

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP

Form DEF 14A

March 05, 2004

SCHEDULE 14A
(Rule 14a-101)

INFORMATION REQUIRED IN PROXY STATEMENT

SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION

Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934

Filed by the Registrant ☒ [X]

Filed by a party other than the Registrant ☐ []

Check the appropriate box:

☐ [] Preliminary Proxy Statement. ☐ [] Confidential, for Use of the Commission only (as permitted by Rule 14a-6(e)(2))

☒ [X] Definitive proxy statement.

☐ [] Definitive additional materials.

☐ [] Soliciting material under Rule 14a-12.

Lakeland Financial Corporation

(Name of Registrant as Specified in Its Charter)

(Name of Person(s) Filing Proxy Statement, if Other Than the Registrant)

Payment of Filing Fee (check the appropriate box):

☒ [X] No fee required.

☐ [] Fee computed on table below per Exchange Act Rules 14a-6(i)(1) and 0-11.

(1) Title of each class of securities to which transaction applies:

(2) Aggregate number of securities to which transaction applies:

(3) Per unit price or other underlying value of transaction computed pursuant to Exchange Act Rule 0-11 (set forth the amount on which the filing fee is calculated and state how it was determined):

(4) Proposed maximum aggregate value of transaction:

(5) Total fee paid:

☐ [] Fee paid previously with preliminary materials:

☐ [] Check box if any part of the fee is offset as provided by Exchange Act Rule 0-11(a)(2) and identify the filing for which the offsetting fee was paid previously. Identify the previous filing by registration statement number, or the form or schedule and the date of its filing.

(1) Amount Previously Paid:

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

(2) Form, Schedule or Registration Statement No.:

(3) Filing Party:

(4) Date Filed:

LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORPORATION
P.O. Box 1387 Warsaw, Indiana 46581 (574) 267-6144

March 5, 2004

Dear Shareholder:

On behalf of the board of directors and management of Lakeland Financial Corporation, we cordially invite you to attend the annual meeting of shareholders of Lakeland Financial Corporation to be held at 12:00 p.m. on April 13, 2004, at Westminster Hall located at 200 Seminary Drive in Winona Lake, Indiana. The accompanying notice of annual meeting of shareholders and proxy statement discuss the business to be conducted at the meeting. We have also enclosed a copy of our 2003 summary annual report to shareholders and a copy of our annual report on Form 10-K for your review. At the meeting we will report on operations and the outlook for the year ahead.

We have nominated four persons to serve as directors, each of whom are incumbent directors. Additionally, our Audit Committee has selected and we recommend that you ratify the selection of Crowe Chizek and Company LLC to continue as our independent public accountants for the year ending December 31, 2004. We recommend you vote your shares for the director nominees and in favor of the ratification of our accountants.

We encourage you to attend the meeting in person. Please return the enclosed RSVP card if you plan to attend. Whether or not you plan to attend, however, please complete, date, sign and return the enclosed proxy card in the enclosed envelope. This will assure that your shares are represented at the meeting.

We look forward with pleasure to seeing and visiting with you at the meeting.

Very truly yours,

/s/Michael L. Kubacki
Michael L. Kubacki
Chairman of the Board, President and
Chief Executive Officer

LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORPORATION

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS
TO BE HELD APRIL 13, 2004

To the shareholders:

The annual meeting of the shareholders of Lakeland Financial Corporation will be held on Tuesday, April 13, 2004, at 12:00 p.m. at Westminster Hall located at 200 Seminary Drive in Winona Lake, Indiana, for the following purposes:

1. to elect four members of the board of directors;
2. to ratify the appointment of Crowe Chizek and Company LLC as independent public accountants for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2004; and
3. to transact such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting and any adjournments or postponements of the meeting.

Only shareholders of record on our books at the close of business on February 25, 2004, the record date for the annual meeting, will be entitled to vote at the annual meeting. In the event there are an insufficient number of votes for a quorum or to approve or ratify any of the foregoing proposals at the time of the annual meeting, the meeting may be adjourned or postponed in order to permit us to further solicit proxies.

By order of the board of directors

/s/Michalel L. Kubacki
Michael L. Kubacki
Chairman of the Board, President and
Chief Executive Officer

Warsaw, Indiana
March 5, 2004

PLEASE SIGN AND DATE THE ENCLOSED PROXY CARD AND RETURN IT IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE, WHETHER OR NOT YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE MEETING IN PERSON. WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ATTEND THE MEETING, AND IF YOU DO YOU MAY VOTE YOUR STOCK IN PERSON IF YOU WISH. YOU MAY REVOKE THE PROXY CARD AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO ITS EXERCISE.

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORPORATION

PROXY STATEMENT

ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

April 13, 2004

Lakeland Financial Corporation, an Indiana corporation, with its principal executive offices located in Warsaw, Indiana, is the holding company for Lake City Bank. We also own all of the common securities of Lakeland Statutory Trust II, a Delaware business trust created for the issuance of trust preferred securities. Lake City Bank owns all of the common stock of LCB Investments Limited, a subsidiary formed in 1999 to manage a portion of the bank's securities portfolio.

This proxy statement is being furnished to shareholders in connection with the solicitation by our board of directors of proxies to be used at the annual meeting to be held at Westminster Hall, located at 200 Seminary Drive in Winona Lake, Indiana on Tuesday, April 13, 2004 at 12:00 p.m., or at any adjournments or postponements of the meeting. Our summary annual report to shareholders, including the consolidated financial statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2003 and a copy of our Form 10-K that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, accompanies this proxy statement, which is first being mailed to shareholders on or about March 5, 2004.

The following is information regarding the meeting and the voting process, presented in a question and answer format.

Why am I receiving this proxy statement and proxy card?

You are receiving a proxy statement and proxy card from us because on February 25, 2004, the record date for the annual meeting, you owned shares of Lakeland Financial's common stock. This proxy statement describes the matters that will be presented for consideration by the shareholders at the annual meeting. It also gives you information concerning the matters to assist you in making an informed decision.

When you sign the enclosed proxy card, you appoint the proxy holder as your representative at the meeting. The proxy holder will vote your shares as you have instructed in the proxy card, thereby ensuring that your shares will be voted whether or not you attend the meeting. Even if you plan to attend the meeting, you should complete, sign and return your proxy card in advance of the meeting just in case your plans change.

If you have signed and returned the proxy card and an issue comes up for a vote at the meeting that is not identified on the card, the proxy holder will vote your shares, pursuant to your proxy, in accordance with his or her judgment.

What matters will be voted on at the meeting?

You are being asked to vote on the election of four directors of Lakeland Financial for a term expiring in 2007 and the ratification of Crowe Chizek and Company LLC as our independent auditors for the 2004 fiscal year. These matters are more fully described in this proxy statement.

