Senior Pastor Job Description

Southport Presbyterian Church

Position Overview

The Senior Pastor serves as the primary pastoral and organizational leader of Southport Presbyterian Church, helping the congregation live into its mission of **"Ordinary people pursuing God's extraordinary call."**

As a Teaching Elder, the Senior Pastor is a member of the Session and participates fully in its work of spiritual leadership, discernment, and governance. The Senior Pastor works collaboratively with the Session to discern and clarify the church's vision and priorities and, as Head of Staff, bears primary responsibility for leading the staff and congregation in carrying out that vision.

The Senior Pastor serves as *first among equals* within the Session—providing significant pastoral, theological, and strategic leadership while recognizing the shared responsibility and authority of the elders who together shepherd the congregation.

The ministry of the Senior Pastor is shaped by four primary areas: **Calling, Chemistry, Character, and Competencies.**

Calling

The Senior Pastor will:

- Demonstrate a clear and continuing call from God to pastoral ministry and specifically to leading an established, multi-generational congregation into its next season of faithful ministry.
- Be ordained or ordainable as a Teaching Elder in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
- Be grounded in the Reformed theological tradition and committed to the Essentials of Our Faith of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
- Demonstrate a deep love for Christ, the Church, and the work of the gospel in the world.
- Embrace Southport Presbyterian Church's mission of ordinary people pursuing God's extraordinary call and lead the congregation toward faithful participation in that mission.

Chemistry

The Senior Pastor will:

- Lead collaboratively and relationally, listening carefully and building consensus when possible while remaining willing to make and lead difficult decisions when necessary.
- Work effectively with people representing a broad range of ages, backgrounds, theological perspectives, political perspectives, and worship preferences, helping the congregation remain centered on its shared life in Christ.

- Approach theological and other differences with conviction, grace, humility, curiosity, and gentleness.
- Build relationships characterized by trust, authenticity, openness, and appropriate vulnerability.
- Demonstrate an ability to lead organizational and cultural change while honoring the history, traditions, and people who have shaped Southport Presbyterian Church.

Character

The Senior Pastor will:

- Demonstrate spiritual and emotional maturity, humility, integrity, self-awareness, and teachability.
- Live and lead from a genuine dependence upon Jesus Christ expressed through prayer, Scripture, worship, and ongoing spiritual formation.
- Maintain healthy personal and professional boundaries and rhythms that sustain long-term faithfulness in ministry.
- Be approachable and authentic, allowing the congregation to know the Senior Pastor as a real person rather than leading from unnecessary pastoral distance.
- Receive feedback with humility and demonstrate a willingness to grow personally, spiritually, and professionally.
- Model the kind of Christian life and relationships that the church seeks to cultivate among its people.

Competencies

Lead Well

The Senior Pastor will:

- Work collaboratively with the Session to discern where God is leading Southport Presbyterian Church and help translate that direction into clear priorities for the congregation.
- As Head of Staff, bear primary responsibility for leading the staff in executing the vision and priorities established in partnership with the Session.
- Build, lead, develop, encourage, and hold accountable a healthy and effective staff team.
- Provide direct supervision to key pastoral and ministry leaders as appropriate to the church's organizational structure, while establishing healthy reporting relationships and delegating supervisory responsibility where appropriate.
- Exercise authority to hire, evaluate, discipline, and terminate staff within established church policies and approved budgets, recognizing the wisdom of appropriate consultation with the Session, particularly regarding significant personnel decisions.
- Mentor and develop Associate Pastors and other ministry leaders, creating meaningful opportunities for them to exercise their gifts, assume responsibility, and grow in leadership.
- Identify, equip, empower, and release both staff and lay leaders for ministry rather than creating a culture in which ministry depends primarily upon the Senior Pastor.

- Lead necessary organizational and cultural change with courage, patience, clarity, and sensitivity to the history and people of the congregation.
- Provide appropriate oversight to the church's operational leadership, ensuring that financial, administrative, facility, and organizational systems effectively support the church's mission and ministry without serving as the church's day-to-day administrator.
- Cultivate a healthy partnership with the Session in which elders understand and exercise their calling as spiritual leaders and shepherds of the congregation.

