

"Touching the World with the love of Christ"



*Stevenston High Kirk
Schoolwell Street
Stevenston
North Ayrshire
Tel. 01294 463356*

LEADERSHIP MANUAL

A Guide to the Eldership

3. Support the Ministry of My Church.

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:43-45)



- **By discovering my gifts and talents.**

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10)

- **By being equipped by my leaders.**

"[God] gave...some pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:11-12)

- **By developing a servant's heart.**

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who...[took on] the very nature of a servant." (Philippians 2:5,7)

4. Share the Responsibility of My Church.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and to prayer... All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together." (Acts 2:42, 44-46)



- **By attending faithfully.**

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)

- **By living a godly life.**

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ..." (Philippians 1:27)

- **By giving regularly.**

"Each person should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)
"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, 'says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." (Malachi 3:10)

High Kirk Agreement

1. Seek the Unity of My Church.

"By this will all men know you are my disciples if you love one another." (John 13:35)
"So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together." (Romans 14:19)



- **By acting in love toward other members.**
"...have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply." (1 Peter 1:22)
- **By refusing to gossip.**
"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building other up according to their needs." (Ephesians 4:29)
- **By supporting the leadership.**
"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Hebrews 13:17)

2. Serve the Mission of My Church.

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19 – 20a)



- **By praying for its outreach to unbelievers.**
"Ask the Lord of the Harvest, therefore, to send out workers to His harvest field." (Matthew 9:38)
- **By inviting the unchurched to attend.**
"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.'" (Luke 14:23)
- **By warmly welcoming those who visit.**
"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." (Romans 15:7)

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*Stevenston High Kirk
Schoolwell Street
Stevenston
North Ayrshire
KA20 3DL
Tel: 01294 463356*

Who? Me?

Becoming an Elder in the Church of Scotland

Why Should I?

In this time of exciting challenge and opportunity for the Church in Scotland

- ◆ Your church needs people like you
- ◆ You have gifts and skills the Kirk Session needs
- ◆ Other people see you as the right kind of person
- ◆ We think God is calling you

What does it entail?

While the work of an elder varies from church to church, every elder agrees to the following:

“Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith? And do you promise to seek the unity and peace of this Church; to uphold its doctrine, worship, government and discipline; and to take your due part in the administration of its affairs?” (The Eldership Promise)

What does that mean?

Every elder is expected to:

- Attend worship regularly
- Remember the work of the church in their own prayers
- Give sacrificially of their time, talent and money
- Attend Kirk Session meetings and workgroups
- Work in partnership with the minister and the other elders

Individual elders might use their gifts in:

- Pastoral Care
- Practical Tasks
- Developing forms of Worship
- Administration
- Outreach
- Education

What is the time commitment?

Your personal circumstances will dictate how much time you can offer, but, Kirk Session meetings usually last about 1½ hours. There is an expectation that you will commit time to using your gifts to enrich the life of the Church. This individual and personal commitment should be discussed with your minister.

Where do I start?

Kirk Session Meetings

- Pray for the eldership of the High Kirk regularly
- Don't form cliques with elders you know already
- Enjoy getting to know elders you don't know so well (why not invite them for coffee, meals, etc?)
- Spend time building relationships of trust
- Honour long-serving elders by listening to their experiences
- Spend time getting to know the history of the High Kirk (understand the congregation and avoid pushing your own agenda)
- Learn to let go of church baggage (When we come from a different church background we may be tempted to turn our present church into the one that we left.)
- Learn to “wait” on visions and dreams that God has given you (“though the vision tarry, wait for it” - Hab.2:3); don't become frustrated when others don't seem to respond to your ideas. If the vision is from God, it will surely come to pass)
- Learn to listen to the Holy Spirit (“Quick to listen, slow to speak”)

Spiritual Oversight

You will be asked to give pastoral care to a designated district of church members (and regular attenders). Giving pastoral care may involve:

- Regular visits (at least 4 times a year)
- Write or phone (asking after their health)
- Send cards at significant occasions
- Giving invitations for coffee, meals, etc
- Inform minister of any needs (a visit from the minister, hospital visit, etc)

Regular Tasks

Never regard practical tasks as “mundane” or “unspiritual”, but do them “as unto the Lord” with a servant spirit:

- Help on door duty (welcoming people to church)
- Welcome new people (inviting them to different events, courses, housegroups, etc)
- Help with practical tasks (taking and counting the collection, offering people transport to church, etc)
- Serve at the Lord's Table at Communion time
- If you see or hear of a task needing done (don't wait to be asked) offer your help!
- Attend spiritual growth courses such as Alpha, Freedom in Christ, etc. (if elders show little interest in developing spiritually, this will be evident in the spiritual life of the congregation. So please set a good example!)

