
ELDERS THAT RULE WELL

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The Nature, Duties, and
Rewards of the Office
of Ruling Elder in the
Presbyterian Church

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Why This Booklet Was Written.

"Of the Ruling Elder."

"Of the Church Session."

The Ruling Elder

According to the Bible

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

He that ruleth, with diligence.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

For this cause left I thee [Titus] in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given

to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor.

Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister [servant]: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

—The Bible: Acts 20:28; Romans 12:8; I Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4; I Timothy 5:17; Mark 10:42-45.

Elders That Rule Well

I. THE NATURE OF THE OFFICE

Where did this office come from? How does a man come to be a ruling elder? It is not enough to say that he is elected by the church of which he is a member, and that he is ordained by his church session. The truth goes deeper.

1. Appointed by God. Paul reminded the elders of Ephesus that they had been appointed over the church by the Holy Ghost. The church was the church of God, and they were the elders of God's own choice and appointment. What was true of the elders who met Paul at Miletus is equally true of elders today. It humbles a man and also steadies him, if he can realize that he is chosen and appointed by Almighty God to serve a church which is God's church. He may be thrilled if he can realize also that the resources of God are his to use in this service: the love of God, the patience of God, the wisdom of God, the zeal of God—these and all other resources of God are at his disposal, and he needs them if he is to rule well.

2. Elected by the People. But it is no less true that ruling elders are elected by the people. The people are God's agents. Through their votes God expresses His choice and calls men to serve as ruling elders. This call is also

expressed to the man himself through a definite conviction of duty. If, then, the people are God's agents in the important matter of selecting ruling elders, how careful and serious and conscientious the people should be! Such reasons for voting as popularity or wealth or prestige or family connection look very small and thin in the sight of God. The people must needs be taught and must rigidly hold themselves bound to look at these things as God looks at them, and God's views are clearly set forth in the passages quoted from the Bible under the heading, "The Ruling Elder," at the beginning of this booklet.

And when the ruling elder has been elected by the people and has the conviction that it is his duty to serve, he is solemnly set apart publicly through ordination by his fellow elders, who act jointly as the agents of the people and the agents of God.

3. Ruling. Jesus said that the common idea of ruling was in His day just the opposite of His idea. He cautioned the disciples about this and taught them clearly that ruling was serving. So today in the church we follow Jesus' idea of ruling. A church office is a church trust. A church officer is a church servant. One who rules well is one who serves well. He grows as a ruler just as he grows as a servant, and becomes great as a ruler when he can serve a great number of people and serve them greatly. Jesus is our ruler. The elder who would rule well should look to Jesus

for his ideal. What Jesus did, the elder is to do, so far as is humanly possible. As Jesus did, so the elder is to do. Thus will he become an elder that rules well. So he becomes a provider, protector, restrainer, teacher, guide, example, to the people of his church. All this and much more is meant by ruling as used of the elder.

4. Names. The Bible is instructive in the words it uses, and nowhere are these words more interesting and instructive than in the names by which this officer is called. Three words are used.

Presbyter or Elder. He is called a presbyter, and this Greek word is exactly translated elder. At first it referred to age or length of days, including all the wisdom and prudence and respect and common sense and piety and faith and character that should accompany age, and often do accompany age, but not always. But these qualities are often found in high degree in men who have not attained great age, and so an elder need not be a man of long life, but he must have these steady and dependable marks of fitness for service if he is what the Bible calls an elder.

Bishop or Overseer. He is also called a bishop, and this Greek word is accurately translated overseer. In the case of presbyter the Greek word has come over into the English and is freely used alongside of its translation, elder; but we rarely use overseer in referring to an elder, and even the word bishop, which is the Greek word come over into English with

slight change, is now used mostly with a different meaning. To call an elder a bishop is usually to imply that he is getting to be a sort of boss. But it is not to be forgotten that elders are bishops in the Bible meaning of bishop, and this word has much to teach about the nature of the office of elder. In truth it comes nearer to the meaning of the office than elder. Elder refers more particularly to the officer and his character and qualifications. Bishop refers to his work. The bishop is one who looks over the people and all that touches their life. He is the watchman. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." So we read in the Psalms with reference to God. In a real sense the elder or bishop represents God, and he must be like God. He must watch the people and he must watch the enemies of the people. The lions and bears and mad dogs of sin are at large seeking the destruction of God's people. It may also be implied in this word bishop that he who is a good bishop should not only see but also warn, and not only see and warn, but also run to the help of, and call others to the help of, those who are in danger, whether the danger arise from their own heedlessness or from someone who seeks to harm them. But it is well to keep close to the first meaning of the word and to realize that the Bible in calling this officer a bishop is telling him that he is to be a watcher, a looker; in other words, he is to be informed thoroughly about his people. He must know them by name and by nature, by occupation and

