

Ruling Elders-2022-23 Job Description -March 2023
First Presbyterian Church, Paw Paw, MI

A Ruling Elder is called to be a Spiritual Leader of the church and to sit with other Ruling Elders on Session—the ruling body of our church. Spiritual leaders seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in leading and make their decisions based upon what God wants instead of what they want or what is popular. **Being a Ruling Elder is a call to discernment as well as governance for our church—the body of Christ.** It is a call to listen and together discern where God is calling us as a congregation.

Responsibilities:

- To be an active member in our congregation and attend worship regularly, 2-3times/month.
- To commit to your own spiritual growth and that of our congregation
- Attend a Session monthly meeting which usually meets the on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30pm
- **Attend a yearly Session Retreat held on a Saturday (9a-3p) for strategic discernment along with one or two possible ½ day retreats.**
 - New Elders attend an orientation.
- Be active and chair or co-chair a Session Committee. The Committee is responsible for recruiting new members. Committees often meet monthly-should meet at least quarterly. It is possible to use email and Zoom for communicating and have sub-groups meet for specific tasks.
- Ruling Elders must have access to a computer/internet and use an individual email, not shared with others, for communication and confidentiality.
- Ruling Elders must let the Moderator and Clerk of Session know if they cannot make a meeting. Missing more than two (2) meetings without notification is grounds for dismissal as is missing over four (4) meetings/year. Most meetings can be Zoomed or attend via phone; however, retreats are not Zoomed, and Session may choose not to Zoom a meeting.
- Ruling Elders are asked to serve 1 term of 3 years; they may serve a second term if asked.

Session and Meetings (1.5 to 2 hrs; rarely longer)

- Written reports are due the 2nd Wednesday of the month prior to the Session meeting
- Any motion coming to session needs to be on the agenda and preapproved by the moderator the Wed before Session
 - Filing a motion in advance helps clarify things
 - Pastor/Clerk of Session go through the reports to look for items that need to be voted on.
- It is important that discussions other than a vote be approved with the Moderator, if possible the Wed before Session; it may be that the discussion should be a focus topic for another time.
- In Session meetings, we follow Parliamentary Procedure, permission to speak should be acknowledged by the moderator.

G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined (from the Presbyterian Book of Order)

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders, and they are eligible for any office.