

Announcement for October 6, 2019

This morning I want to talk with you about Northlake's elder selection process and a decision that has been made by your Northlake elders.

Northlake's process for many years has been a three-year cycle of calling the congregation into prayer and reflection to nominate and then affirm those to serve as elders. That process is getting underway, and we've circulated the process document as we have in previous cycles. This process of opening up nominations and affirmations every three years is grounded in our belief that the Holy Spirit is working among us and that the congregation engages with the Spirit through prayer, reflection, observation, discernment to identify, nominate and affirm its spiritual leaders.

Over the last few cycles, through that discernment process Northlake members have nominated women to serve as elders. During the last cycle in 2016, the facilitation committee informed the elders that at least one woman had received sufficient support from the congregation to have her name placed before the congregation for affirmation - but that woman for whatever reason declined the nomination. (The elders were not told who she was, or the reasons for her decision - that information remains confidential to the facilitation committee.)

You may have personally nominated a woman in previous cycles – or you may not. You may have thought a lot about it, or never given it much thought. But the fact is that women are being identified as potential elders through the process that we use.

The elders go to great lengths not to influence the process – the congregation chooses its elders. A document governs the process, and the facilitation committee (which includes no current elder) carries out the process. Within that process, the elders would be called in to make a decision if someone raised a scriptural objection to a candidate – including an objection based solely on the fact that she is a woman.

As we prepared for this cycle of nomination and affirmation, your elders determined we needed to address the question: "Can a woman serve as an elder of the Northlake church?"

After much prayer, study and discussion, the elders unanimously feel that the answer to that question is "yes." We see no reason to exclude someone from serving as an elder just because she's a woman, and thus would not sustain an objection raised solely because of gender.

This decision reflects a united decision of all your elders, seven people from very different backgrounds and perspectives, but with a common heart for this church. We'd like to talk with you about how we studied and came to this decision, and listen to your perspectives and questions.

We want to invite you into that study and conversation. So next Sunday, October 13, we encourage all of our adult members to join a combined adult class here in the auditorium at 9:15 am. On the following Sunday, October 20, we encourage everyone to attend their regular adult class to talk with elders in each class. On October 27 we will offer a session during the Bible class hour for anyone who couldn't attend either of the previous classes.

Of course, please reach out to any of us to talk about this. And please continue to pray – for your brothers and sisters in this church family, for our current and future leaders - as we join to follow the way of Jesus.