by circumstances, by families and by individuals, in successes and in failures, in weakness and in strength, in hopes and aims and temptations. He may not know the number of the hairs on their heads, but it would do him no harm if he did know. However, important as it is for him to know the people in the outer things of their lives, it is more important to know them in the inner things of their lives, to know their souls. There is nothing more tremendously significant than those things in the office of elder which are included in the meaning of the word bishop.

Shepherd or Pastor. He is called a shepherd. The word itself is not used of the elder, but he is told to do the work of a shepherd and Peter calls Christ the chief Shepherd in a passage clearly implying that elders are shepherds under Christ. It is hard for us to think into the word shepherd all it means. We are mostly ignorant of sheep and shepherds. Even when we do know sheep and shepherds, the conditions of sheep-growing and shepherd life and work in our country are so different from what they are in the lands where the Bible was written, that the shepherd we know may not be a shepherd at all in the Bible sense of the word. Shepherd is a great word in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. If we fix attention on one or two familiar passages, we need not be at any loss to understand the nature of the office of elder when he is called a shepherd. What God is in the Twenty-third Psalm, in all His love and protection and pains-

taking and providential care of His people, that the shepherd elder is to be in his relation to his people, so far as he can. And he is not to excuse himself from trying to do his duty because the ideal is so high. What Jesus is in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel and in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, as He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out, and meets the wolf and leaves the ninety and nine while He goes after the one that is lost, and even as He gives His life for the sheep—that the good shepherd elder is to be to his flock. A thinking man grows dizzy as he looks to the heights of this ideal, but a true man who allows himself to be put in the office of elder dare not let his gaze rest on any point short of these heights, nor can he be satisfied with any life short of a ceaseless struggle to attain them.

5. Limitation and Joint Rule. It is worth while, perhaps, to note that the ruling elder may not officially preach and pronounce the apostolic benediction and administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These individual functions belong to the teaching elder or minister.

It should also be carefully remembered that the office of ruling elder is a shared office and the authority of the office is a shared authority. There ought not to be any church with only one ruling elder, and when in the providence of God the number of ruling elders in any church is reduced to only one, the church should take steps to elect additional elders just as soon as

possible, and the sole elder should be exceedingly careful in executing the duties of his office lest he blunder into actions that he might have been saved from through the counsel and advice of fellow elders in the church session. The ruling elder is not an autocrat.

6. Summary. The office of ruling elder, then, is established by God in His own church, and through the election by the people and the ordination by the session God selects and appoints the men whom He would have to bear rule in His church. Elders rule in the sense of ruling as understood and taught by Christ, where the primary purpose is service, and where greatness is achieved through greatly helping the most people possible; the elder or presbyter is a man of character who by his common sense and faith in God and daily religious life wins the respect and confidence of the people in his own church and also of the people in his community; he is a bishop in the original meaning of the word and watches as one who is to give account of his work to God; he is a shepherd who takes heed to his flock with the Good Shepherd as his example, expecting some day to meet the Chief Shepherd unashamed; he studies to keep inside his own field of service and to work in harmony and mutual love and effort with his fellow elders in the church session; and he serves without pay, the "double honor" of which he who rules well is counted worthy being expressed in esteem and appreciation and not in money.

II. THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE

Naturally there is close relation between what a man is and what he does. And so what an office is determines what the officer who fills that office does. This holds true of the office of ruling elder. His duties may be put into three general classes: Those he owes to himself; those he owes to his people in the church where he is an elder; and those he owes to the Church at large.

