

THE MINISTRY OF THE ELDER



THE FULL GOSPEL CHURCH OF GOD

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INTRODUCTION

[Greek: "Presbuteros"] Acts 14:23; 15:4; 6, 22, 23; 20:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:17.

It is evident from New Testament Scriptures that the office of elder was not one of the set ministries of the Church, nor included in the ministry gifts as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:28 or Ephesians 4:11. The office of elder in the early Christian Church had apparently originated from the Jewish synagogue system and the pagan guilds (see Matthews 27:1, 3, 12, 20). One of the problems that confronted the apostles when preaching the Gospel was that it brought about the establishment of many new churches in widely separated areas and particularly among the Gentiles and that there were not sufficient called, trained and capable ministers. The practice consequently arose of appointing elders or overseers in each of these churches, and always more than one in every church (Acts 14:23). In the absence of higher church officials, a certain degree of authority and ministerial responsibility was delegated to them. This was necessary owing to circumstances, but it is clear that the Holy Spirit honoured such appointments by, in certain instances, confirming the initial appointment of such elders and divinely appointing some to become pastors or shepherds of the Church. Compare Acts 20:17 to 20:28 and Titus 1:5 to 1:7. Consequently the Church today recognizes elders in the body of Christ as being spiritual men of administrative and instructive ability, being appointed in their office by the higher Church officers, as and when the need arises dictated by local circumstances.

CONSTITUTIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ELDER

- 1. New Testament Standard**
The scriptural qualifications of elders in the Church shall be in accordance with the standards set forth in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:2-7) for bishops.
- 2. Knowledge of the Word**
Elders need to possess a reasonable knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and a sound knowledge of the doctrines of the Church.
- 3. Holy Spirit Baptism**
He shall have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with initial evidence of speaking with other tongues.
- 4. Tithing**
The elders will be a tithe paying member in good standing in the Church for at least two years prior to his/her appointment.

5. **Separation From the World**

Members must clearly realize the necessity of:

5.1 Maintaining a conscience void of offence towards God and men (Acts 24:16) and of showing to the world that they have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) and, by the purity of their lives, demonstrate that they have put off the old nature with its evil deeds and have put on the new man, who are created in the image of God in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:22 - 24). This will clearly involve a separation from sin and from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17).

5.2 Abstinance from tobacco, narcotics, alcohol, active membership of secret societies, unchristian entertainment, wearing of immodest or costly apparel and unnecessary jewellery and everything else that is not becoming to a true disciple of Christ. (Ephesians 5:11, 1 Timothy 2:9, 1 Peter 4:3-4 and 4:3-4, 1 John 2:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Galatians 5:19-21).

METHOD OF APPOINTMENT

In an established Local Church elders are appointed by the Minister. Due consideration is given to those who have proved themselves worthy after experience on diaconate, and who have clearly shown that they possess the proper spiritual qualifications as set forth in Article 1.3.1 of these By-Laws.

1. **Training**

It is important that the elder will receive training. Training should not be an inhibiting factor, but rather a means to proper service. A simplified course in Dogmatics, Spiritual Ministries, Evangelism, Homiletics, Liturgy, Prayer and Power from Above will be a great contribution to improve the ministry of the elder.

2. **Examination**

Any training should be evaluated. The candidate needs to be examined after completing the relevant theoretical and practical training. Such an evaluation will benefit both the elder and church.

3. **Probation**

Each elder should have a probation period. The fact that someone passes the theoretical and practical training does not always reflect the person's success as an elder. A probationary period will give the applicant an opportunity to prove himself and develop his calling.

4. **Appointment or ordening**

The candidate should only be appointed or ordained once all requirements are met. This will ensure that excellent work is done in a superb manner.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING AND PRIVILEGES GRANTED THE ELDER

1. **Under Ministerial Jurisdiction**
He/she shall serve under the jurisdiction of the Minister of his/her respective local church.
2. **Tithing**
He/she shall faithfully tithe of his/her income into the treasury of the local church where he/she holds office.
3. **Co-operation with the programme**
He/she shall comply with and support the full programme of the Church.
4. **Member of Church Council**
He/she shall be a member of the local Church Council where he/she holds office.
5. **Spiritual Presbytery**
He/she shall be a bona-fide member of the spiritual presbytery where he/she holds office.
6. **Spiritual Assistant**
At the discretion of, and in co-operation with the Minister, he/she shall at all times assist in the spiritual programme of the local church.

