

The First Edition

First Presbyterian Church, Ellerbe, NC

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From the Pastor:

“Sermon Surplus for Elder Selection”

Pastors are routinely reminded – “Don’t try to cram everything into one sermon; there will be another day.” I remembered that saying in my sermon on Exodus 18:13-27. Believe it or not, I did not say everything I could have said! In particular, I wanted to flesh out verse 21 for you because it has so much to say about selecting church leaders, in our case elders. I held off on September 15th. However, because verse 21 has so much to say about officer selection and because the kind of men you nominate and elect to be your elders is so important, I have decided verse 21 is worth a newsletter article. By the way, much of what I am about to say applies to choosing Deacons as well.

In verse 21 Jethro gives Moses four qualifications he should look for in the men he and/or the people (see Deut. 1) select as judges to rule over them. These four characteristics are also characteristics you should want to see in the men who rule over you. The first thing we see is that these men are to be “able men” (ESV). Old Testament scholar John D. Currid translates the Hebrew here as “men of character.” The term is often used in military contexts to refer to “men of strength.” However, in this context, it implies that these will be “men of sterling character” (*Exodus*, volume 1, EP Study Commentary series, 374). In the pastoral epistles Paul tells Timothy and later Titus that overseers/elders (same office) are to be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6, 7). There should be no obvious disqualifiers in the character of the men you select.

The second requirement Jethro gives is that these men should be men who “fear God.” We want wise men governing our church and Solomon reminds us that “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). In his masterful biography of Martin Luther, Roland Bainton relates a lesson he learned from the great reformer, “The most intrepid revolutionary is the one who has a fear greater than anything his opponents can inflict upon him” (Here I Stand by Roland Bainton, 104). It is important that an elder have a good and holy “fear of God,” so that he does not fear rejection by men. One reason is that as elders carry out their function of governing, they are sometimes called to administer loving corrective church discipline (There is such a thing as discipline that is positive and not corrective). If a man is overly concerned about rejection by men, he will refuse to act. On the other hand, if he cares more about what God thinks about him, he will have the courage to do the right thing, even if unpleasant. Another reason “fear of God” will be important in days to come is that the church is likely to face increasing persecution. Here again, you need elders who are willing to stand strong for the gospel and the faith delivered to us no matter what the government or the world hurls at us.

The third characteristic of these men is that they should be men who are “trustworthy” (ESV). The Hebrew word used here is translated variously as “firmness, faithfulness, truth.” Perhaps “men of truth” is best (Currid) and the idea is probably that these men are consistent in their judgments. They don’t make one judgment one day and make a contradictory judgment the next. So also, the church needs men who are consistent, not ruling one way one day and a contradictory way the next, men who don’t “speak out of both sides of their mouth,” or show partiality.

Finally, Jethro tells Moses they should be men who “hate a bribe.” The obvious point is that their head is not turned by money; they are not “on the take.” Jesus stated plainly, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt. 6:24). The apostle Paul states that an elder cannot be a “lover of money” (1 Tim. 3:3) or “greedy for gain” (Titus 1:7). Perhaps the most pertinent application for elders (teaching and ruling) is that they make sure they do not give preferential treatment (whether granting of favors or shielding from discipline) to men or women based on their financial status. Believe it or not, such a thing happens all too frequently in the church!

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These were the kind of men whom Jethro wanted Moses to place over Israel. And these are the kind of men you should want to govern our church. But remember how they were to be chosen. The only way for Moses (and/or the covenant people) to find such men was to search for them. The bottom line is that Israel was to exercise wisdom in selecting their rulers. And so, the saying holds true for us, "If you want wise elders, you should exercise wisdom in choosing them." You not only get the kind of elders you pray for; you get the kind of elders you choose. No task is more important than governing the house of God. Choose wisely and trust the Lord to work through his Spirit inspired system to give us just the kind of elders we need.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Stan

From the Session

Mr. Layton called the stated meeting to order on Wednesday, September 11th. Jimmy Wagers had the opening prayer. A quorum was declared present. The reading of the Scripture came from Acts 20, vs 28. The usual perfunctory Session business was held and then proceeded to our ongoing and new business. The Session reviewed the following reports:

- Church Treasurer's monthly report.
- Mr. Layton's monthly report to the Session.
- Rickie DeWitt reporting on the August 2024 CCP meeting.