How do I vote?

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

You may vote either by mail or in person at the meeting. If you are a record holder of shares, you may complete and sign the enclosed proxy card and mail it in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. No postage is required if mailed in the United States. If you mark your proxy card to indicate how you want your shares voted, your shares will be voted as you instruct.

If you sign and return your proxy card but do not mark the card to provide voting instructions, the shares represented by your proxy card will be voted "for" all four nominees named in this proxy statement and "for" the ratification of our auditors.

If you are a beneficial owner and a broker or other fiduciary is the record holder (or in what is usually referred to as "street name"), then you received this proxy statement from the record holder. The broker should have given you instructions for directing how your broker should vote your shares. It will then be your broker's responsibility to vote your shares for you in the manner you direct.

2

If you want to vote in person, please come to the meeting. We will distribute written ballots to anyone who wants to vote at the meeting. Please note, however, that if your shares are held in the name of your broker, you will need to arrange to obtain a proxy from your broker in order to vote in person at the meeting. Even if you plan to attend the annual meeting, you should complete and return your proxy card in advance of the annual meeting in case your plans change.

If I hold shares in the name of a broker, who votes my shares?

Under the rules of various national and regional securities exchanges, brokers may generally vote on routine matters, such as the election of directors and the ratification of independent auditors, but cannot vote on non-routine matters, such as an amendment to the certificate of incorporation or the adoption of a stock option plan, unless they have received voting instructions from the person for whom they are holding shares. If your broker does not receive instructions from you on how to vote particular shares on a matter on which your broker does not have discretionary authority to vote, your broker will return the proxy card to us, indicating that he or she does not have the authority to vote on these matters. This is generally referred to as a "broker non-vote" and will affect the outcome of the voting as described below, under "How many votes are needed for approval of each proposal?" Therefore, we encourage you to provide directions to your broker as to how you want your shares voted on all matters to be brought before the meeting. You should do this by carefully following the instructions your broker gives you concerning its procedures. This ensures that your shares will be voted at the meeting.

What does it mean if I receive more than one proxy card?

It means that you have multiple holdings reflected in our stock transfer records and/or in accounts with stockbrokers. Please sign and return ALL proxy cards to ensure that all your shares are voted.

What if I change my mind after I return my proxy card?

If you hold your shares in your own name, you may revoke your proxy and change your vote at any time before the polls close at the meeting. You may do this by:

- o signing another proxy card with a later date and returning that proxy card to our transfer agent at:

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

American Stock Transfer and Trust Company
59 Maiden Lane
New York, New York 10038;

- o sending notice to us that you are revoking your proxy; or
- o voting in person at the meeting.

If you hold your shares in the name of your broker and desire to revoke your proxy, you will need to contact your broker to revoke your proxy.

How many votes do we need to hold the annual meeting?

A majority of the shares that are outstanding and entitled to vote as of the record date must be present in person or by proxy at the meeting in order to hold the meeting and conduct business.

Shares are counted as present at the meeting if the shareholder either:

- o is present in person at the meeting; or
- o has properly submitted a signed proxy card or other form of proxy.

On February 25, 2004, the record date, there were 5,811,094 shares of common stock issued and outstanding. Therefore, at least 2,905,547 shares need to be present at the annual meeting.

What happens if a nominee is unable to stand for re-election?

The board may, by resolution, provide for a lesser number of directors or designate a substitute nominee. In the latter case, shares represented by proxies may be voted for a substitute nominee. Proxies cannot be voted for more than four nominees. We have no reason to believe any nominee will be unable to stand for re-election.

What options do I have in voting on each of the proposals?

You may vote "for" or "withhold authority to vote for" each nominee for director. You may vote "for," "against" or "abstain" on any other proposal that may properly be brought before the meeting.

3

How many votes may I cast?

Generally, you are entitled to cast one vote for each share of stock you owned on the record date. The proxy card included with this proxy statement indicates the number of shares owned by an account attributable to you.

How many votes are needed for each proposal?

The four individuals receiving the highest number of votes cast "for" their election will be elected as directors of Lakeland Financial.

The ratification of our auditors and all other matters must receive the affirmative vote of a majority of the shares present in person or by proxy at the meeting and entitled to vote. Broker non-votes will not be counted as entitled to vote, but will count for purposes of determining whether or not a quorum is present on the matter.

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

Where do I find the voting results of the meeting?

We will announce voting results at the meeting. The voting results will also be disclosed in our Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2004.

Who bears the cost of soliciting proxies?

We will bear the cost of soliciting proxies. In addition to solicitations by mail, officers, directors or employees of Lakeland Financial or its subsidiaries may solicit proxies in person or by telephone. These persons will not receive any special or additional compensation for soliciting proxies. We may reimburse brokerage houses and other custodians, nominees and fiduciaries for their reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for forwarding proxy and solicitation materials to shareholders.

SECURITY OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN BENEFICIAL OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT

The following table sets forth certain information with respect to the beneficial ownership of our common stock at February 25, 2004, by each person known by us to be the beneficial owner of more than 5% of the outstanding common stock, by each director or nominee, by each executive officer named in the summary compensation table which can be found later in this proxy statement, and by all directors and executive officers of Lakeland Financial as a group. Beneficial ownership has been determined for this purpose in accordance with Rule 13d-3 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"), under which a person is deemed to be the beneficial owner of securities if he or she has or shares voting power or investment power in respect of such securities or has the right to acquire beneficial ownership of securities within 60 days of February 25, 2004.

Name of Individual or Number of Individuals in Group -----	Amount and Nature of Beneficial Ownership(1,2) -----	Percent of Class -----
5% Shareholders		
Lakeland Financial Corporation 401(k) Plan Post Office Box 1387 Warsaw, Indiana 46581-1387	512,836(3)	8.83%
Directors and Nominees		
Robert E. Bartels, Jr.	100	*
L. Craig Fulmer	14,721(4)	*
Michael L. Kubacki	68,248(5)	1.17%
Allan J. Ludwig	34,028(6)	*
Charles E. Niemier	11,986(7)	*
Emily E. Pichon	300	*
Richard L. Pletcher	11,937(8)	*
Steven D. Ross	2,200	*
Donald B. Steininger	10,507(9)	*
Terry L. Tucker	12,146(10)	*
M. Scott Welch	7,154(11)	*

4

Other Named Executive Officers		
David M. Findlay	1,402	*

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

Charles D. Smith	40,324 (12)	*
Robert C. Condon	7,952 (13)	*
Kevin L. Deardorff	10,333 (14)	*
All directors and executive officers as a group (19 persons)	255,081 (15)	4.34%

*Indicates that the individual or entity owns less than one percent of Lakeland Financial's common stock.

