Northlake Church of Christ
Elder Selection Process
(August 2013)

Purpose of This Document

This document describes the process by which members of the Northlake Church of Christ select elders who will serve the church as spiritual leaders, overseers and shepherds. Early in the history of the church each congregation was under the leadership of a plurality of mature Christians usually designated as elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Acts 15:2; Acts 20:28). The character which elders should exhibit are found in the qualities listed in two passages, I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

Although the process for elder selection is not specified in detail in scripture, New Testament examples of the appointment of church leaders and servants include participation of the entire congregation in the selection process (Acts 1:15,23; Acts 6:1-3; Acts 15:22-23). This document provides a process for congregational participation in the elder selection process that is in keeping with these New Testament examples.

Each selection process will begin with an announcement by the existing elders of the need for reaffirmation of existing elders and the need for appointment of new leaders. This announcement will initiate a period of study, prayer and reflection in preparation for the selection process. The selection process will be repeated at least every three years.
**Elder Selection Facilitation Committee**

For the selection process, the existing elders will appoint an *ad hoc* Elder Selection Facilitation Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Facilitation Committee). This committee will consist of a chairman and 3 to 9 members of the Northlake Church, none of whom is a current elder or is willing to accept nomination for service as an elder. The committee should reflect the diversity within the congregation. The function of this committee is to assist the congregation in fulfilling its responsibilities in the elder selection process.

Approval of this Elder Selection Process document and the membership of the Facilitation Committee by members of the congregation will be confirmed by requesting that any objections to the process or committee be submitted to the elders in writing early in the selection process. The absence of significant objections, as determined by the existing elders, will constitute approval of the process and of the Facilitation Committee.

**Facilitation Committee Responsibilities**

The elder selection process in 2013 and at intervals of three years thereafter shall be administered by the Facilitation Committee under the oversight of the existing eldership. The committee will keep the current eldership informed of its progress throughout the process and will seek the current elders’ advice and assistance as needed. The Facilitation Committee shall have the responsibility for organizing and carrying out the work necessary for implementation of the processes and procedures specified in this Elder Selection Process document. Its responsibilities include communications, distributing forms, receiving and safeguarding completed forms, tallying the results, determining the willingness of nominees to serve as elders if selected, and resolving scriptural objections to any nominee or candidate.

After tallying the nominations, the Committee shall inform each nominee who received a sufficient number of nominations, discuss with him his willingness and ability to serve as an elder if chosen by the church and ask his permission to have his name on the Affirmation Forms that will be distributed to the congregation. If he declines further consideration, the Committee shall accept his decision and hold it in confidence.

The Facilitation Committee shall be responsible for receiving written objections to any nominee or candidate submitted at any time during the selection process. The process for resolving written objections is set out below.

The Facilitation Committee shall prepare an Affirmation Form with the names of the men that meet the nomination criteria and consent to being considered by the church, arrange for ample printing of the forms, and distribute the forms. The Committee shall make provisions for securely receiving and storing completed affirmation forms. At the end of
the time allotted for affirmation, the Committee shall tally the results.

The Committee shall hold in confidence all information on submitted forms. In particular, the Committee shall not disclose specific information about those who submitted forms and what their ratings of candidates were. When a final determination has been made of which candidates have met the selection criteria (specified in a later section) and against whom no objection remains unresolved, the Facilitation Committee shall inform the eldership. Members of the Committee shall go to each man listed on the form and inform him of the church’s decision on his candidacy. To assist the candidates in evaluating themselves and making personal commitments to self-improvement, the Selection Committee will provide each candidate with a transcription of comments associated with his “NO” ratings without disclosing the member that submitted the comments.

Throughout the selection process, the Facilitation Committee may exercise discretion as necessary but may not make any decision that is not clearly within the intent of this document.

