

The Role of the Supervising Elder

Mentoring or “eldering,” as it was called by early Brethren, is the practice of experienced Brethren elders giving counsel to beginning or less experienced pastors. This long-time practice has helped younger pastors and elders grow in their faith and the practice of their duties as elders in the Brethren Church. (Donald F. Durnbaugh and Dale V. Ulrich, eds., *The Brethren Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, 4 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 2005), 2221.)

One aspect of this “eldering” is needed in the process of ordination in The Brethren Church. As candidates go through the process of ordination, each region provides their candidates with an experienced elder, or Supervising Elder, to guide candidates through the multi-year process.

In addition, those who chose to remain licensed in the Brethren Church and do not pursue ordination continue to need mentoring, oversight, and encouragement from a supervising elder as long as they are licensed. Below you will find the qualifications and responsibilities of a Supervising Elder. Please consider this important role in the life of the church and lend your experience to your Regional Leadership Team (RLT) in this very important ministry.

Qualifications of a Supervising Elder

1. An Elder in good standing in their region
2. Gifted and/or trained in mentoring or coaching others through a process
3. Have a working understanding of the ordination process and/or a commitment to learning and implementing the process.
4. Has the time and ability to commit to overseeing a licensed pastor who is not pursuing ordination.

Responsibilities of a Supervising Elder

1. Work with individual ordination candidates through the licensing process.
2. Work with candidates through the ordination process, if it is pursued.
3. Provide connection to relevant resources when needed.
4. Advise the RLT on the progress of individual licensing and ordination candidates, and those who remain licensed.
5. Meet regularly with candidate to discuss licensing and ordination processes
 - a. The frequency of the meetings to be determined in collaboration with the RLT, candidate, and supervising elder
6. In the case of the reading program:
 - a. The supervising elder must be able to read, review, and approve the completion of each module
 - b. They will certify the satisfactory completion of each unit of the reading program, reporting the completion to the RLT
 - c. The reading program and guidelines are found in the reading program document

Expectations of Supervising Elder

1. Serve as a connection between the RLT and candidate, advocating for the candidate when appropriate
2. Attend RLT meetings with candidate when able

3. Encourage candidate in the completion of the work, but allow candidate to drive the completion of the ordination process
4. Submit an annual report on the progress of all licensed pastors under their supervision, whether or not they are pursuing ordination.
5. Help candidate with the planning of ordination service if and when they complete the ordination process.