Help I'm a new Elder!

What Help do I get?

- God promises to help you fulfil your role and thus grow in faith through involvement and service
- If you are able, why not go along to the prayer meeting on a Friday night?
- Elders whom you know can share their wisdom and experience
- Eldership workshops and conferences are available locally and nationally
- Videos, booklets and other great resources are available from the church
- Downloadable resources: www.churchofscotland.org.uk

A Prayer For Elders:

*Grant them the gift of your Holy Spirit,
that their hearts may be set on fire
with love for you
and for those committed to their care.
Make them pure in heart
as those who have the mind of Christ.
Give them vision to discern your purpose
for the Church and for the world you love.
Keep them faithful to the end in all their service,
that, when the chief shepherd appears,
they may receive glory,
a crown that never fades.*

USEFUL RESOURCES	
Eldership Training Seminars (video format with David Searle, Rutherford House)	Caring For God's People (video & book format from the Church of Scotland)
Spiritual Leadership (J Oswald Saunders)	*Rediscovering Church (Lynne & Bill Hybels)
Whatever Happened to Worship (A W Tozer)	*Purpose Driven Church (Rick Warren)
Tozer on Christian Leadership (Ron Eggert)	*Courageous Leadership (Bill Hybels)
Power through Prayer (E M Bounds)	Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire (Jim Cymbala)
Why Revival Tarries (Leonard Ravenhill)	Spurgeon on Leadership (Larry J Michael)

*Although we do not support the "Market-driven" and "consumer-centred" ethos in these books, we would suggest that there is still some good practical material here.

Church Government

The Scotland is the largest of the Presbyterian denominations in Scotland. In the Presbyterian structure of church government, authority is vested in church courts, as distinct from an Episcopal hierarchy of bishops and archbishops. At the level of the congregation the court is the Kirk Session; the next court is the Presbytery and finally the General Assembly, the supreme court. The chairperson of each court is known as the Moderator.

The Kirk Session:

The Kirk Session consists of the parish minister and a number of specially selected men and women, ordained as elders, who are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the parishioners and the organisation of the local congregation. Elders have a pastoral responsibility for members of the congregation within their districts and share with the minister in the celebration of Holy Communion. Elders may also be called on to serve in the higher Courts and Committees of the Church. (Many congregations also have Financial Boards, known variously as Congregational Boards, Deacons' Courts and Committees of Management, with responsibility for the financial affairs of the congregation.)

The Presbytery:

The next court is the Presbytery, which is responsible for a geographical area made up of a number of parishes. It consists of all ministers within the area entitled to membership of Presbytery plus a number of elders, there being at least one for every congregation. Members of the Diaconate in certain posts are also members of Presbytery. This court has wide powers of oversight and ensures that the Word of God is purely preached within its area, the Sacraments administered and Church business conducted according to procedures determined by the General Assembly.

The General Assembly:

The Supreme Court is the General Assembly which meets in Edinburgh in May every year and consists of approximately one quarter of the ministers of the Church plus an equal number of elders, together with some members of the Diaconate, all "commissioned" by Presbyteries, amounting to some 1,200 commissioners not "delegates".

What is an Elder?

The term "elder" is used throughout the Bible, occurring some 200 times, to denote one in a leadership position whether at home, in the community, or an ecclesiastical assembly. An elder is generally seen as one who is mature, both in age and wisdom.

In the Old Testament:

We find this word first used in Genesis 50:7 where it refers to senior members of Joseph's household as well as officials from Egypt who attended Jacob's funeral in Canaan. Here, "**elder**" appears more as a title rather than an indicator of age. When God had an important message for the Hebrew people, the "**elders of the people**" were called to hear it from Moses (Ex. 3:16). It is later used specifically of the men chosen by Moses to help judge the Hebrew people. Moses selected godly men to help judge the people for the load was too great for one man (Ex. 18:25). The elders spoke for the people and received commands from God through Moses on behalf of the people (Ex. 19:7-8). The elders also commanded the people of God concerning God's will, along with Moses (Deut 27:1).