- (1) The total number of shares of common stock issued and outstanding on February 25, 2004 was 5,811,094.
- (2) The information contained in this column is based upon information furnished to us by the persons named above and as shown on our transfer records. The nature of beneficial ownership for shares shown in this column, unless otherwise noted, represents sole voting and investment power.
- (3) This information has been supplied by Lake City Bank which serves as trustee of the trust for the plan. Participant employees of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank exercise investment power over the shares held in their respective participant accounts. Lake City Bank exercises sole investment power over those shares not allocated to any participant account. On February 25, 2004, there were 487,164 unallocated shares held for the plan.
- (4) Includes 1,453 shares held by Mr. Fulmer's individual retirement account, as to which shares he shares voting and investment power; 300 shares held by Mr. Fulmer's wife's individual retirement account, as to which shares he shares voting and investment power; 1,500 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Fulmer has no voting power and sole investment power; and 5,899 shares credited to Mr. Fulmer's account as of January 26, 2004 under the terms of the Amended and Restated Lakeland Financial Corporation Directors Fee Deferral Plan.
- (5) Includes 100 shares owned by each of Mr. Kubacki's minor son and daughter and 300 shares held in a trust in which he serves as co-trustee and 30,000 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Kubacki has no voting power and sole investment power.
- (6) Includes 17,492 shares held by Ludwig Investments, as to which shares Mr. Ludwig exercises voting and investment power; 8,000 shares held by Mr. Ludwig's individual retirement account, as to which shares he exercises voting and investment power; 2,000 shares held by Mr. Ludwig's wife's retirement account, as to which shares Mr. Ludwig disclaims any beneficial interest; 1,500 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Ludwig has no voting power and sole investment power; and 5,036 shares credited to Mr. Ludwig's account as of January 26, 2004 under the terms of the Amended and Restated Lakeland Financial Corporation Directors Fee Deferral Plan.
- (7) Includes 2,016 shares held by Mr. Niemier's individual retirement account, as to which shares he shares voting and investment power; 1,434 shares held by Mr. Niemier's wife's individual retirement account, as to which shares he disclaims any beneficial interest; 1,848 shares held in Mr. Niemier's 401(k) plan, as to which shares he shares voting and investment power; 575 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Niemier has no voting power and sole investment power; and 3,920 shares credited to Mr. Niemier's account as of January 26, 2004 under the terms of the Amended and Restated

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

Lakeland Financial Corporation Directors Fee Deferral Plan.

- (8) Includes 1,170 shares held by Mr. Pletcher's individual retirement account. Also included are 904 shares held by Mr. Pletcher's wife's individual retirement account, with respect to which shares Mr. Pletcher disclaims any beneficial interest; 1,500 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Pletcher has no voting power and sole investment power; and 8,363 shares credited to Mr. Pletcher's account as of January 26, 2004 under the terms of the Amended and Restated Lakeland Financial Corporation Directors Fee Deferral Plan.
- (9) Includes 507 shares credited to Mr. Steininger's account as of January 26, 2004 under terms of the Amended and Restated Lakeland Financial Corporation Directors Fee Deferral Plan.
- (10) Includes 1,500 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Tucker has no voting power and sole investment power; and 5,366 shares credited to Mr. Tucker's account as of January 26, 2004 under the terms of the Amended and Restated Lakeland Financial Corporation Directors Fee Deferral Plan.
- (11) Includes 700 shares held by Mr. Welch's wife's individual retirement account, as to which shares he shares voting and investment power; 575 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Welch has no voting power and sole investment power; and 2,929 shares credited to Mr. Welch's account as of January 26, 2004 under the terms of the Amended and Restated Lakeland Financial Corporation Directors Fee Deferral Plan.
- (12) Includes 278 shares owned by Mr. Smith's wife, as to which shares he disclaims any beneficial interest and 8,000 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Smith has no voting power and sole investment power;.
- (13) Includes 5,000 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Condon has no voting power and sole investment power.

5

- (14) Includes 8,000 options, which are currently exercisable, over which Mr. Deardorff has no voting power and sole investment power.
- (15) This includes shares which have been allocated to executive officers under the 401(k) plan through December 31, 2003 and all prior years.

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Shareholders will be entitled to elect four directors for a term expiring in 2007 at the annual meeting. Our board is divided into three classes of directors having staggered terms of three years. We have no knowledge that any nominee will refuse or be unable to serve, but if any of the nominees is unavailable for election, the holders of the proxies reserve the right to substitute another person of their choice as a nominee when voting at the meeting.

Set forth below is information concerning the nominees for election and for each of Lakeland Financial's other directors, whose terms of office will continue after the meeting, including the age, the year first elected as a director and the other positions held by the person at Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank. The nominees, if elected at the annual meeting, will serve

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

as directors for a three-year term expiring in 2007, except as noted below. We recommend that shareholders vote "FOR" each of the nominees for director. Unless authority to vote for the nominees is withheld, the shares represented by the enclosed proxy card, if executed and returned, will be voted "FOR" the election of the nominees.

NOMINEES

Name (age)	Director Since	Positions with Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Term Expires 2007		
L. Craig Fulmer (age 61)	1993	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Charles E. Niemier (age 48)	1998	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Donald B. Steininger (age 61)	2001	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Terry L. Tucker (age 63)	1988	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank

CONTINUING DIRECTORS

Term Expires 2005		
Robert E. Bartels, Jr. (age 39)	2002	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Michael L. Kubacki (age 52)	1998	President, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Steven D. Ross (age 49)	2000	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
M. Scott Welch (age 43)	1998	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Term Expires 2006		
Allan J. Ludwig (age 65)	1996	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Emily E. Pichon (age 40)	2002	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank
Richard L. Pletcher (age 62)	1992	Director of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank

Except as noted above, all directors will hold office for the terms indicated, or until their earlier death, resignation, removal or disqualification, and until their respective successors are duly elected and qualified. There are no arrangements or understandings between any of the

nominees, directors or executive officers and any other person pursuant to which any of our nominees, directors or executive officers have been selected for their respective positions. No nominee, member of the board of directors

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

or executive officer is related to any other nominee, member of the board of directors or executive officer. No nominee or director is a director of another "public corporation" (i.e. subject to the reporting requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934) or of any investment company, except for Mr. Niemier, who is a director of Biomet, Inc.

The business experience of each of the nominees and continuing directors for the past five years is as follows:

Mr. Bartels, Jr. is President and Chief Operating Officer of Martin's Supermarkets, Inc., a regional supermarket chain headquartered in South Bend, Indiana.

