Biblical Standards for Christian Leaders

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"It is a true saying that if someone wants to be a church leader they have a good ambition. For a leader must be a good person whose life cannot be spoken against... Those who do well as leaders will be well rewarded both by respect from others and also by developing their own confidence and bold trust in the Lord." (1 Timothy 3:1-2a, 13)

Leadership in the church is a responsibility and not a right. Leaders come under the authority of the church's teaching as expounded in the Bible and Book of Confessions. 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 project Christian leadership.

The lack of clear moral guidelines in our society leaves many confused; this confusion extends often to church life. In an effort to bring some clarity, we have distilled some biblical principles for the selection, training and development of those who serve the church as leaders. We want to be faithful to biblical standards yet avoid being judgmental. All of us have sinned, with failings both public and private. At the same time, believing that our leadership and lifestyles must demonstrate our beliefs, we should be able to say with Paul, "follow me, as I follow Christ."

There are three principal passages in the New Testament that explicitly discuss the guidelines for Christian church leaders. They are 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3. Christian life standards are described well in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, and instruction on Christian service is found at Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16 and Philippians 2:1-4. The Christian leader should continually seek the Lord's help in achieving the standards set forth in these passages.

All who seek to lead in the Christian community will strive with the help of the Holy Spirit to exemplify the following biblical standards of Christian living:

Personal Standards
- Integrity: The Christian leader 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: The Christian leader exercises self-control in speech and action and is free from substance abuse and other destructive patterns of behavior.
- Sexual Behavior: The Christian leader is committed to fidelity in the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, and chastity in singleness.
- Distinctive Lifestyle: The Christian leader will demonstrate in lifestyle what is desirable in all believers, the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Spiritual Standards

- Personal Faith: The Christian leader requires 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 new believers.
- Lordship of Christ: The Christian leader desires Jesus Christ to be Lord in all areas of life.
- Servants: Christian leaders are willing to help those in need.
- Christian Growth: Christian leaders make spiritual growth a continuing priority, reflected in Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and ministry.
- Confession: Christian leaders confess and repent of their sins, demonstrating humility and the need for God's grace.
- True to the Word of God: Christian leaders are faithful to the Scriptures and the guidance of the Book of Confessions. They acknowledge the authority of the Bible in their own lives.
- Commitment to Local Church: Christian leaders at CPC are to be members of the congregation, regular in attendance of worship and faithful to their office.
- Stewardship: Christian leaders are to have a growing commitment to stewardship. They are to be generous in giving of their time, talents and financial resources (including disciplined giving that is proportional to resources).

Leadership Standards

- Balance: The Christian leader makes 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 Equipping Others: The Christian leader is committed to encouraging others, giving them opportunities to use their gifts, and resourcing their ministries.