Our prayer list was reviewed and Tony Yates prayed for these concerns. The following items were approved as follows:

- 2024 Revival dates are Sunday, March 30 through Wednesday, April 2, 2025 . The keynote speaker is Dr. Neil Stewart on March 30th and other ministers are not lined up yet.
- Men's Prayer Breakfast is Saturday, October 5th, 7:00 am.
- Mr. Layton's request for a Hymn Sing and to report on the 2024 PCA General Assembly on Sunday evening, October 6th, 6:00 pm..
- Assistance to the ladies' Circle to sponsor a table at a recognition ceremony at the House of Pearls in Anson county.

The next stated meeting is October 9th. Rickie DeWitt offered the closing prayer.

Respectfully, Jimmy Wagers, *Clerk of Session*



WIC Update

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Homecoming covered dish meal a success! It was a good time of Christian fellowship.

The next quarterly Women in the Church (WIC) meeting is Tuesday, October 8 at 7:00pm in the fellowship hall. The program is planning for our annual O Holy Night Around the World event which features nativities along with missionary information. All ladies are invited and encouraged to attend the meeting.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month and the WIC plans to have a box in the vestibule where you can leave notes, etc. for our pastor. It will be presented to him on Sunday, October 27.

Beth Meacham, *WIC President*

Circle News

Circle ladies met on September 24th, in the fellowship hall. Hostess Lori Clark opened with prayer to bless our meal, Thank you, Lori for providing a delicious meal. Prior to our lesson, ladies were invited to participate in a season of prayer for what was laid upon their heart – whether aloud or silently.

Lori presented our lesson from our book **Fruit of the Spirit – SELF CONTROL** entitled, "Controlling our Body" based on 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. In this study, "the stage is set for discussion of the horrors of sexual immorality and in contrast the holy use of our bodies by stating that as we evaluate our right to do all things, we should face four questions: (1) Is the thing contemplated beneficial? (2) Will the practice in question overpower and dominate and will the result affect others? (3) Will the practice support the truth that the body is for the Lord who created it and intended it to be used for his glory? And (4) will it support the truth that the Lord is for the body – that is, the Lord has redeemed the body. Paul points out that our bodies are meant for the Lord and will ultimately be resurrected. Therefore, we must serve God with our bodies as well as our spirits."

We would like to thank all who helped make our recent Homecoming a success! We had a great crowd and the food was delicious as usual. We appreciate each and every one of you.

Plans are being made now for our Fall Festival. This is such a great time of the year that we look forward to as the weather cools and the leaves start changing their colors before falling. Mark your calendars for October 27th – we will not only be observing Pastor Appreciation on this day, but will also have our Fall Festival from 5 pm until 7 pm. More information will be placed in the bulletin in the weeks ahead.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 22nd at 6:30 pm in the fellowship hall with Sandra Futrell hosting. Please mark your calendar to join us. We do send out reminders of our meetings, both Circle and WIC, via text and if any lady in our church wishes to be added to this group for texts, please contact Patricia McCormick at (919) 995-3490 – we will be happy to get you added so you may stay up-to-date with all the happenings in our church.

Patricia McCormick, *Secretary*

Announcements

MEN OF THE COVENANT BREAKFAST: Men, set your calendars now for our next “Men of the Covenant Breakfast,” which will be Saturday, October 5th, 7:00 – 8:00 am in the fellowship hall. Breakfast will be provided and Pastor Layton will give a brief talk. All men are encouraged to come and bring their sons and/or friends.

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH QUARTERLY MEETING: The quarterly Women in the Church (WIC) meeting is Tuesday, October 8th at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall. The program is planning for our annual O Holy Night Around the World event which features nativities and missionary information. All ladies are invited and encouraged to attend the meeting.

PCA CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP CONFERENCE: The PCA Christian Discipleship Ministries (CDM) MADE FOR MORE conference for women is at Christ covenant in Charlotte on Friday, January 31 and February 1, 2025. The Session will pay for the cost of girls and ladies to attend this conference. If you would to attend, please contact WIC Secretary Jan Stivers by October 1 and she will register you. Her contact information is kevinandjan90@gmail.com or 910-995-3975. For complete information about the conference, visit <https://women.pcacdm.org/made-for-more/>.

OFFICER NOMINATIONS: The On Sunday, October 6th, the Session will begin receiving nominations for the offices of Ruling Elder and Deacon. Communing members may submit the name(s) of any male communing member(s) who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 (elder and deacon) and Titus 1:5-9 (elder). Nomination forms will be available in the vestibule on or before October 6th and nominations will be received through noon on Sunday, October 27th. In addition to adding additional Deacons, the Session would like to add up to two men to the Session. In preparation for the nomination process, Pastor Layton will be preaching a brief series of sermons on church leadership. We encourage everyone to begin praying now for officer nomination, training and election.