TERMINATION OF STATUS

1. **Tenure of Office**
The elder's term of office shall be for a maximum period of two years, but he/she is eligible for re-appointment continually if he/she remains in good standing in the local church.
2. **Ministerial Appointment**
The appointment or re-appointment of elders shall be made by the Minister.
3. **Termination by Minister**
Withdrawal of appointment at any time by the Minister will terminate the status of the elder.
4. **Transfer of Membership**
Transfer of his/her membership from one congregation to another shall immediately terminate the status of an elder.
5. **Disciplinary action**
Disciplinary action establishing improper conduct or doctrinal error will terminate the status of an elder.

NEW TESTAMENT GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament function of the elder is to take care of the spiritual, doctrinal, moral, discipline and financial management of the congregation. The elder shares the vision of the Presiding Minister and works together to achieve it. Together with the pastor they form the governing body of the church. It is therefore important that the finances of the church be handled and monitored by the elders. The pastor is at all times the chairman of the board of elders. The Church Council consists of elders and deacons. It is important for the pastor to take his spiritual board or board of elders into consideration when making important decisions or recommendations to the Church Council in relation to spiritual matters, building programme, personnel, planning, etc.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ELDER

1. **Blameless - Titus 1:7, 1 Timothy 3:2**
In short it means that one should have a good reputation and testimony. His character and conduct should be blameless and irreproachable.
2. **The husband of one wife - 1 Timothy 3:2**
The elder must have one spouse and be loyal to her, and also have a healthy marriage.
3. **Sober- 1 Timothy 3:2**
It means being sober in thinking and having a clear understanding and wisdom in making decisions.
4. **Respectable – 1 Timothy 3:2**
Must not live extravagantly and behave in a disciplined and orderly way. The respectability applies to every area of the person's life: home, at work, in the congregation, his habits, clothing and social life.
5. **Hospitality – 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8**
Hospitality has to do with human relations and showing love to others. It should be part of every true Christian's life pattern.
6. **Equipped to teach - 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9**
He must know the Word and be able to teach others. In order to do this he should baste himself to the knowledge of the Word and the doctrine of the church.
7. **No Drinker - 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7**
Hy must be a total abstainer from alcohol.
8. **No fighter – 1 Timothy 3:2**
He should not get involve in quarrels, arguments or fights.
9. **No filthy lucre - 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7**
He must not use his position to enrich or to please himself.
10. **But friendly - 1 Timothy 3:3**
Let your gentleness be known to all men. He must be friendly to all people.

11. **Not belligerent – 1 Timothy 3:3**
Not to be quarrelsome, not to argue, debate or compete with other people - but be a peacemaker.
12. **Not be covetous/greedy - 1 Timothy 3:3**
Should not have a love for money or use his position for personal gain. When money becomes a god or status symbol, God is often forgotten.
13. **The ruler of his own home – 1 Timothy 3:4**
Not with harshness and tyranny, but with honesty, integrity, dignity and love.
14. **He should not be a newcomer - 1 Timothy 3:6**
Not shortly saved or even a novice in the congregation. He must prove himself first.
15. **Good reference from outsiders – 1 Timothy 3:7**
He must be decent and an example for everyone.
16. **Modest – Titus 1:8, 1 Timothy 3:7**
It shows a sober minded and moderate lifestyle.
17. **Just – Titus 1:8**
To assess and act fairly and be reasonable.
18. **Holy – Titus 1:8**
The word means to be set apart from the world and dedicated to God for a specific task, striving to live holiness.
19. **A steward of God – Titus 1:7**
Be faithful in giving his tithes and by handling finances in a proper way.
20. **Not headstrong – Titus 1:7**
Not stubborn, or tending to follow his own head, but to listen to others and their advice.
21. **Not irascible – Titus 1:7**
Not being short-tempered. One who can control his temper.
22. **One who loves good – Titus 1:8**
One who seeks the good things in life and loves to do good things.
23. **Self-controlled – Titus 1:8**
Restrained, stays calm and applies self-discipline.
24. **One who clings to the Word – Titus 1:9**
Who is steadfast in believing the promises and truths of the Word and lives a life that portrays those principles.