Mr. Fulmer is Chairman of Heritage Financial Group, Inc., a real estate investment and management company based in Elkhart, Indiana.

Mr. Kubacki presently serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank. He first joined Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank during 1998 as President and became Chief Executive Officer of both in January 1999. Prior to 1998, Mr. Kubacki served as Executive Vice President of the Northern Trust Bank of California, NA.

Mr. Ludwig is an entrepreneur and industrial developer.

Mr. Niemier is Senior Vice President - international operations of Biomet, Inc., which is a manufacturer of medical and orthopedic devices. He also serves as a trustee of Valparaiso University.

Ms. Pichon is a director of the Cole Foundation, a private charitable foundation focused on northeast Indiana education, economic development and conservation.

Mr. Pletcher is President of Pletcher Enterprises, Inc., a holding company, and Chief Executive Officer of its principal subsidiary, Amish Acres, LLC, a heritage resort.

Mr. Ross is President of Bertsch Services, which is a regional food service and vending company based in Warsaw, Indiana.

Mr. Steininger is President of Steininger Development, a real estate development company based in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Mr. Tucker is President of Maple Leaf Farms, Inc., which is primarily engaged in duck production, processing and sales, as well as the production and sale of other food products.

Mr. Welch is the Chief Executive Officer of Welch Packaging Group, Inc., which is primarily engaged in producing industrial and point of purchase packaging.

In addition, the following individuals serve as executive officers of Lakeland Financial and are named in the compensation tables included in this proxy statement:

David M. Findlay, age 42, became an Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank in September, 2000. Prior to his arrival, Mr. Findlay served as the Chief Financial Officer of Quality Dining, Inc., a publicly traded company with its headquarters in South Bend, Indiana. Prior to that, he served in various capacities with The Northern Trust Company in Chicago.

Charles D. Smith, age 59, presently serves as an Executive Vice

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

President of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank, positions he has held since 2000. He has served as an officer of Lake City Bank since 1983.

7

Robert C. Condon, age 62, presently serves as an Executive Vice President of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank, positions he has held since 1999. Prior to that he was Managing Director of the Northern California region of The Northern Trust Company for eight years. Before that he was Vice President and Division Head for Trust Division A for The Northern Trust Company in Chicago.

Kevin L. Deardorff, age 42, presently serves as an Executive Vice President of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank, positions he has held since 2001. He has served as an officer of Lake City Bank since 1993.

Section 16(a) Beneficial Ownership Reporting Compliance

Section 16(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 requires that our executive officers, directors and persons who own more than 10% of our common stock file reports of ownership and changes in ownership with the Securities and Exchange Commission. They are also required to furnish us with copies of all Section 16(a) forms they file. Based solely on our review of the copies of such forms, and, if appropriate, representations made to us by any reporting person concerning whether a Form 5 was required to be filed for 2003, we are not aware that any of our directors, executive officers or 10% shareholders failed to comply with the filing requirements of Section 16(a) during 2003 except for Mr. Fulmer who did not timely file three Form 4 reports concerning four acquisitions of our common stock totaling 1,046 shares.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

General

There are currently eleven directors serving on our board of directors. Generally, the board oversees our business and monitors the performance of our management. In accordance with our corporate governance procedures, the board does not involve itself in the day-to-day operations of Lakeland Financial, which is monitored by our executive officers and management. Our directors fulfill their duties and responsibilities by attending regular meetings of the board, which are held on a monthly basis, and through committee membership, which is discussed below. Our directors also discuss business and other matters with Mr. Kubacki, our President and Chief Executive Officer, other key executives and our principal external advisers (legal counsel, auditors and other consultants). All members of our board of directors also serve as members of Lake City Bank's board of directors.

With the exception of Mr. Kubacki, all of our current directors are "independent" as defined by the Nasdaq Stock Market, Inc. The board of directors has established an Audit Committee, a Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee and a Compensation Committee, among other committees. The current charters of each of these committees are available on our website at www.lakecitybank.com. Also posted on the web site is a general description regarding the company, many of our corporate policies, and links to our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Our board of directors held twelve meetings during 2003. With the exception of Messrs. Creighton, Grant and Ludwig, all of the directors attended at least 75% of the board meetings and meetings of committees of

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

which they were members. While we do not have a specific policy regarding attendance at the annual shareholder meeting, all directors are encouraged and expected to attend the meeting. Last year's annual meeting was attended by eight of the eleven incumbent directors.

At the beginning of 2003, there were sixteen members on our board. Since last year's annual meeting, Eddie Creighton, R. Douglas Grant, D. Jean Northerner, Jerry L. Helvey and Anna K. Duffin each retired from the board upon reaching the age of 70, which is our mandatory retirement age. In 2003, the board considered whether to maintain the size of the board or to reduce the size as directors retired. The board decided not to appoint new directors to fill any of the vacancies created by the retiring directors and reduced the size of the board to eleven.

8

Audit Committee

In 2003, the Audit Committee was comprised of Charles E. Neimer, Robert E. Bartles, Jr., Anna K. Duffin, Emily E. Pichon, Richard L. Pletcher, Terry L. Tucker and M. Scott Welch. Steven D. Ross also served on the committee until October, 2003. Ms. Duffin retired from the board in January 2004 and is no longer on the committee. Each of the members is considered "independent" according to the Nasdaq listing requirements and the regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission. The board of directors has determined that Mr. Niemer qualifies as an "audit committee financial expert" under the regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission. The board based this decision on Mr. Niemer's education, his professional experience at an audit firm and his experience as Chief Financial Officer and board member of Biomet, Inc., a company with its common stock quoted on the Nasdaq National Market System.

The functions performed by the Audit Committee include, among other things, the following:

- o overseeing our accounting and financial reporting;
- o selecting, appointing and overseeing our independent auditors;
- o reviewing actions by management on recommendations of the independent auditors and internal auditors;
- o meeting with management, the internal auditors and the independent auditors to review the effectiveness of our system of internal control and internal audit procedures; and
- o reviewing reports of bank regulatory agencies and monitoring management's compliance with recommendations contained in those reports.

To promote independence of the audit function, the committee consults separately and jointly with the independent auditors, the internal auditors and management. In 2003, the committee met four times. The Audit Committee has adopted a written charter, which sets forth the committee's duties and responsibilities. Our current charter was attached to our 2003 proxy statement as Appendix A and is available on our website at www.lakecitybank.com.