Elders were looked up to as pillars of the community. As such, they are subject to greater accountability with God. Their actions could lead a great number of people astray (Isa 3:14-15). Rather than leading people astray, elders were to remind us of God's past accomplishments in the lives of His people (Deut 32:7). Their faith was an inspiration to the people, a good testimony (Heb. 11:1-2) of their trust in God and His faithfulness.

In the New Testament:

The New Testament speaks of elders being appointed in every church through specific ordination (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). In this case, they were appointed to their positions by Paul and Barnabas who fasted and prayed about the decision. Paul commanded Titus to "**set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you**" (Titus 1:5, NKJV). Elders, then, are to bring order to the church through godly leadership. They shepherd the church as overseers (1 Pet. 5:1-4), appoint others to leadership positions in the church (1 Tim. 4:14), settle doctrinal questions and issue authoritative orders for the church body (Acts 15:2-6; 16:4), and pray for those who are sick in the church (James 5:14-16).

Churches use differing terminology in regard to the leadership in their respective congregations. The different terms used in Scripture of those in lead ministerial positions are:

- **Episkopos:** The Greek word "episkopos" in 1 Tim. 3:1 is translated "bishop" (KJV/NKJV), "overseer" (NAS/NIV), "elder" (NLT), and "pastor" (TLB).
- **Presbuteros:** The Greek word "presbuteros" in Titus 1:5 is translated "elders" (KJV/NKJV/NIV/NLT) and "pastors" (TLB).
- **Diakonous:** This Greek word is translated "deacon" in 1 Tim. 3:8 and is used of a subordinate office to the bishop/overseer.

Effective Kirk Session Meetings

Format of the Kirk Session

- ♦ **Begin with Praise:** Singing together enhances prayer and praise. Singing together is a uniquely inspiring form of praise and prayer to God. Singing unites and focuses the Kirk Session spiritually and expresses the Spirit's presence and control (Eph. 5:18,19).
- ♦ **Prayer Time:** The first church eldership stated its priorities in these terms, "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:5). Prayer is not a formality for opening and closing a meeting; it is an essential part of the work, the special calling for all who lead God's people. Prayer should, therefore, be a significant part of all elder's meetings.
- ♦ **Ministry of the Word:** It is important for the Kirk Session to devote themselves to the Word of God. The minister (or an appointed elder) will share from a passage of scripture, applying it practically to the life of the elders.
- ♦ **Reading and Approval of the Minutes:** Approving of the minutes provides formal accountability to the Kirk Session.
- ♦ **The Main Agenda:** The main agenda is for the receiving of group reports, comments, questions and other correspondence. It is important that all reports are presented in writing to the Church Secretary at least 4 days before the session meeting. This allows the Church Secretary to make minutes and reports available on the Sunday before the Kirk Session meeting. Issues for the agenda that demand lengthy discussions should be dealt with on a separate night approved by the Kirk Session.

Conduct at the Kirk Session

- ♦ **Learn to speak gently, calmly, graciously and tactfully:** "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov.15:1).
- ♦ **Learn to communicate well:** Lecturing and preaching, withdrawing or giving "the silent treatment," being self-centred, and being argumentative or patronizing all destroy good communication.
- ♦ **Learn to listen patiently:** "Effective leadership has more to do with listening than with talking!" Being a good listener will enhance your pastoral care and improve your meeting participation.
- ♦ **Learn to deal with complaints and questions sensitively:** When dealing with complaints, we must never take sides. When members have been hurt through Kirk Session decisions, we must show compassion and care, and not add fuel to the fire.

The Character & Chemistry of the Elder

The Character of the Elder

- ◆ **Gentle:** forbearing, patient, graciously amenable, yielding wherever yielding is possible
- ◆ **Temperate:** self-controlled, balanced in judgment, free from debilitating excesses or rash behaviour
- ◆ **Sensible:** sound-minded, discreet, able to keep an objective perspective in the face of problems and disagreements
- ◆ **Not pugnacious:** not a fighter, bad-tempered, or irritable
- ◆ **Not a new convert:** not someone who is inexperienced or spiritually immature
- ◆ **Peaceable:** not quarrelsome
- ◆ **Not self-willed:** not arrogant and inconsiderate of others' opinions, feelings, or desires
- ◆ **Not quick-tempered:** not a "hothead" or an angry person
- ◆ **Just:** a law-abiding person of principal
- ◆ **Not domineering or authoritarian:** willing to listen and yield to others
- ◆ **Sound in doctrine:** Protect the church from false teaching