A. Duties to Himself

Over the entrance to an ancient temple was the inscription, "Know Thyself." In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Polonius counselled Laertes, "This above all: to thine own self be true." The Apostle Paul by the Holy Ghost admonished Timothy, his son in the faith, "Study to show thyself approved unto God"; and likewise Paul urged the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed unto yourselves." This advice, so fundamentally needed as shown by the experience of the human race, and stamped with the full approval of God, is to be most carefully heeded by the ruling elder. The casting of votes by a church congregation cannot give him either brains or character. The laying on of hands and prayer on the part of his session cannot give him salvation or that love of men and women and little children which he needs if he is to rule well. God will not hand over to him such an experimental knowledge of the principles of the Bible as he must have if he

is to teach these principles to others. Presumably God has given him certain so-called natural endowments, and he must use these himself day by day. He cannot have the confidence and affection of his people unless he has lived and continues to live as their every-day friend. He cannot have a good name among all the people of his community, including those outside the church, unless he has lived before them a just and generous and upright and friendly life. He cannot know the Word of God so as to be apt to teach it, unless he has the living habit of laying that Word up in his heart and practicing it in his life. He cannot lay hold on the resources of God for use in his work as elder unless he has practiced the presence of God and regularly called on God in prayer. All this and much more is as true and simple as A B C. So there are duties of an elder to himself which he must have been performing before he is fit to be made an elder, and which he must continue to perform with increasing faithfulness to keep himself fit.

1. **The ruling elder owes it as a duty to himself to cultivate real religion.** Everybody knows the difference between real religion and unreal religion. Not everybody agrees about just what goes to make up real religion. But perhaps there would be more or less agreement on two things that ought to be in a religion entitled to be called real.

One is a reasonable measure of self-control. Note that it is said, "a reasonable measure."

No one is perfect in self-control, just as no one is perfect in other matters. But the man who has real religion ought to be able to say to himself, "You must not do these things because for various reasons I think they hinder my own religious life and my religious influence on my acquaintance"; and to say this so as to command his own attention and his own obedience. There is a more important side to self-control, however, than simply leaving undone the things that ought not to be done. A man with real religion ought to be able to say to himself, "You must do such and such things because I know they ought to be done"; and to say this so as to secure his own obedience. How often it is heard from this person or that, "I know I ought to do this, but . . .," and then various supposed reasons are given why a man excuses himself from doing what he admits to be his duty! The real trouble is lack of that self-control which would make him able to do what he knows he ought to do.

Another thing in real religion is an active zeal and interest in religious things. Religious work takes time. A man with real religion is willing and glad to spend some of his time in the doing of religious work. He will not say when asked to take part in this work, "I haven't time." The writer once knew a ruling elder who was always ready to give of his time to religious things. One day it came out incidentally in conversation that this man tithed his time, and in this way he had time to give.

Religious work takes brains. A man with real religion is willing to spend some of his brain power for God's work. Religious work takes money. A man with real religion is willing to give of his money to get the work done. Religious work takes prayer. A man with real religion is ready to wear holes in the knees of his breeches and to burn up some of his nervous energy for the work he knows is near to the heart of God.

2. The ruling elder owes it as a duty to himself to acquire and keep a good reputation in his community. He ought to be a man of dignity and prudence. He ought to be a man of business uprightness and integrity, just, straight, clean, open, fair in all business dealings and relationships, his word just as good as his bond. He ought to be generous enough so that all will know he is master of his possessions and money and not their servant. He ought to maintain family religion and rule his own household well, not as their boss with a big stick in his hand, but as their provider, protector, teacher, friend. He ought to be intelligently informed about his office as elder, about the Bible, about the Church and the work of the Church, about how God deals with the souls and consciences of men. He ought to know how to adapt himself to others so that he could say truthfully with the Apostle Paul: "For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain

Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof." (I Corinthians 9:19-23, A. S. V.)

B. Duties to His Own People

No attempt is made to give a complete list of these duties, and the things mentioned are principles rather than rules in detail. A real man wants to think out his own rules of action in accord with great principles of truth.

1. To inform himself about his people. He wants to know the facts and all the facts, so far as possible, about the life of his people and his community. If centers of evil are sapping the moral life of the community, the ruling elder ought to know it. If the civil authorities are trying to put down the forces of evil, the ruling elder ought to know it. He ought especially to know the conditions of life under which his own church people live—their problems, disappointments, hopes, fears, temptations, failures, successes. He ought particularly to know the people, and especially the children, by name.

2. To help his people. He is their teacher and he ought to teach. He is their guide and he ought to guide. He is their defender and he ought to defend. He is their friend and he ought to sympathize. He ought to visit and he ought to pray for his people and with them. He owes special duties to the sick and to the shut-in.

3. To maintain religious worship. He ought to see that the church property is adequate and well equipped for its purpose and comfortable and convenient. He ought to protect the church property against improper uses and see that it is available for all the proper uses to which it can be put. He ought to make provision for all the regular services of the church, and see that there are preachers and teachers and musicians and singers to do what is needed. He ought to be present at all the services, especially Sunday school and prayer meeting, unless God keeps him away.