**Periodic Identification of New Shepherds**

At three-year intervals beginning in 2013, the church shall go through the process of evaluating and selecting qualified men who have demonstrated elder/shepherd personal qualities and are willing and prepared to serve the church in the functions of an elder. In each selection process the church membership shall evaluate potential additional elders. Each candidate that meets all selection criteria as identified in the document will serve for a 3-year term, which is the normal full term of service as an elder of the Northlake Church of Christ.
Besides the normal selection of new elders at three-year intervals, special selections may be held at some intermediate time if changing circumstances lead to general recognition of an immediate need for additional elders.

Reaffirmation of Existing Shepherds

Every three years, in conjunction with the normal process of selecting new elders, each elder shall determine if he wishes to continue in his role as an elder. If he wishes to serve an additional term, he must ask for reaffirmation from the congregation for an additional three-year term. His name will then be added to the Affirmation Form along with the qualified nominees for service as new elders and he shall be subject to the same selection criteria as the new elder candidates.

No limit is prescribed for the number of terms that an elder may serve, provided that they continue to exhibit character consistent with the qualities found in scripture and that they continue to be affirmed every three years by the congregation as an elder.

Participation of the Congregation

All members of the Northlake Church of Christ are eligible to nominate fellow members for the role of elder/overseer/shepherd of this church. A member of the Northlake Church is defined as anyone who is a baptized believer in Jesus Christ and who participates regularly in the worship and Ministries of Northlake.

Nomination forms will be distributed by the Facilitation Committee in a Sunday morning assembly of the church. After this general distribution, Nomination Forms can be obtained from any member of the Facilitation Committee. Every member of the church shall be encouraged to fill out a Nomination Form with the names of all the men who he or she believes meets scriptural standards and is well suited for service as an elder. Completed Nomination Forms shall be submitted to the Facilitation Committee (normally by dropping them in a locked box that will be conveniently available for that purpose). The deadline for submission of nominations shall be the close of the Sunday morning assembly two weeks after the general distribution of forms. All Nomination Forms must be signed by the member submitting the form.

In order for a member to be listed as a candidate on the Affirmation Form for consideration as elder by the full church, the member must have been nominated by at least 15 individual members, from at least 10 households.

The Facilitation Committee will contact all persons who have met the nomination criteria and determine their willingness to have their names put before the congregation as candidates for service as elders. Those candidates that are willing to go forward in the selection process will be provided with documents summarizing the major currents, directions and issues that engage the current eldership. In addition, candidates will be
invited to attend a meeting with the existing elders for informal discussions of the eldership experience and to address any questions which the candidates may have about serving as an elder. If a nominee has reservations about being able to meet the demands of an elder’s responsibilities, he shall be encouraged to discuss his questions with a currently active elder.

When the Facilitation Committee has determined the final list of the men who are willing to be candidates, the Committee shall prepare Affirmation Forms listing the names of the candidates for new elders and the names of the elders seeking reaffirmation. At the next Sunday morning assembly of the church following final determination of the list of elder candidates, the Facilitation Committee shall make Affirmation Forms available to all members of the congregation.

Affirmation

All members of the Northlake Church of Christ (as defined previously) should participate in the affirmation stage of the selection process by submitting completed forms to the Facilitation Committee (normally by dropping them in a locked box provided for that purpose). Forms may be submitted at any time during the period between the general distribution of Affirmation Forms and the termination of the affirmation process at the conclusion of the Sunday morning assembly two weeks after the general distribution of Affirmation Forms. All Affirmation Forms must be signed by the member submitting the form.

Affirmation Forms shall offer members the options of marking ”YES”, “NO” or “UNSURE” for each candidate.
Marking “YES” signifies conviction that the candidate should be selected to serve the church as an elder, that he meets scriptural requirements and his personal qualities make him well-suited for effective service as a spiritual shepherd- overseer- leader. It implies the expectation of being able to support him wholeheartedly by working under his leadership/oversight as an elder.

