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| They must not be inclined to get drunk. | Again self control and restraint is highlighted. |
| They must not be violent but must be gentle. | They must be gracious, kindly, forbearing and considerate to others and their family. |
| They must not be quarrelsome. | Not inclined to be contentious and be willing to avoid heated arguments |
| They must not love money. | They should be content in everything. |
| They must manage their family well. | What an Elder does within the family shows what can be done with the church family. |
| They must be rooted in the Faith and not be a recent convert. | This prevents an Elder becoming proud because of the position held. |
| They must have a good reputation with those outside of the church family. | The reputation of the local church is important and the Christian witness in the local community has to be guarded by its leaders. |

As well as these characteristics, the Approved Governing Document of Ross Baptist Church requires its Elders to be members of the church, and baptised believers in the manner described in the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle. The manner of baptism described is ‘by immersion in water, into the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.’

‘Fundamental to all Christian leadership and ministry is a humble, personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, devotion to time expressed in daily prayer, and love for him expressed in daily obedience. Without this, Christian ministry is impossible. In addition to this, being Christ’s subordinates, we are accountable to him for our service, for he is our Lord and our judge. This fact brings both comfort and challenge.’ (John Stott, “Calling Christian Leaders” IVP 2002).

If, after reading these guidance notes, you are interested in progressing becoming an Elder of Ross Baptist Church, or have any further questions or comments, please speak to Gordon or one of the Elders. The process of becoming an Elder will involve being nominated and seconded by church members, an interview by a selection team, and an election, whereby the church members will seek God’s guidance, and vote in accordance with the church Approved Governing Document.



Guidelines about Eldership at Ross Baptist Church

This leaflet is designed to help those who may be thinking about Eldership at Ross Baptist Church. It is also essential for those who are on the Selection Team and who are called to consider nominees for Eldership from a Scriptural basis.

Some background information.

Featuring from time to time in the Old Testament, Elders were hallmarked as being filled with the Spirit of God, willing to listen, showing wisdom, displaying accessibility and governing justly and well. In the majority of cases they earned the respect, obedience and loyalty of those who were under their care and leadership. (An example can be found in Numbers 11 verses 16 & 17).

It is, therefore, not surprising to see a similar model of leadership being ‘birthed’ in the early New Testament Church. In Acts 6 we first encounter people who were full of the Spirit, wisdom, and the power of God, being set aside for specific purposes of service in the local church. These same individuals displayed the fruits of the Spirit exemplified in Galatians 5 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control).

The early church used at least four words to define what we now describe as an Elder. Basically these words describe one who has experience through maturity, one who has the responsibility of overseeing, one who shepherds and protects, and one who is a steward.

A reading of 1 Timothy 3 verses 1-16 or Titus 1 verse 5, will show that God intends his church to have pastors and pastoral leaders. However the word pastor is interpreted, the basic conviction has persisted that some kind of pastoral oversight is God’s will for his people. This principle is mirrored in Acts 14 verse 23, where Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, **and appointed elders in each church.** So as to avoid a ‘Pauline’ bias, we see the same principle of elders outlined again in 1 Peter 5 verses 1-4.

It is important that this structure is not seen as a purely human arrangement. It was the ascended Christ who gave some to his church, ‘... to be pastors and teachers.’ (Ephesians 4 verse 11), and it is the Holy Spirit who still assigns ‘overseers’ to God’s flock (Acts 20 verse 28).

How are Elders described?

- They are servants of Christ. (1 Corinthians 4 verse 1(a)).
- They are stewards of God’s revelation (1 Corinthians 4 verse 1(b)). - They are teachers.
- They are shepherds of the flock. - They must protect, lead, care, encourage, feed, provide, shelter, heal, restore and lead. (Acts 20 verse 29, Ephesians 4 verse 11, 1 Peter 5 verses 1-4).
- They are examples. (1 Timothy 4 verse 12 & 1 Peter 5 verse 3).
- They are faith defenders. (Acts 20 verse 28 & Titus 1 verse 9).
- They set their heart on service to the local church. (1 Timothy 3 verse 1).

- They are prayer warriors. (Multiple examples in the New Testament).
- They are to be used by God in the process of healing. (James 5 verse 14).
- They have the ability to guide and direct, both corporately and individually. (Acts 21 verses 18-25).
- They are accountable to God for what they do. (Hebrews 13 verse 17).
- They are able to give with selfless care and sacrificial love. (1 Peter 5 verses 2 & 3).
- They are people with vision. (Ephesians 4 verse 13)
- They are able to recognise and encourage the use of gifts in others. (Ephesians 4 verse 13)
- They are driven by the love of Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5 verse 14)

This list is not a complete one, but it is formidable, and without the power of the Holy Spirit, it is hard to imagine anyone feeling capable of exercising such a weight of responsibility.

Corporately, the unity and spiritual growth of the Church is of paramount importance, and this is a prime responsibility of the Eldership body. Paul suggests in Ephesians 4 verses 11 to 13, that the leadership body shares between them the apostolic gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. By so doing they will be strong in ‘preparing God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.’

What are the characteristics of an Elder?

The main scriptures that point us to this subject are 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5.

In summary the main points are:-

They must be above reproach.

To be so dictates a close relationship with God which shows itself in goodness, holiness and humility.

They must be faithful in marriage.

They must be beyond reproach in relationships with the opposite sex.

They must be temperate, self controlled, respectable.

Personal self discipline is highlighted. There must be the ability to exhibit restraint and act honourably.

They must be hospitable.

They must love strangers. They must be generous in the use of property, time, home and money.

They must be able to teach.

“Not merely a readiness to teach, but the spiritual power to do so as the outcome of prayerful meditation of the Word of God, and the practical application of its truth to oneself.” (W E Vine).