The Chemistry of the Elder

- ◆ **Be an Active, Responsible Participant:** Be a problem solver, not a problem; don't be an out-of-meeting complainer, state your frustrations during the meeting.
- ◆ **Be a Faithful Attender:** Invest your time and energy into making the Kirk Session meetings a success. Pray and Prepare in advance.
- ◆ **Be a Peacemaker and Unity Builder:** Disunity confuses, disheartens, and weakens the effectiveness of the Kirk Session. If it is persistent, disunity can be destructive to the church also.
- ◆ **Be a Person of Integrity, not a Manipulator:** we must speak the truth openly, and not allowing an atmosphere of worry over hidden agendas, backroom politicking, or destructive backbiting.
- ◆ **Be Fair; Refrain from Making Judgments without the Facts:** The Bible says, "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him" (Prov.18:13). Never make judgments without the facts!
- ◆ **Be Trustworthy with Confidential Information:** an elder is in a position of trust. To betray confidentiality can ruin an elder's reputation and discredit the whole leadership.
- ◆ **Be Self-Controlled, Not Angry:** Never use the Kirk Session meeting as a platform to vent your anger and frustrations! It should never be used as a pulpit to preach your pet subject. It is the immature Christian who justifies their hot temper as "righteous anger".

Interestingly, the terms "**elder**" (presbuteros) and "**bishop**" (episkopos) are used interchangeably (Titus 1:5,7). In 1 Peter 5:1-5, Peter exhorts the "**elders**" and even calls himself a "**fellow elder**" (v1). He then commands them to "**shepherd the flock**" (v2) by serving as "**overseers**" (v2). The elders/shepherds/overseers had people entrusted to their ministry (v3) including younger people who were to submit to their leadership (v5). Scripture, then, does not distinguish between these terms as different roles or offices in the church. One may view "elder" as emphasizing the quality of maturity and respect while "bishop" emphasizes the actual role of leading God's flock (*Thomas, Earle, Hiebert. The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1,2 Thessalonians/1,2 Timothy/Titus. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI. Copyright 1996. p. 204.*).

The position of elder holds a position of great responsibility but also of great honour. Scripture clearly teaches that the people of God are to honour the elders of the church:

- Elders who discharge their duties well are to be accorded double the honour of the average church member (1 Tim 5:17-18).
- Elders who minister the word and doctrinal guidelines should be accorded special honour in the church (1 Tim 5:17-18).
- One who serves as a teaching elder should be rewarded monetarily as is appropriate for "**The labourer is worthy of his wages**" (1 Tim 5:17-18, NKJV).

Elders, because of their key position in the church, should not be accused unfairly or frivolously. An accusation should not even be received unless two or three gather to accuse and the ones who accuse are witnesses of the offence (1 Tim 5:19).

Several other references to elders in the New Testament are worth noting. The religious leaders in the Jewish community were referred to as "**elders**" (Matt. 15:2; Mark 14:53; Acts 4:5). In reference to older men in general, Paul commands that they are not to be rebuked but treated with gentleness and respect as one would treat one's own father (1 Tim. 5:1; Titus 2:2). Older women are to be treated with this same gentleness and respect as one would treat one's own mother (1 Tim. 5:2; Titus 2:3).

Clearly the aged members of our family, community, and churches are to be shown the utmost of respect. The context of these references does not suggest that any aged person is an officer in the church, but only those that are qualified (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9) and are willing to serve (1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2). The final reference to an elder appears in Revelation 4:4 where twenty-four elders sit before the throne of God in Heaven. Whether this is interpreted literally or figuratively, it points to a position of great responsibility and honour.

The Duties of an Elder

Question: "What are the duties of an elder in the church?"

Answer: The Bible spells out at least five duties and obligations of an elder:

1) The elders help to settle disputes in the church. "While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the Christians "Unless you keep the ancient Jewish custom of circumcision taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas, disagreeing with them, argued forcefully and at length. Finally, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question" (Acts 15:1-2, NLT). The question was raised and forcefully argued, then taken to the apostles and elders for a decision. Therefore they are Decision makers.