4. To control the members of his church. He receives members into the church. He dismisses them to another church. He disciplines them when they need it, so far as he can by friendly conference and counsel and warning and pleading and prayer, and in some cases he deals with them jointly with the other elders. He should see that parents give their children the rights and privileges that are their due.

5. To care for the young people. If there is one duty more important than any other or perhaps than all others, it is this. Here are

the future church members, the future church officers. These young people are bundles of energy and they need to learn how to control it for wise uses. Who but the elders are responsible for this? Who is to speak a word calling attention to better education and to the ways of getting it, to the need for ministers and missionaries, and the qualifications necessary for those who go into this work? Who is to see that these young people are taught line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little? Who but God's own appointed man, the ruling elder? He can't do it all but he can work through others and see that it is done.

6. To promote church benevolence. The church needs a lot of money to do its work. This money must nearly all come from the free-will gifts of the people. If the work is to go on without hindrance there will be need of more and more money. If this money is to be forthcoming, the people of the church must not only multiply in number but must grow in the grace of giving. The ruling elder ought to lead in giving, and in informing the people and teaching them to give.

7. To connect pastor and people. The ruling elder stands in a special relation between pastor and people. He ought to refrain from criticizing the pastor. He ought to be the pastor's special friend. He should correct wrong impressions the people have and report to the pastor facts he needs to know. He ought to live what the

pastor preaches. Thus he reflects from the pastor to the people and reports from the people to the pastor. He should be first to know who are sick and who are asking the way of life, and should report these facts to the pastor. He should sense the need for a revival of religion and report the signs that determine the time to begin special effort. He is the pastor's counsellor and as such is an agent of God.

8. To be a shepherd to his people. This duty covers all that have been mentioned and more. Dr. Charles E. Jefferson, in his book *The Minister as a Shepherd*, analyzes the work of a shepherd into seven activities, as follows:

- (1) The shepherd watches the sheep.
- (2) The shepherd guards the sheep.
- (3) The shepherd guides the sheep.
- (4) The shepherd heals the sheep.
- (5) The shepherd rescues the sheep.
- (6) The shepherd feeds the sheep.
- (7) The shepherd loves the sheep.

Suppose we exchange words and see how this applies to the ruling elder:

- (1) The ruling elder watches the people.
- (2) The ruling elder guards the people.
- (3) The ruling elder guides the people.
- (4) The ruling elder heals the people.
- (5) The ruling elder rescues the people.
- (6) The ruling elder feeds the people.
- (7) The ruling elder loves the people.

So we may sum up all the duties of the

ruling elder in one; namely, to be a faithful shepherd to the flock over which God has appointed him.

Every church session might well include in its plans some definite form of training to inform newly elected elders and to incite all elders to strive for excellence in knowing and doing their duty.

C. Duties to the Church at Large

Each church session sends a ruling elder to the meetings of Presbytery and to the meetings of Synod. Presbytery sends ruling elders to the General Assembly. So it comes about that every ruling elder has duties to the church at large as well as to the people of his own congregation.

1. It is the duty of the ruling elder to inform himself about the things the Church believes and about the work the Church does and about the agencies through which the Church does its work. How else can he be an intelligent and faithful member of the Presbytery or Synod or General Assembly? A Church paper and the *Presbyterian Survey* should come regularly to his home and be carefully and systematically read by him. He should think through honestly and painstakingly the problems of the Church. He should pray earnestly for all the enterprises of the Church. And he should support the institutions of the Church.

2. It is the duty of the ruling elder to be a real

member of the church courts to which he is sent. He ought to go when he is appointed and not excuse himself and let some one member of the church session go practically every time as is the custom in some churches. He ought to be at the meeting on time and stay until it closes. He ought to be a real working member of any committee on which he is appointed. If this committee holds over between meetings of Presbytery or Synod or General Assembly he ought still to be a real member of the committee. He ought to cultivate the ability to work with others on committees and in church courts, respecting their motives and sincerity and at the same time speaking out his own opinions and convictions. To sum up, the ruling elder in his relation to the church courts of which he is made a member, is in duty and honor bound to be there, to stay there, to work, and to work with others.

3. It is the duty of the ruling elder to keep the purity of the Church and to defend the truth. This duty is in part discharged as a member of the church courts, but it does not stop there. Every ruling elder is bound as an individual to use his utmost effort to see that the Church is kept free from those opinions and practices that would spoil her purity. His life, his speech, his influence, and all that he is and can do must count toward this result. And he must stand up for the truth. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." What a splendid fact! But the truth

is often attacked and misrepresented and obscured. It is every man's duty to defend the truth, but this duty is especially binding on the ruling elder.

