

FREMONT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLICAL STANDARDS FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP



"It is a trustworthy saying that if someone wants to be a church leader, they have a noble task."
(1 Timothy 3:1)

The local church has a unique mission given to it by Jesus. In order to fulfill its calling to be the hope of the world, God calls devoted servants on whom He depends to lead the church faithfully. Leadership in the church is a responsibility and not a right. It is extended to those who come under the authority of Christ, the Head of the Church, whose teaching is expounded in the Scriptures, and who are willing and able to submit to the ordained leaders in the church and to the mission and purpose of the church.

As we serve Christ in leadership, we model what we really believe about our faith. Both our beliefs and our lifestyles are critical to the way we serve Christ and fulfill the calling of Christian leadership. It has always been a demanding calling. Those who participate in leadership inevitably represent a special calling in the life of a congregation and should exhibit a gracious Christian life that brings honor to God. Those called to leadership should have such a character and conduct themselves in such a way that their lives will not be a barrier or hindrance to those whom they lead and to whom they minister.

We grieve that the gap between Christian and societal values has widened, which causes potential confusion when it comes to leadership in the church. We also grieve that some Christians remain ill-equipped to live out the values in Scripture or choose to live differently than what they understand from Scripture. While Fremont has affirmed its standards for the ordained roles of pastor/teaching elder, ruling elder and deacon in the life of the church (see Position Paper on Standards for Membership and Ordination), this position paper is intended to provide clarity about the standards for leadership to which we are committed beyond the ordained roles.

In His Word, God has provided Biblical principles for the selection, training and development of those who serve the church as leaders. All Christians should seek to live their lives by the standards described in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, which specifically calls upon believers to "put no stumbling block in anyone's path so that ministry will not be discredited," and Ephesians 5:1-5, which calls believers to "follow God's example as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us..." We must also serve with the attitude described in Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16, which calls us to use our gifts to build up the body of Christ, and Philippians 2:1-4, which calls us to "look to the interests of others." There are three principal passages in the New Testament that explicitly discuss the guidelines for ordained leaders, and those should be the goal of any person desiring a leadership role in the life of the Church: 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1.

In identifying those who might be qualified for leadership, we desire to be faithful to Biblical standards, yet avoid being judgmental. We are all subject to the fallen nature of being human. All of us have sinned and continue to sin, with failings both public and private. Fremont is not a

congregation of “saints” but of “sinners,” expecting no more of those who wish to become members than to confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and accept His overwhelming grace. At the same time, a true Christian leader will understand and be able to affirm from the depths of their soul that they renounce and turn away from any action, lack of action, shortcoming or wrongdoing that the Bible identifies as sin and be able to say to others with confidence and conviction, "Follow me, as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). When it comes to our lifestyle, the critical standard for leadership is the willingness and commitment to turn away from any sin and resolve, with the help of the triune God, to “live a life worthy of the calling we have received” (Ephesians 4:1).

There are numerous roles and serving opportunities in the life of the church that might be fulfilled by both members and non-members of Fremont. Though the desired standards for those roles might match those for leaders, Fremont understands that Christians find themselves on varying points in the process of growth and sanctification in Jesus Christ. An important part of the discipleship process is serving both within and outside of the community of the church. All those desiring to follow Christ should be encouraged to participate in the act of serving.

Given that, all who seek to lead in in Fremont’s ministries should strive, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to exemplify the following standards of Christian living and leadership identified in the Bible (verses noted above):

Personal Standards

- Integrity: Christian leaders shall be committed to the highest ethical standards in both personal and professional conduct.
- Speech: Christian leaders speak truth in love and are not quarrelsome. Their speech should reflect their commitment to Christ.
- Self Control: Christian leaders exercise self control in speech and action and are free from substance abuse (alcohol, drugs and other dependencies).
- Sexual Behavior: Christian leaders are committed to fidelity in the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, and chastity in singleness.
- Distinctive Lifestyle: Christian leaders will demonstrate in lifestyle what is desirable for all believers - the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Leaders seek to exemplify a ministry of grace in their own lives.

Spiritual Standards

- Personal Faith: Christian leaders require a mature, vibrant and Christ-centered faith. That faith includes a personal grasp of basic Christian beliefs, an active, ongoing relationship with God - rooted in prayer, obedience to Scripture, and a commitment to growth in love, holiness, service and fellowship. Christian leaders should not be recent converts.
- Lordship of Christ: Christian leaders desire Jesus Christ to be Lord in all areas of life.
- Servanthood: Christian leaders are to be the servants of others, and be willing to help those in need.

- Christian Growth: Christian leaders make spiritual growth a continuing priority, reflected in Bible study, fellowship with other Christians, worship and involvement in Christian community.
- Confession: Christian leaders are able to confess and repent of their sins. They lead the church in demonstrating humility and the need for God's grace.
- True to the Word of God: Christian leaders are teachers in the Christian community. They must teach with doctrine faithful to the Scriptures. They come under the authority of the Bible in their own lives.
- Commitment to the Local Church: Christian leaders are to be members of the congregation wherever possible, regular in attendance of worship and faithful to the extra commitments their positions require.
- Stewardship: Christian leaders are to have a growing commitment to progressive and disciplined giving, proportional to resources. They are to be generous in giving of their time, talents and financial resources.

Leadership Standards

- Balance: Christian leaders make an ongoing effort to balance quality relationships among family, occupation and church responsibilities.
- Concern for Others: Christian leaders have a heart for seeing people come to know Christ and develop their Christian walk. They cultivate an ability to share their faith.
- Commitment to Training Leaders: Christian leaders are committed to training others, encouraging them, and giving them opportunities to use their gifts.

These standards shall be considered in affirming or identifying any leader or potential leader in the life of the church. Those leadership roles shall include any formal role in which the leader has a direct personal, organizational and/or spiritual influence in the life or ministry of a member or participant in the life of the church. Those roles are identified as:

Staff Member
 Ministry Team Leader
 Committee Chair
 Children's Ministry Leader, Teacher or Assistant
 Student Ministry Leader, Teacher or Assistant (Jr. High / High School)
 College Ministry Leader
 Life Group Leader
 Small Group Leader
 Adult Education Teacher
 Chaplain / Stephen Minister / Counselor
 Mentor / Discipler / Coach
 Worship Leader

It is appropriate that those called to leadership in the church be members of the local church as far as possible. It is the responsibility of ordained leaders and staff members of the church to discern that the calling, beliefs and lifestyle of any potential leader in the life of the church is consistent with these standards. As such, leaders in the above roles identified by the staff or members of the Session shall be subject to the approval and/or affirmation of the Session of Fremont.

There are also certain specific roles in the life of the church that are more visible to the members of the congregation, such as the choir and the worship band. While we desire that each member of these groups strives to meet the standards outlined above, we also understand that these roles, though visible, are roles involving group leadership versus individual leadership. As such, they provide a wonderful opportunity for the nurture and growth of new Christians and even seekers in some cases. The ministry leader shall make clear the leadership standards for those groups prior to incorporating any individual into a ministry role. We trust that the leaders of these ministries will be involved in the lives of those participating in these groups to the level that they are able to discern whether any individual is a distraction, barrier or hindrance to those with whom and for whom they minister, or is pursuing a lifestyle that is dishonoring to God. If so, it is appropriate for the ministry leader to make a decision regarding future participation and to lovingly communicate that decision with truth and grace, encouraging an ongoing mentoring relationship with them or with another leader in the life of Fremont.

*“Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance
in their faith in Christ Jesus.”*
(1 Timothy 3:13)

5/15/17