2) They pray for the sick. "Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. And their prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make them well. And anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15, NLT). Elders ought to be godly examples to others. When we repent of our sins on a daily basis, we may then be used in praying for the sick. One of the necessities in prayer is praying for the Lord's will to be done and they are expected to do this.

3) They are to watch out for the church in humility. "And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share his glory and his honour when he returns. As a fellow elder, this is my appeal to you: Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example. And when the head Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never-ending share in his glory and honour" (1 Pet. 5:1-4, NLT). Elders are the designated leaders of the church and the flock is entrusted to them by God. They are not to do it for the pay or the reward but because of desire.

4) They are to watch out for the spiritual life of the flock. "Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit" (Heb. 13:17, NLT) This verse does not specifically say elders but it is talking about the church leaders. They are accountable for the spiritual life of the church.

The Conduct of the Elder

Conduct yourself with a Christ-like attitude

Philippians 2:5 provides a foundation for which the character of an elder is built: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Christ's attitude of humility and self-sacrifice should permeate every Kirk Session meeting and shape the attitude of every participant.

As elders we need to be keenly aware that each participant's attitude and behaviour affect the quality of a meeting. There are right and wrong ways to talk to one another, disagree with one another, reason with one another, press one another for change, and persuade. Sinful attitudes produce unpleasant meetings; godly attitudes produce joyous meetings. The spirit of our meetings should be one of humbly washing one another's feet (John 13:12-15), not chopping off one another's heads!

Conduct yourself with Christ-like love

Without love, elders at best merely tolerate one another; at worst, they sabotage each other. Love helps us overcome our fears of one another's differences, understand one another better, disagree with grace, be less defensive and more open to others' ideas, listen better, cooperate more, take more risks, fight less, and forgive the hurts we all unintentionally inflict on one another in the course of intense interaction. In the uncomfortable heat of human conflict, only "love" covers (1 Peter 4:8).

Conduct yourself as a Christ-like Servant

In what has been called the "great reversal", Jesus Christ taught servant leadership and modelled it for His disciples: "I am among you as the one who serves" (Luke 22:27a). Jesus taught that leaders are to serve one another, to act humbly toward one another, and to live in loving brotherly community. In Christ's community, true greatness is based on "service".

Servant leadership affects not only the way elders relate to the members of the congregation, but the way elders treat one another when making decisions and discussing disagreeable subjects. They are to relate to one another as family, as servants, and with a humble spirit. They are not to play power-control games or use manipulative tactics. "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor.4:5).

The Church of Scotland acknowledges the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the supreme rule of faith and life.

In view of this Declaration you are now required to answer this question:

Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith: do you seek the unity and peace of this Church, to uphold the doctrine, worship, government and discipline thereof: and to take your due part in the administration of its affairs?

I Do!

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, I now declare you to have been ordained to the office of the Eldership, and I admit you to office in this Congregation and Parish; and I commend you to the grace of God in the discharge of all your duties.”

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, rest upon you and abide with you always. Amen.

What do we believe?

- **We believe** the Bible is the Word of God, and believe its message is true and relevant for daily life.
- **We believe** in the ONE true God as revealed in the Bible, a God in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- **We believe** that we were created to be in a perfect relationship with God.
- **We believe** everybody is guilty of sin whether intentionally done or not. Sin destroys our relationship with God.
- **We believe** Jesus died on the cross in our place so that our sins might be forgiven and our relationship with God restored. (This relationship is also known as "eternal life.")
- **We believe** the gift of eternal life cannot be earned or deserved in any way. It is a free gift from God through believing and trusting in His Son Jesus Christ.
- **We believe** the result of trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life is peace with God.
- **We believe** in the astonishing claim that Jesus, who died on the cross, is risen and alive.
- **We believe** the Holy Spirit was sent to this world to convince us of the truth. He also comes to live powerfully within us, to change us, and to help us grow in our relationship with God.
- **We believe** that Jesus is coming back AGAIN.

(Stevenston High Kirk is an evangelical church in the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions. A fuller statement of our beliefs as a church can be found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Shorter & Larger Catechisms, the Apostle's and the Nicene Creeds.)

5) They are to spend their time in praying and teaching the word. "So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. 'We apostles should spend our time preaching and teaching the word of God, not administering a food program,' they said. 'Now look around among yourselves, brothers, and select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this business. Then we can spend our time in prayer and preaching and teaching the word'" (Acts 6:2-4, NLT). From this verse you can see the difference between the elder and the deacon. The deacon was responsible for the practical ministry while the elders were released into the spiritual ministry of praying and teaching the word.