Compensation Committee

During 2003, the Compensation Committee was comprised of L. Craig

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

Fulmer, Charles E. Niemer, Emily E. Pichon, Richard L. Pletcher and Terry L. Tucker, each of whom is expected to serve on the committee through 2004. R. Douglas Grant and Jerry L. Helvey each served on the committee during 2003 until their retirement. Allan J. Ludwig also served on the committee until November, 2003. Each of the members is considered "independent" according to the Nasdaq listing requirements. The purpose of the Compensation Committee is to determine the salary and bonus to be paid to Mr. Kubacki, our Chief Executive Officer, and to review the salaries and bonuses for our other executive officers. The committee also administers our stock option plans and meets either independently or in conjunction with our full board of directors to grant options to eligible individuals in accordance with the terms of the plans. The committee's responsibilities and functions are further described in its charter, which is available on our website at www.lakecitybank.com. In 2003, the committee met five times.

Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee

We recently established the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. The members of our nominating committee are Allan J. Ludwig, Steven D. Ross, Donald B. Steininger and M. Scott Welch, and each is considered "independent" according to the Nasdaq listing requirements. The primary purposes of the committee are to identify and recommend individuals to be presented to our shareholders for election or re-election to the board of directors and to review and monitor our policies, procedures and structure as they relate to corporate governance. The committee's responsibilities and functions are further described in its charter, which is available on our website at www.lakecitybank.com. The committee met one time in 2003.

9

Director Nominations and Qualifications

For the 2004 annual meeting of shareholders, the full board of directors, including all of the current members of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee, nominated for re-election to the board the four incumbent directors whose terms are set to expire in 2004. This action was taken in connection with the board's long-term planning relating to director retirements that have occurred since the last shareholder meeting. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee was formed in November 2003 and will act on nominations in the future. We did not receive any shareholder nominations for director for the 2004 annual meeting.

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee evaluates all potential nominees for election, including incumbent directors, board nominees and those shareholder nominees included in the proxy statement, in the same manner. Generally, the committee believes that, at a minimum, directors should possess certain qualities, including the highest personal and professional ethics and integrity, a sufficient educational and professional background, demonstrated leadership skills, sound judgment, a strong sense of service to the communities which we serve and an ability to meet the standards and duties set forth in our code of conduct. Additionally, all nominees must be under the age of 70, which is the mandatory retirement age established by the board. The committee also evaluates potential nominees to determine if they have any conflicts of interest that may interfere with their ability to serve as effective board members and to determine whether they are "independent" in accordance with Nasdaq requirements (to ensure that at least a majority of the directors will, at all times, be independent). The committee has not, in the past, retained any third party to assist it in identifying candidates.

Shareholder Communication with the Board, Nomination and Proposal Procedures

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

General Communications with the Board. Shareholders may contact Lakeland Financial's board of directors by contacting David M. Findlay, Secretary, at Lakeland Financial Corporation, P.O. Box 1387, Warsaw, Indiana, 46581 or (574) 267-6144. All comments will be forwarded directly to the Chairman of the board of directors.

Nominations of Directors. In accordance with our bylaws, a shareholder may nominate a director for election to the board at an annual meeting of shareholders by delivering written notice of the nomination to our President not fewer than 10 days nor more than 50 days prior to the date of the annual meeting. The shareholder's notice of intention to nominate a director must include the name and address of the proposed nominee, the principal occupation of the proposed nominee, the name and address of the shareholder making the nomination, and the number of shares of capital stock of Lakeland Financial owned by the notifying shareholder. We may request additional information after receiving the notification.

For a shareholder nominee to be considered to be included in our proxy statement, the nominating shareholder must file a written notice of the proposed director nomination with our corporate secretary, at the above address, at least 120 days prior to the date the previous year's proxy statement was mailed to shareholders. Nominations must include the full name and address of the proposed nominee and a brief description of the proposed nominee's business experience for at least the previous five years. All submissions must be accompanied by the written consent of the proposed nominee to be named as a nominee and to serve as a director if elected. The committee may request additional information in order to make a determination as to whether to nominate the person for director.

Other Shareholder Proposals. For all other shareholder proposals, to be considered for inclusion in our proxy statement and form of proxy relating to our annual meeting of shareholders to be held in 2005, shareholder proposals must be received by our corporate secretary, at the above address, no later than November 5, 2004, and must otherwise comply with the rules and regulations set forth by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Independent Director Sessions

Consistent with the Nasdaq listing requirements, the independent directors regularly have the opportunity to meet without Mr. Kubacki in attendance. In 2003, the board of directors created the position of a lead independent director and appointed Allan J. Ludwig to serve in this position. The lead independent director assists the board in assuring effective corporate governance and serves as chairperson of the independent director sessions.

10

Code of Ethics

We have a code of conduct in place that applies to all of our directors and employees. The code sets forth the standard of ethics that we expect all of our directors and employees to follow, including our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer. The code of conduct is posted on our website at www.lakecitybank.com. We intend to satisfy the disclosure requirements under Item 10 of Form 8-K regarding any amendment to or waiver of the code with respect to our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer, and persons performing similar functions, by posting such information on our website.

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

The following table shows the compensation earned for the last three fiscal years by the Chief Executive Officer and our four other most highly paid executive officers:

SUMMARY COMPENSATION TABLE				
(a)	(b)	Annual Compensation		Sec Und Opti
		(c)	(d)	
Name and Principal Position	Year	Salary (\$)	Bonus (\$)	
Michael L. Kubacki President and Chief Executive Officer	2003	\$ 315,000	\$ 106,000	
	2002	290,000	56,000	
	2001	280,000	52,000	
David M. Findlay Chief Financial Officer	2003	\$ 197,000	\$ 51,000	
	2002	182,500	26,250	
	2001	177,296	7,615	
Charles D. Smith Executive Vice President	2003	\$ 165,000	\$ 43,000	
	2002	152,500	21,750	
	2001	145,423	18,377	
Robert C. Condon Executive Vice President	2003	\$ 135,000	\$ 21,000	
	2002	125,000	18,000	
	2001	120,000	16,500	
Kevin L. Deardorff Executive Vice President	2003	\$ 135,000	\$ 23,000	
	2002	125,000	18,000	
	2001	120,000	10,645	

(1) The amounts set forth in column (i) for Messrs. Kubacki, Findlay, Smith, Condon and Deardorff include life insurance premiums paid by us as well as the following 401(k) plan matching contributions, including supplemental 401(k) matching contributions, paid by Lakeland Financial as follows:

	Mr. Kubacki	Mr. Findlay	Mr. Smith	Mr. Condon	Mr. Deardorff
2003	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 9,360	\$ 9,506
2002	\$ 10,500	\$ 11,000	\$ 10,455	\$ 7,500	\$ 8,580
2001	\$ 10,096	\$ 2,845	\$ 8,029	\$ 7,200	\$ 7,200

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

The following table sets forth information concerning the number and value of stock options granted in the last fiscal year to the individuals named above in the summary compensation table:

OPTION GRANTS IN LAST FISCAL YEAR				
Individual Grants				
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Name	Options Granted (#) (1)	% of Total Options Granted to Employees in Fiscal Year	Exercise or Base Price (\$/Sh)	Expiration Date
Michael L. Kubacki	7,091 2,909	10.94% 4.49%	\$ 34.37 34.37	12/09/13 12/09/13
David M. Findlay	2,091 2,909	3.23% 4.49%	\$ 34.37 34.37	12/09/13 12/09/13
Charles D. Smith	2,091 2,909	3.23% 4.49%	\$ 34.37 34.37	12/09/13 12/09/13
Robert C. Condon	2,000	3.09%	\$ 34.37	12/09/13
Kevin L. Deardorff	2,091 2,909	3.23% 4.49%	\$ 34.37 34.37	12/09/13 12/09/13

(1) All options vest five years after grant.