Marking “NO” signifies conviction that there are valid reasons why the candidate should not be selected to serve as an elder. The person submitting the form will be requested to describe, in writing on the back of the Form or on an attached sheet, his or her reasons for marking “NO.”

Marking “UNSURE” signifies that the member is not willing to subscribe to either of the foregoing statements of convictions associated with a “YES” or a “NO.” Marking “UNSURE” is appropriate if the voter feels that he or she does not know the candidate well enough to voice an opinion either way. An “UNSURE” marking would also be appropriate if the voter is acquainted with the candidate but holds no strong conviction about whether he should be asked to serve as an elder.

A principle of the affirmation process design is that any man appointed as an elder must have (a) received enough YES votes to support confidence that in his service as elder he will receive support and acceptance by a very large majority of the congregation and (b) not so many NO or UNSURE votes that there is serious doubt of his ability to serve effectively as a shepherd and leader. To this end the Selection Committee shall apply the following “Standard Criteria”.

For a candidate to be recognized as an elder:

1. at least 60% of the forms cast shall be marked “YES” for the candidate, and
2. no more than 15% of the forms cast shall be marked “NO” for the candidate, and
3. no more than 40% of the forms cast shall be marked “UNSURE” for the candidate.

The Facilitation Committee shall examine all forms and tally the results as soon as practicable after the termination of the affirmation period. At all times the Committee shall treat the results as confidential information and shall take measures to prevent any unauthorized use of the information on the forms. The Committee shall securely preserve the forms and their information at least until after the installation of the selected elders. At any later time, whenever the Committee considers study of the affirmation results is no longer useful, the Committee may destroy the forms.

The Facilitation Committee may exercise limited discretion in its application of the foregoing “Standard Criteria” if specific circumstances warrant and if only small deviations of the “YES” and “UNSURE” percentages from the “Standard Criteria” exist. An example of such discretion might be where it is known from the current elders that additional elders are needed and a particular candidate barely failed to meet the “YES” and “UNSURE” criteria. The Selection Committee shall make no deviations regarding scriptural objections or application of the “NO” criteria from the “Standard Criteria”
above.

Any member knowing of a scriptural reason that would disqualify an elder candidate from serving should submit in writing the nature of the disqualification to a member of the Facilitation Committee during the week immediately following distribution of the Affirmation Forms. The Facilitation Committee will notify the current elders of any objections submitted and proceed as prescribed below.

**Resolution of Written Objections**

If it is alleged that there is scriptural basis for the objection, the Committee shall proceed in the following manner. The Committee shall inform the person raising the objection that his or her identity will not be disclosed to anyone other than Committee members, that the Committee will investigate the matter, and the Committee will inform the person raising the objection of its final disposition. The Committee shall then attempt, insofar as practicable, to gather enough reliable information to either uphold or dismiss the objection. If the Committee is unable to reach a unanimous conclusion that the objection should be dismissed, members of the Committee shall discuss the matter with the person against whom the objection was made. If the outcome of this discussion is that the accused person maintains that the objection is unjustifiable and therefore he will not voluntarily withdraw from further consideration, the Committee shall inform the eldership of the objection and denial. From that point onward, the eldership shall be responsible for any further investigation and for reaching a decision on whether the candidate would be permitted to serve if he meets the selection criteria. The eldership shall communicate and explain their decision to the person in question and to the Committee. The Committee will then inform the person who raised the objection of its ultimate disposition.
Appointment

At the first regular Sunday morning assembly of the church after completion of the process of determining who the church has selected to begin or to resume service as elders, the newly selected elders and their spouses shall be set before the congregation for formal installation. After the selected elders are solemnly charged with their responsibilities, the church will be asked to express vocally their acceptance and support. The assembly should conclude with a special prayer, including thanksgiving and invocation of divine blessings for the elders and their spouses.

The Elder Selection Process presented in this document was based in part on a process developed by the Hardin Valley Church of Christ in Knoxville, TN. Permission of the Hardin Valley Church to make use of the material they developed is gratefully acknowledged.