaron@citylifecharleston.com or by dropping it off to an elder at the church office.

Step 4: Written Assessment Evaluation and Planning for Meetings

The current elders will set aside appropriate time to read through and discuss the written assessment. This is to evaluate yellow flags (concerns) and red flags (disqualifications). Assuming the current elders decide to proceed to assessment meetings, this evaluation time should help the current elders plan for any specific questions they desire to ask or issues they desire to make an emphasis.

Step 5: Assessment Meetings

A team of at least three elders, assuming there are at least three elders, meet with the candidate and his wife (if married) for assessment meetings.

Meeting 1 (w/ applicant only)

This meeting focuses on character, calling, capacity, competence, and chemistry. Specific questions and emphases should be determined by current pastors/elders before the meeting. The candidate should have submitted a sermon or teaching with his written assessment. If the candidate did not have a recording of a sermon or teaching, he should record himself giving a sermon on a text the elders choose before this meeting.

Meeting 2 (w/ wife only and then wife and applicant)

This meeting focuses on processing what the wife is thinking, feeling, and sensing. Some specific questions to ask the applicant's wife (w/ out applicant present) are...

- How are you feeling about your husband potentially becoming a pastor?
- Is your husband the same man (a man of high character who loves City Life Church) at home behind closed doors that he seems to be to us?
- Is there anything you think we would want to know about your family and your husband?

Some specific questions to ask the applicant's wife (w/ applicant present) are...

- What do you believe the role of a pastor's wife is?
- What are some difficulties you expect to encounter if your husband becomes a pastor at City Life?
- Does your husband have the capacity to effectively and cheerfully pastor? Do you believe your family can remain healthy with your husband adding pastoring at City Life to his plate?

Step 6: Recommendation

The applicant is either 1) approved to complete elder process, 2) approved with conditions to complete elder process, 3) given conditions to complete before going back into the elder process (repeat written assessment or assessment meetings), 4) not ready to pursue eldership. An assessment report is written with results.

When the applicant receives the recommendation of a 1, they are now considered an "elder candidate." If they receive a 2 or 3, they are still considered an "applicant".

When an applicant receives a 1, they go to step 9.

When an applicant receives a 2 or 3, they go to step 7.

If they receive a 4, the process is stopped.

Step 7: Development (for 2's & 3's only)

During development the applicant/candidate completes the conditions given by the elders.

Common conditions are...

- Reading, completing a class, theological development
- Attending all or some elder meetings for a season
- Preaching and teaching development through practice, feedback, and utilizing resources
- Leading a ministry or group for a season
- Coaching/Mentoring or professional/pastoral counseling for a season

The applicant/candidate should be meeting with at least one elder on a monthly basis during development to keep in touch, to receive feedback, to update on progress, and for encouragement. It is also acceptable for elders to ask for a written monthly update if meetings are a struggle to make happen for any reason.

Development is typically to work on a specific area that needs improvement. Sometimes development happens simply to have a longer period of time to evaluate the 5 C's if the applicant/candidate has not been known by the elders for sufficient time. Generally, we require a person to be a member for at least two years before becoming an elder candidate. We also generally require someone to have a friendship or relationship with two or more current elders for at least a year before becoming an elder candidate. Sometimes this year begins when Step 1 happens. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the elders, especially if the person is being hired to be a pastor or if the elders sense God is leading them to speed up the process.

Step 8. Post-Development Assessment Meeting(s) (for 2's & 3's only)

An interview/assessment to assess after development and provide feedback. After Steps 7 and 8, continue with Step 6.

Step 9: Church Affirmation

After a recommendation of a 1 in Step 6, the current elders present the applicant before the congregation for questioning and affirmation during a 2-3 week public review period. Two weeks is standard, but if there is a holiday or a reason to make it three weeks, that can be decided. Church members and community members will be encouraged to communicate with the current elders concerning the candidate. They will be asked to communicate affirmations or concerns.

Step 10: Elder Vote

At an elder meeting after Step 10 is complete, the elders will vote to approve the candidate as an elder. The elders can also vote to terminate the process or to go back to any step in the process.

Step 11: Installment/Ordination

A date is chosen to have a special service to "ordain and install" the candidate to elder/pastor status or if he is already ordained, he will be "installed." The candidate should re-sign our partnership covenant as a pastor the day of his installation.