Simply put, the Elders should be peace makers, prayer warriors, teachers, leaders by example, and decision makers. They are the preaching and teaching leaders of the church. It is a position to be sought but not taken lightly; read this warning "Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged by God with greater strictness" (James 3:1, NLT). The role of elder is not a position to be taken lightly.

Duties & Responsibilities:

- The main duty of an Elder is to assist the Moderator (our Minister) in the development of the Spiritual life of his/her district.
- All Elders must play their part in dealing with Church business, both spiritual and temporal through the Leadership meetings.
- An Elder must know the people in his/her district and be responsible for their Pastoral Care. The Moderator should be informed of any special pastoral concerns and other requirements, such as Home Communion.
- Each district has its own Elder and a Partner Elder. The Partner Elder is responsible for helping the District Elder carry out his/her duties in emergencies, e.g. illness.
- All Elders have the privilege of dispensing the Elements at Holy Communion, plus normal door and collection duties. All of these are well documented in the appropriate rotas.
- Each Elder is required to attend every Leadership meeting. Any Elder unable to attend a meeting is asked to submit an apology to the Session Clerk.
- All designated Elders should visit organisations twice during the Session: once before Christmas and again in the New Year.

Expectations of the Eldership

Extracted from “The Office of Elder in the Church of Scotland”... a brief statement prepared by the Panel of Doctrine.

The Nature of the Office

The Eldership is a spiritual office in the Church, concerned with the rule and pastoral oversight of the congregation. It is distinct from, though closely associated with, the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.

It is therefore expected that... you will remain a spiritual person, rooted in Christ the true vine, and that you will take every step to nurture your spiritual growth, thereby caring for your faith and your calling.

Also from “The Office of Elder in the Church of Scotland”:
An Elder should –

- be an example to others and should encourage them in the Christian life.
- Strive always to be a devout and well-informed Christian.
- Take part in public worship regularly.
- Be diligent in performing duties allotted to him/her in public worship.
- Be faithful in taking his/her place at Kirk Session meetings.

It is therefore expected that an Elder in this congregation will do his/her best to meet the following commitments:

- To be at worship on Sunday morning unless working, ill, or out of town (duties of necessity and mercy).
- To be regular in attendance at our Leadership (Session) meetings and to send an apology if absent.
- To share in the work of the Leadership Team (Kirk Session).
- To recognize and support the Leadership’s positive role in promoting the Christian good of the congregation and parish.
- To carry out all duties as per rota.
- To share in the Communion duties.
- To care for his/her district:
 - ⇒ by regular visits into each home
 - ⇒ by praying regularly for the members of the district by name
 - ⇒ by sharing any difficulties with the Minister
 - ⇒ by sharing with the Minister in cases of extra need, for example where there is bereavement, illness or a baptism.

The Role and Appointment of Elders

In the Presbyterian Church the team of Elders are formed into a committee known as the Kirk Session. The role of the Kirk Session is to protect and oversee our church. According to the New Testament, the elders are involved in six oversight functions:

- Manage or oversee the church.
- Shepherd the church.
- Teach and exhort.
- Refute those who contradict truth.
- Pray for the church.
- Set a godly example.

So, how do we choose Elders? Elders are chosen in a very similar way that staff, small group leaders, ministry team leaders, and other volunteers in our church are chosen. We base our selection on three Cs:

- **Competency** – Are they competent in the areas of their giftedness, are they wise, are they discerning, are they able to influence?
- **Character** – Do they exhibit integrity, authenticity, honesty, truthfulness, fruit of the Spirit, a teachable spirit?
- **Chemistry** – Does their personality, giftedness, and demeanour mesh with the existing team, are they a team player, do they bring something needed to the team?

The Elder’s Ordination

Before the ordination of an Elder the Minister must read the following preamble which summarises the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church we meet here today to perform the act of Ordination (and/or Admission) into the office of Eldership and into that office in this congregation.

In this act of Ordination and Admission, the Church of Scotland, as part of the Holy, Catholic or Universal Church, worshipping one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – affirms yet again its belief in the Gospel of Sovereign Grace and the love of God, and through Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen, He freely offers to everyone, upon repentance and faith, the forgiveness of sins, renewal by the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, and calls them to labour in the fellowship of faith for the advancement of the kingdom of God throughout the world.