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THE MINISTRY OF THE ELDER

1. **The elder is an overseer and shepherd – Acts 20:28**
He must look after the congregation with loving care.
2. **The elder is a ruler – 1 Timothy 3:4-5**
He is a true family man.
3. **The elder is prayerful – James 5:14-15**
He needs time in his inner room to pray to God, to attend prayer meetings and to pray for his church, especially when he is called upon to pray.
4. **The elder is a protector – Acts 20:28-29**
He must protect members and the parsonage family against attacks from outside.
5. **The elder is a student of the Word – 2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9**
He must devote himself to study the Bible.
6. **The elder must be competent to teach – 1 Timothy 3:2**
He should teach others from the Word.
7. **The elder must show sympathy – 1 Timothy 3:2**
He needs to be a sympathetic man.
8. **The elder should be an example of his words and deeds – 1 Peter 5:3**
He must reveal the life of Christ.
9. **The elder must be a leader– Luke 22:26**
A true leader is a servant.
10. **The elder is called to a sacrificial service - Luke 14:25-37**
His life must be unconditionally surrendered to God.
11. **The elder is a wise counsellor – Proverbs 24:6**
His advice to others will put them on the road to victory.
12. **The elder is hardworking – Philippians 2:30**
His life is dedicated to the work of the Lord.
13. **The elder bears the burdens of others– Galatians 6:2**
The interest of others is his priority.
14. **The elder must be a team worker – Romans 13:3-5**
He should team up with the pastor as well as the congregation.
15. **The elder should encourage others – Proverbs 16:24**
The right encouragement will bring healing, deliverance and victory.
16. **The elder shares the pastor's vision in order to bring unity in the church – 1 Corinthians 1:10**
He needs to transfer the pastor's vision to the church regularly in order to bring unity.

17. **The elder should be transparent - Proverbs 27:5-6**
Everyone should know where they stand. _____
18. **The elder must submit himself to authority by being humble - 1 Peter 5:1-3**
Submit himself to the authority of the pastor and his fellow servants. _____
19. **The elder must be a cheerful giver - 2 Corinthians 9:6-7**
God loves a cheerful giver. _____
20. **The elder should have a positive attitude - Philippians 2:14-15**
His positive attitude should spread through the whole church. _____
21. **The elder must be a disciplined person - Galatians 6:4**
He must be self-disciplined at all times. _____
22. **The elder is a man of faith – 1 Samuel 17:37**
His faith in God should be visible to all. _____
22. **The elder must be a worshiper - Revelation 4:10-11**
He must lead the congregation in worship and not wait for others to start. _____
23. **The elder must protect the flock - Acts 20:28-31**
As a shepherd, he constantly has to guard the flock against wolves. _____
24. **The elder must be filled by the Holy Spirit - Mark 1:8**
He must partake in speaking in tongues. _____
25. **The elder is to be goal-orientated - Philippians 3:14**
He needs to lead the congregation on a road of victory. _____
26. **The elder must promote his ministry gift - 1 Peter 4:10**
The ministry that he received from God should be visible in his ministry. _____
27. **The elder must be a good listener - Proverbs 19:20**
A good listener is wise and will not act hastily. _____
28. **The elder must be loyal - Proverbs 17:17**
Loyalty should be one of the strong qualities in his spiritual life _____
29. **The elder should pray for the sick - James 5:14-15**
It is a God-given ministry to pray for the sick. _____
30. **The elder should equip others - 1 Peter 4:11, 2 Timothy 2:2**
He must teach others about the power and glory of God. _____
31. **The elder acts as an associate pastor - 1 Peter 5:2**
He must assist the pastor in serving the congregation. _____

I want to express confidence that this course will contribute to the job description and activation of the ministry of the elder/s in each church and town. Although there are plenty of duties, it comes down to a Holy Spirit-filled life, dedicated to God. _____