12

The following table sets forth information concerning the exercisable and nonexercisable stock options at December 31, 2003 held by the individuals named in the summary compensation table:

AGGREGATED OPTION EXERCISES IN LAST FISCAL YEAR AND FY-END OPTIONS VALUES	
--	--

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

(a) Name	(b) Shares Acquired on Exercise (#)	(c) Value Realized (\$)	(d) Number of Securities Underlying Unexercised Options at FY-End(#)	
			Exercisable	Unexercisable
Michael L. Kubacki	---	---	20,000	50,000
David M. Findlay	---	---	---	35,000
Charles D. Smith	---	---	4,000	26,000
Robert C. Condon	---	---	---	21,000
Kevin L. Deardorff	---	---	4,000	23,000

Pension Plan Table

Our defined benefit retirement plan covers certain employees over 21 years of age with more than one year of service. Effective April 1, 2000, we amended the plan to freeze the accrual of benefits to participants under the plan. As a result of this amendment, employees who were not participants in the plan as of March 31, 2000 are no longer able to become participants under the plan. In addition, all benefits previously accrued under the plan by participants were frozen in place, and continuing employment with us will not increase the employee's benefits upon retirement. Normal retirement age is 65. Participants received credit for 2-1/2% of their average salary for each year up to 20 years of service or through March 31, 2000, whichever occurred first.

The principal benefit under this plan is a lifetime annuity for the joint lives of participants and their spouses. This amount is offset by social security benefits. On December 31, 1985, the then existing plan was terminated and the latest plan (which is now frozen) was adopted effective January 1, 1986. Participants in the terminated plan were paid cash or received annuities for their earned benefits as of December 31, 1985. The amounts paid for annuities purchased, as a part of the plan termination will reduce the benefits to be paid out of the latest plan.

Remuneration	Years of Credited Service Through March 31, 2000				
	15	20	25	30	35
100,000	37,500	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
150,000	56,250	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
200,000	75,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
250,000	93,750	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000
300,000	112,500	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000
350,000	131,250	175,000	175,000	175,000	175,000
400,000	150,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
450,000	168,750	225,000	225,000	225,000	225,000
500,000	187,500	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000

The amounts shown above include benefits payable under a supplemental employee retirement plan, which is a non-qualified plan payable as a general creditor of Lakeland Financial. This plan was created in 1989 when changes to the Internal Revenue Code that apply to defined pension plans could have

resulted in a reduced pension benefit for certain highly compensated employees. This supplemental plan did not create any new benefits, but was adopted to offset any such reduction in pension benefits. Benefits under this plan were frozen as of December 31, 1999, by a resolution of our board, and continuing employment will not increase the employee's benefits under the plan. At the time the defined benefit plan was frozen, Mr. Kubacki was credited with 2 years of service, Mr. Smith was credited with 14 years of service, and Mr. Deardorff was credited with 8 years of service. Mr. Findlay and Mr. Condon, who joined Lakeland Financial in 2000 and 1999, respectively, never participated in the plan.

Employment Agreements

We have change of control agreements with several of our executive officers, including Messrs. Kubacki, Findlay, Smith, Condon and Deardorff. The agreements provide that upon the termination of the executive's employment within one year prior to, or following, a change of control of Lakeland Financial, Mr. Kubacki has the right to receive a payment equal to approximately two times 120% of his base salary and all other executives have the right to receive a payment equal to approximately two times 115% of the executive's base salary. Also, the executive shall continue to receive certain benefits, including medical insurance coverage. Pursuant to the agreements, a "change of control" shall be any of the following events: a merger or attempted hostile takeover; a person acquiring 30% of our voting securities followed by the election of that person's representative of a director to the board of directors; a person acquiring more than 50% of our voting securities; and any other event that has the effect of placing control of Lakeland Financial in someone other than its current shareholders.

In addition, the agreements provide that the executive shall not compete with us, or our successor, for two years following a change of control. If the executive elects, he may forego the severance benefit and not be subject to the restrictive covenant. The restrictive covenant extends to a 60 mile radius of Warsaw, Indiana.

Report of the Compensation Committee on Executive Compensation

The report of the Compensation Committee below shall not be deemed incorporated by reference by any general statement incorporating by reference this proxy statement into any filing under the Securities Act of 1933 or under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, except to the extent Lakeland Financial specifically incorporates this information by reference, and shall not otherwise be deemed filed under such Acts.

General. We annually review executive officer compensation in December with the new compensation to become effective the following February. In establishing executive compensation, we have historically divided compensation into the two separate components of salary and bonus. When fixing an individual executive officer's compensation, these two components are intended to work together to compensate the executive officer fairly for his or her services and reward the executive officer based upon our performance during the year. We further encourage the executive officers and all employees to acquire a personal interest in the long-term success of Lakeland Financial by participating in stock ownership under our 401(k) plan. In 1998, we established the Lakeland Financial Corporation 1997 Share Incentive Plan to enhance the opportunity of the executive officers, as well as other covered employees, to acquire stock in Lakeland Financial. The board of directors retains final approval over executive compensation.

Salary. The Compensation Committee reviews each executive's base salary on an annual basis. The committee believes that the base salaries should offer security to each executive and allow us to attract qualified executives and maintain a stable management team and environment. The committee targets base salaries at levels comparable to those of similar positions within the market place. The committee may adjust salaries to reflect our financial performance, including, but not limited to, our earnings per share, net income and return on average assets, although no specific weight is given to these factors. Additionally, base salaries are determined examining, among other things, an executive's level of responsibility, prior experience, education, breadth of knowledge, internal performance objectives and the current market level. All of the factors described herein are considered on a subjective basis in the aggregate, and none of the factors is accorded a specific weight. When establishing the salary of executive officers other than his own, Mr. Kubacki participated and made recommendations to the committee.