Preach Well

The Senior Pastor will:

- Serve as the primary preacher of Southport Presbyterian Church, ordinarily preaching approximately **35 Sundays each year**.
- Provide preaching that is biblically grounded, theologically thoughtful, engaging, and relevant to everyday life.
- Communicate the gospel in ways that are accessible and meaningful both to mature Christians and to those who are exploring faith or are not yet part of the church.
- Help the congregation engage Scripture thoughtfully and faithfully, addressing difficult questions with theological conviction, intellectual honesty, grace, and humility.
- Bear primary responsibility for the theological direction, content, planning, and overall quality of Southport Presbyterian Church's worship services.
- Work collaboratively with worship staff, Associate Pastors, and other worship leaders while maintaining responsibility for ensuring that the church's worship faithfully communicates the gospel and advances the mission of the congregation.
- Provide pastoral and theological leadership across the church's various worship styles and services rather than identifying the Senior Pastor primarily with a particular style or congregation.

Love Well

The Senior Pastor will:

- Genuinely know, love, and shepherd the people of Southport Presbyterian Church.
- Be visible, approachable, and relationally present in the regular life of the congregation, including worship and significant church gatherings.
- Participate personally in pastoral care while recognizing that the care of the congregation is a shared responsibility.
- Share with the Session the responsibility of shepherding and caring for the congregation, recognizing the Session as a body of spiritual shepherds rather than simply a board of directors.
- Equip and empower elders, pastors, staff, and other members of the congregation to participate in a culture in which people are known, loved, supported, and cared for.
- Know, encourage, support, and care for staff members as people and ministry partners while also being willing to provide honest feedback, address difficult issues, and maintain appropriate accountability.
- Demonstrate a genuine love for people beyond the walls of the church and lead Southport toward meaningful engagement with its neighbors and surrounding community.

- Help the congregation see those who are not yet part of the church not as problems to solve or threats to avoid, but as people created and loved by God whom the church is called to know, serve, and love.
- Encourage a culture in which disciples increasingly take responsibility for their own spiritual growth and use their gifts, resources, relationships, and influence in service to others.

Polity, Accountability & Denominational Participation

The Senior Pastor serves as a Teaching Elder and member of the Session of Southport Presbyterian Church. Within the Session, the Senior Pastor serves as *first among equals*, providing pastoral, theological, and strategic leadership while participating in the shared discernment and governance of the church.

The Senior Pastor is accountable to the Session for the faithful fulfillment of the responsibilities of the position, particularly for providing leadership to the staff and congregation in carrying out the vision and priorities discerned by the Session.

The Senior Pastor will participate in an annual review conducted by the Session. This process will provide opportunity for mutual evaluation, feedback, goal-setting, encouragement, and accountability and will consider both the Senior Pastor's leadership and the support necessary for the Senior Pastor to lead effectively.

As a Teaching Elder, the Senior Pastor is a member of and accountable to the appropriate Presbytery in accordance with the Constitution of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, including matters related to ministerial standing and discipline.

The Senior Pastor is expected to participate actively in the broader connectional life of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, including meaningful participation at the Presbytery and General Assembly levels, and to encourage Southport Presbyterian Church's engagement with the larger denomination.

Qualifications

The Senior Pastor will:

- Hold a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary or its equivalent.
- Be ordained or ordainable as a Teaching Elder in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
- Be grounded in the Reformed theological tradition and committed to the Essentials of Our Faith of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
- Demonstrate significant experience in pastoral ministry and organizational leadership, preferably within a multi-staff church environment.
- Demonstrate effectiveness in preaching and teaching, staff leadership, collaborative leadership, pastoral care, and the development of other leaders.

Indicators of Effective Ministry

While ministry cannot be reduced to organizational metrics alone, the Senior Pastor and Session will regularly consider whether the Senior Pastor's leadership is contributing to:

- A spiritually healthy congregation increasingly centered on Jesus Christ and the gospel.
- A healthy, collaborative, effective, and mission-focused staff culture.
- A Session increasingly functioning as faithful spiritual leaders and shepherds of the congregation.
- A church that is meaningfully engaged with and serving its surrounding community.
- A congregation in which people are growing as disciples, exercising their gifts, taking ownership of ministry, and helping others do the same.