

Ruling Elder Ministry Description

Appointed by the Holy Spirit and called by the congregation, a Ruling Elder is ordained as an elder, overseer and shepherd to serve under the authority of Jesus Christ on Greenwood's Elder board (Session) and in the Presbytery of the West of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The primary ministry of an elder is spiritual leadership, watching over the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

Qualifications to Serve as an Elder (in addition to EPC Book of Order G10-4, 5 and 6):

The most specific biblical criteria for elders and deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. We may summarize all the requirements under the heading of a life joyfully submitted to the Lord's authority (Word) and power (Spirit). Essentially every attribute or character quality mentioned in these two chapters is taught or modeled elsewhere in Scripture. For instance, we could also say that the character qualities required of elders and deacons is reflected in a life "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Having said this, we may identify the following criteria:

1. They are humble, teachable people, who have demonstrated a willingness to submit to biblical authority.
2. Their character is above reproach, consistently demonstrating the "fruit of the Spirit" – "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Paul specifically mentions that they be hospitable and not quick-tempered or quarrelsome.
3. They have demonstrated faithfulness in their marriage covenant or celibacy in singleness.
4. They have demonstrated spiritual leadership beginning in their family – they are seeking to lead others into God's purposes in God's ways.
5. They are rooted in sound, biblical orthodoxy and able to teach others.
6. They are faithful and generous with God's money and give to Greenwood.
7. They are not a new convert subject to the temptation of pride.
8. They have a good reputation inside and outside the church.

Responsibilities of an Elder:

The Session consists of the Ruling Elders along with the Teaching Elder(s). The Ruling Elders are each elected for three-year terms. An elder is called to spiritual leadership rather than merely serving as a decision-maker in a corporate body. Spiritual leadership is the process of leading others into God's fullness for them under the authority of God's Word in the power of His Spirit. Specifically, elders give themselves to five priorities:

1. Disciple-makers - The elders are called to engage in discipling relationships with others in various relational contexts such as one on one, small groups etc. according to our mission, vision, and values.
2. Discernment – The Elders have the primary responsibility of discerning the Lord's will for Greenwood and leading the congregation to obey it. The kinds of decisions requiring Elder

discernment are those that define the fundamental character, direction and future of the church such as vision, mission and key personnel.

3. Doctrine – The Elders are responsible for making sure that what is taught at all levels in the Church is consistent with historic, orthodox Christianity and Reformed Theology.
4. Devoted to Prayer and Giving – The Elders are called to intercede for the congregation and to pray in different ways and situations as needs and opportunities arise. Elders are called to give generously in obedience to Jesus' instructions.
5. Discipline – The Elders are called to exercise compassionate, redemptive church discipline in appropriate pastoral situations.

Session Terms:

Once elected, Elders serve on the Session for a three-year term with the option of serving an additional three-year term. If an elder serves two consecutive three-year terms, they must take one year off before being eligible for service again on the Session. Faithful and prayerful preparation, attendance and participation by every Elder is essential for the Session to fulfill its responsibilities.

Expectations of Elders:

Currently the Session meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month. The 1st Thursday is for formation and prayer (6-7:30 pm) and the 3rd Thursday for dinner and business (6:00-9:00 p.m.). Elders are expected and trained to serve the sacrament of communion; serve as prayer ministers; and possibly as ushers during communion.

There are currently three Session teams: Strategic Leadership, Finance, and Personnel. These teams vary in the frequency of their meetings. Each elder is expected to serve on one of these teams.

Annually, a retreat is held over one weekend in the Fall for elders, staff, and spouses (paid by GCC). A Session only retreat is held in April every year.

On the average Elders will give about 6-8 hours per month in serving. In some cases, the time commitment may be more, depending upon the needs of the Church.

In addition, an Elder should practice regular rhythms of abiding with Jesus and ideally have at least one person or a small group of people they are discipling. It is a commitment of each person to serve the Lord, to serve the church, and to support the other Elders with whom they serve. To do this one must be available for the responsibilities as outlined above, one must commit to regular prayer and be willing to serve where and how the Lord leads.