The salary paid to Mr. Kubacki, as President and Chief Executive Officer, during 2003 was based in part upon the committee's satisfaction with

14

the following factors; profitability, revenue growth, expense control and credit quality. The committee determined that Mr. Kubacki's leadership had a significant impact on our attaining this level of performance while maintaining our excellent safety and soundness ratings. Additionally, the committee considered Mr. Kubacki's personal performance as President and Chief Executive Officer, as well as his employment contract, his previous years' salaries and the salary levels of other similarly situated financial institutions in setting his base salary at \$315,000 for 2003.

Bonus. Executive officer bonuses that were paid in 2003, including Mr. Kubacki's, were determined by an established executive incentive compensation program, which is periodically reviewed by the committee. This program applied to all of our executive officers, as well as designated officers of Lake City Bank. As established, the committee retains the right to modify the program and/or withhold payment at any time. Historically, payments have not been withheld since its adoption. The bonus program for 2003 was designed to encourage the executive officers to achieve a strong return on shareholders' equity and perform well versus personal goals. Bonuses paid in 2003 were computed in part on our return on beginning shareholders' equity. It was based upon net income after the 401(k) match and incentive compensation costs and excluding non-recurring gain/loss on sale of fixed assets. For payments made in 2003, the year end return on shareholders' equity as of January 1 of each year must equal or exceed 13% in order for a bonus to be paid that year. Thereafter, based upon an established schedule, the award eligibility increases with improved return on shareholders' equity. Bonuses under the plan provide for bonus payments of 5% to 40% of eligible salary.

For bonus payments made in 2003, the bonus program provided that our President and Chief Executive Officer would receive up to 40% of his salary and that the Executive Vice Presidents would receive from 20% to 30% of their salary. Bonuses for officers receiving promotions during the year were prorated.

The committee made changes to the executive incentive compensation plan in 2003 for bonus payments to be made in 2004. Eligible participants in the plan may earn a performance-based bonus based on the Company's performance versus budgeted net income and the employee's performance versus personal

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

goals. For purposes of determining the performance against budgeted net income, net income after the 401(k) match and incentive compensation costs and excluding non-recurring gain/loss on sale of fixed assets, investments and extinguishment of debt is used. The actual net income for each year must equal or exceed 70% of budgeted net income in order for a bonus to be paid that year. Thereafter, based upon an established schedule, the award eligibility increases with improved performance versus budgeted net income. Bonuses under the plan provide for bonus payments of 5% to 40% of eligible salary.

Stock Ownership. At the annual meeting held in April 1998, the shareholders approved the Lakeland Financial Corporation 1997 Share Incentive Plan. The purpose of this incentive plan is to enhance our long term financial performance by:

- o attracting and retaining executive and other key employees of Lakeland Financial and Lake City Bank through incentive compensation opportunity;
- o motivating such employees to further the long term goals of Lakeland Financial and the Lake City Bank; and
- o furthering the identity of interests of participating employees with our shareholders through opportunities for increased employee ownership of Lakeland Financial.

During 2003, the compensation committee recommended, and the board of directors approved, the granting of options for a total of 64,790 shares to 64 employees and directors. The number and terms of shares for which options were granted to Messrs. Kubacki, Findlay, Smith, Condon and Deardorff during 2003 are shown in the table of option grants above.

We have a 401(k) plan, effective January 1, 1984, which allows the participants to choose between several different investment options, including shares of our common stock. Under the plan, employees are eligible to redirect up to 12% of their regular basic compensation into a tax-deferred trust. We make matching contributions of up to 6% of each participant's regular basic compensation. All participants are always 100% vested in their salary redirections and become 100% vested in our contribution upon retirement,

15

disability or in accordance with the vesting provisions of the plan. Participant accounts are distributed to the individual participants upon termination of employment and may include our stock.

Conclusion. The Compensation Committee believes these executive compensation policies and programs effectively serve the interests of shareholders and Lakeland Financial. The committee believes these policies motivate executives to contribute to our overall future success, thereby enhancing the value of Lakeland Financial for the benefit of all shareholders.

Approved by the Lakeland Financial Compensation Committee as of December 31, 2003.

L. Craig Fulmer, Charles E. Niemer, Emily E. Pichon, Richard L. Pletcher and Terry L. Tucker

Compensation Committee Interlocks and Insider Participation

During 2003, none of the directors serving on the Compensation

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

Committee was an officer or employee of Lakeland Financial or Lake City Bank, and none of these individuals was a former officer or employee of either organization. In addition, during 2003 no executive officer served on the board of directors or compensation committee of any other corporation with respect to which any member of our compensation committee was engaged as an executed officer.

STOCK PRICE PERFORMANCE GRAPH

The stock price performance graph below shall not be deemed incorporated by reference by any general statement incorporating by reference this proxy statement into any filing under the Securities Act of 1933 or under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, except to the extent Lakeland Financial specifically incorporates this information by reference, and shall not otherwise be deemed filed under such Acts.

The graph below compares the cumulative total return of Lakeland Financial, the Nasdaq Market Index and a peer group index.

16

The following table was presented as a graph in the proxy material mailed to shareholders.

INDEX	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP.	\$100.00	\$ 82.66	\$ 71.95	\$105.42	\$144.48	\$223.43
PEER GROUP INDEX	100.00	185.95	113.19	89.65	61.67	92.90
NASDAQ MARKET INDEX	100.00	87.35	83.42	112.58	138.69	188.53

* Assumes \$100 invested on December 31, 1998 and dividends were reinvested.

The peer group index is comprised of all financial institution holding companies in the United States with total assets between one billion dollars and three billion dollars whose equity securities were traded on an exchange or national quotation service.

DIRECTORS' COMPENSATION

During 2003, directors who were not full time employees of Lakeland Financial or Lake City Bank, were paid an annual fee of \$8,500 and an additional \$500 for each board meeting attended and \$400 for each committee meeting attended. In 2004, the directors will receive an annual fee of \$9,000 and an additional \$600 for each board meeting attended and \$500 for each committee meeting attended. Mr. Kubacki, who is a director and also our President and Chief Executive Officer, is not paid a director's fee. Non-employee directors are not permitted to participate in our 401(k) plan. Directors are permitted to defer receipt of their directors' fees and earn a rate of return based upon the performance of our stock. We may, but are not required to, fund the deferred fees into a trust which may hold our stock. The plan is unqualified and the directors have no interest in the trust. The deferred fees and any earnings thereon are unsecured obligations of Lakeland Financial. Any shares held in the trust are treated as treasury shares and may not be voted.

CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS AND RELATED TRANSACTIONS

During 2003, Lake City Bank had extended, and expects to continue to extend, loans to its directors and officers and to their related interests.