REPORT ON PCA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND HYMN SING: On Sunday evening, October 6th Pastor Stan will be giving a brief report on the 2024 PCA General Assembly which will be followed by a “hymn sing.” Pastor Stan will first explain why we have General Assembly in the first place and then report on what took place at this year’s GA. Following the devotion and report on GA we will sing hymn favorites, both old and new.

2025 REVIVAL: The dates for our annual revival services are set and will be Sunday, March 30 through Wednesday, April 2nd. Our keynote speaker this year will be Dr. Neil Stewart, Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC. Dr. Stewart’s sermons can be heard on Sermonaudio.com and worship services for First Presbyterian Church (Columbia) can be viewed on YouTube. Mark these dates on your calendar now and make plans to attend.

MISSIONS TRIP TO ITALY: Santo and Mary Ellen Garofalo, PCA Mission to the World Missionaries in Italy, are inviting individuals to come assist a church plant in the city of Palermo on the island of Sicily. Outreach activities will include putting together a traditional Thanksgiving feast and spending time in schools and other contexts, sharing the Thanksgiving story and conversing in English with young adults (kids, college students) and old (retirement homes). Please let Pastor Stan or one of the elders know if you are interested.



PRAYER LIST:

President and other national leaders, the Persecuted Church and Christians worldwide, the upcoming elections, Samuel Austin, Beverly Sears Barber, Christian Barrett, Daniel Brown, Austin Bryant, Billy Carter, Mary Ellen Carter, Ted Carter, Vera Carter, Vergie Clark, Kevin Conner, Ronald Lee Cook, Kim Covington, Kevin Craven, Tony Craven, Alli Cundy, Cindy Daniels, Sharon DeWitt, Susan DeWitt, Ruby Dunn, Ellerbe First Responders, Fred Fletcher, Mark Futrell, Jessica H., Becky Henderson, Pete Herron, Ken Hill, Lowell Hill, Miranda Hunter, Melanie Johnson, Donna McCormick, Bill McFayden, Patsy Dunn McIntyre, Julia McIntosh, Lee McKenzie, Shannon McNeil, Trevor Moss, Morgan North, Leo Poole, Sophia Potterfield, Doris Sears, Tina Sellers, Tony Ward, Mica Way, Amanda Watson, Mary Nell Watson, Hayley White, Jo Wilson, Curtis Wright, unspoken Requests.



Happy Birthday October

- 1 Jamie Sears
- 9 Susan Smith
- 10 Amanda Cloninger
- 11 Chris Meacham
- 17 Elizabeth Potterfield
- 19 Jimmy Greene
- 19 Herman Stutts
- 21 Cody Blades
- 31 Nancy Daugherty

October Anniversaries



- 8 M/M Wayne Wright
- 25 M/M Jimmy Greene

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
October 2024 Sunday School Assembly is in the sanctuary at 10:00 am, classes are at 10:15. Worship service is at 11:00 am Sunday		1	2 6:00 pm Prayer meeting 7:00 pm Deacon's meeting	3	4	5 7:00—8:00 am Men of the Covenant Breakfast, , fellowship hall
6 Sacrament of Holy Communion during the worship service 6:00 pm General Assembly Report & hymn singing	7	8 7:00 pm Quarterly WIC Meeting, fellowship hall	9 6:00 pm Prayer meeting 7:00 pm Joint Deacon/Session meeting; Session meeting follows joint meeting	10	11	12
13	14	15	16 6:00 pm Prayer meeting	17	18	19
20	21	22 6:30 pm Circle Meeting, fellowship hall	23 6:00 pm Prayer meeting	24	25	26
27 Pastor Appreciation Sunday 5:00-7:00 pm Fall Festival, fellowship hall	28	29	30 6:00 pm Prayer meeting	31		

Church Officers:

Ruling Elders

- Austin Bryant
- Bill Carter, Elder Emeritus
- Tim Clark
- Rickie DeWitt
- Richard Smith
- Jimmy Wagers
- Tony Yates

Deacons:

- Patrick Bryant
- Tim Grotenhuis
- Chris Meacham
- Jesse McQueen
- Buck Smith
- Kevin Stivers
- Tommy White

WIC Officers

- Beth Meacham, President
- Ginny Layton, Vice-President
- Jan Stivers, Secretary
- Jane Carriker, Treasurer
- Barbara Wagers, Historian
- Chrystal Weatherly , Mission to the World Chair
- Lori Clark , Mission to North America Chair
- Sandra Futrell, Christian Growth Chair