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

Such loans were, and will continue to be, made only upon the same terms, conditions, interest rates, and collateral requirements as those prevailing at the same time for comparable loans extended from time to time to other, unrelated borrowers. Loans to directors and officers do not and will not involve greater risks of collectibility, or present other unfavorable features, than loans to other borrowers.

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

The report of the Audit Committee below shall not be deemed incorporated by reference by any general statement incorporating by reference this proxy statement into any filing under the Securities Act of 1933 or under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, except to the extent Lakeland Financial specifically incorporates this information by reference, and shall not otherwise be deemed filed under such Acts.

The Audit Committee assists the board in carrying out its oversight responsibilities for our financial reporting process, audit process and internal controls. The Audit Committee also reviews the audited financial statements and recommends to the board that they be included in our annual report on Form 10-K. As of December 31, 2003, the committee was comprised solely of independent directors.

The Audit Committee has reviewed and discussed our audited financial statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2003 with our management and Crowe Chizek and Company LLC, our independent auditors. The committee has also discussed with Crowe Chizek the matters required to be discussed by SAS 61 (Codification for Statements on Auditing Standards) as well as having received and discussed the written disclosures and the letter from Crowe Chizek required by Independence Standards Board Statement No. 1 (Independence Discussions with Audit Committees). Based on the review and discussions with

17

management and Crowe Chizek, the committee has recommended to the board that the audited financial statements be included in our annual report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2003 for filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Approved by the Lakeland Financial Audit Committee as of December 31, 2003.

Charles E. Niemier
Robert E. Bartels, Jr.

Emily E. Pichon
Terry L. Tucker

Richard L. Pletcher
M. Scott Welch

INDEPENDENT PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Shareholders are also being asked to ratify the appointment of Crowe Chizek and Company LLC ("Crowe Chizek") as our independent public accountants for the year ending December 31, 2004. If the appointment of Crowe Chizek is not ratified by shareholders, the matter of the appointment of independent public accountants will be considered by the Audit Committee and board of directors. A representative of Crowe Chizek is not expected to be present at the annual meeting.

Accountant Fees

Audit Fees. The aggregate amount of fees billed by Crowe Chizek for its audit of Lakeland Financial's annual financial statements for fiscal years

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

2003 and 2002 and for its required reviews of our unaudited interim financial statements included in our Form 10-Qs filed during fiscal 2003 and 2002 were \$130,175 and \$106,165, respectively.

Audit Related Fees. The aggregate amounts of audit related fees billed by Crowe Chizek for fiscal years 2003 and 2002 were \$22,950 and \$17,605, respectively. The majority of these services were related to Employee Benefit Plans.

Tax Fees. The aggregate amounts of tax related services billed by Crowe Chizek for fiscal years 2003 and 2002 were \$21,355 and \$28,595, respectively, for professional services rendered for tax compliance, tax advice and tax planning. The services provided were included assistance with the preparation of Lakeland Financial's tax return and guidance with respect to estimated tax payments.

All Other Fees. We did not incur any other fees from Crowe Chizek for fiscal years 2003 and 2002 other than the fees reported above.

The Audit Committee, after consideration of the matter, does not believe that the rendering of these services by Crowe Chizek to be incompatible with maintaining Crowe Chizek's independence as our principal accountant.

Audit Committee Pre-Approval Policy

Among other things, the Audit Committee is responsible for appointing, setting compensation for and overseeing the work of the independent auditor. The Audit Committee's policy is to pre-approve all audit and permissible non-audit services provided by Crowe Chizek. These services include audit and audit-related services, tax services, and other services. Crowe Chizek and management are required to periodically report to the Audit Committee regarding the extent of services provided by Crowe Chizek in accordance with this pre-approval, and the fees for the services performed to date. The Audit Committee may also pre-approve particular services on a case-by-case basis that the committee had not already specifically approved. In 2003, all of the services described above were pre-approved by the Audit Committee.

18

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

A copy of our Annual Report to Shareholders for the 2003 fiscal year, which also includes our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2003 (including financial statements), accompanies this Proxy Statement.

Michael L. Kubacki
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer

March 5, 2004
Warsaw, Indiana

ALL SHAREHOLDERS ARE URGED TO SIGN
AND MAIL THEIR PROXIES PROMPTLY

19

Edgar Filing: LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORP - Form DEF 14A

PROXY FOR COMMON SHARES SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD
OF DIRECTORS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS OF
LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORPORATION TO BE HELD ON APRIL 13, 2004

The undersigned hereby appoints David M. Findlay and Michael L. Kubacki, or either one of them acting in the absence of the other, with power of substitution, attorneys and proxies, for and in the name and place of the undersigned, to vote the number of common shares that the undersigned would be entitled to vote if then personally present at the annual meeting of shareholders, to be held at Westminster Hall located at 200 Seminary Drive in Winona Lake, Indiana, on the 13th day of April, 2004, at 12:00 p.m., or any adjournments or postponements of the meeting, upon the matters set forth in the notice of annual meeting and proxy statement, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, as follows:

1. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS:

FOR all nominees listed below WITHHOLD AUTHORITY
(except as marked to the contrary to vote for all nominees listed below
below)

[]

[]

(INSTRUCTIONS: TO WITHHOLD AUTHORITY TO VOTE FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL NOMINEE,
STRIKE A LINE THROUGH THE NOMINEE'S NAME IN THE LIST BELOW.)

Term Expires 2007: L. Craig Fulmer, Charles E. Niemier,
Donald B. Steininger and Terry L. Tucker

2. RATIFY THE APPOINTMENT OF Crowe Chizek and Company LLC as the Company's
independent public auditors for the year ending December 31, 2004:

[]

[]

[]

For

Against

Abstain

3. In accordance with their discretion, upon all other matters that may
properly come before said meeting and any adjournments or postponements of
the meeting.

THIS PROXY WHEN PROPERLY EXECUTED WILL BE VOTED IN THE MANNER DIRECTED HEREIN
BY THE UNDERSIGNED SHAREHOLDER. IF NO DIRECTION IS MADE, THIS PROXY WILL BE
VOTED FOR THE NOMINEES LISTED UNDER PROPOSAL 1 AND FOR PROPOSAL 2.

Dated: _____, 2004

Signature(s) _____

NOTE: PLEASE DATE PROXY AND SIGN IT EXACTLY AS NAME OR NAMES APPEAR ABOVE.
ALL JOINT OWNERS OF SHARES SHOULD SIGN. STATE FULL TITLE WHEN SIGNING AS
EXECUTOR, ADMINISTRATOR, TRUSTEE, GUARDIAN, ETC. PLEASE RETURN SIGNED PROXY
IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.