4. It is the duty of the ruling elder to extend the Kingdom of God throughout the whole earth. Here, too, the duty covers his work in the church courts and in his own congregation, but beyond these as a man and as an officer in the Church of God it is a binding duty of the ruling elder to see to it that God's rule in the world is increased and spread abroad as far and as fast as may be possible. It is not for him to sit by and bemoan the fact that men forget and ignore and disobey and defy God. It is his business to work hard to change these things. Jesus must be made King and the ruling elder must help to make Him King.

III. THE REWARDS OF THE OFFICE

It is worth notice that the Bible does not speak of the office of ruling elder as being a reward in itself. The people have no right to use this office to reward a man of whom they think well. The elders that rule well are to be counted worthy of double honor. The rewards of this office should and do come with and after work on the part of the ruling elder.

God is not afraid of rewards. The Bible is full of references to rewards. It is perfectly proper to think of the rewards that the ruling elder may surely count on as coming to him in

the faithful performance of the duties of his office.

1. There is the reward of being helpful to people. The opportunities of helpfulness in this office are numerous and great. And this helpfulness is in the deepest and highest things of life. God made man to be helpful to others and there is no other reward that surpasses the sense of satisfaction which comes to a man as he realizes that he has been helping people.

2. There is the reward of friendship. God has no finer gift than the gift of friendship. As the ruling elder goes about the duties of his office there comes to him the friendship of the people. They love him as God's servant and they love him for his own sake, if he is faithful and deserves their love, and he will deserve it if he rules well.

3. There is the reward of fellowship in service. The joy and satisfaction that come to a man as he serves with other men in a church session are great. And in the Presbytery, in the Synod, and in the General Assembly, this fellowship in service rises higher and higher and becomes more and more something to be prized. And when men have not only worked together in the fine service of man and God but have seen their work result in achievement, then comes supreme joy and satisfaction.

4. There is the reward of the companionship of Jesus. This is a real thing, though hard to

describe in words. "Lo, I am with you always." "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." These sure words of promise have been found true in the experience of many of God's people. None has proved their precious truth more than God's faithful servant, the elder that rules well. All who will obey the words of Jesus and do the service of Jesus may claim the companionship of Jesus all the days, and this is the crown of life on earth and a bit of heaven brought down among men. Ruling elder, covet earnestly this reward.

Why This Booklet Was Written

In a small church with no pastor and only one ruling elder, two more ruling elders were elected. They were good men with high respect for duty, but they needed to know. The minister who presided at their election felt a strong desire to show them something of the nature, the duties, and the rewards of the office of ruling elder. There was no time to talk with them. There was no printed matter in brief and clear form to put in their hands. So he wrote them a letter. Out of the writing of that letter this booklet has come.

Many elders are being elected every year. They are good men. They want to know. They will respect and obey the voice of duty. But they need to know. This booklet may come into their hands and help them to magnify their office by the wise understanding of its nature, and to adorn their office by the loyal doing of its duties, and to rejoice in their office by deserving and receiving the double honor of which those are worthy who rule well.

The booklet may serve a purpose also for ruling elders who know all these things, if it stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, that they may be mindful of their office.

Rev. F. W. Phillips and Rev. F. P. Sydenstricker, of Greenbrier Presbytery, have given encouragement and helpful suggestions.

"Of the Ruling Elder"

As there were in the Church, under the law, Elders of the people for the government thereof, so in the gospel Church, Christ has furnished others besides the ministers of the Word with gifts and commission to govern when called thereunto, which officers are entitled Ruling Elders.

These Ruling Elders possess the same authority and eligibility to office in the courts of the Church as the Ministers of the Word, or Teaching Elders. They should, moreover, cultivate zealously their aptness to teach the Bible and should improve every opportunity of doing so, to the end that destitute places, mission points, and churches without Pastors may be supplied with religious services.

Those who fill this office ought to be blameless in life and sound in the faith; they should be men of wisdom and discretion; and by the holiness of their walk and conversation should be examples to the flock.

Ruling Elders, the immediate representatives of the people, are chosen by them, that, in conjunction with the Pastors or Ministers, they may exercise government and discipline, and take the oversight of the spiritual interests of the particular church, and also of the Church generally, when called thereunto. It appertains to their office, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to

their charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. Evils which they cannot correct by private admonition they should bring to the notice of the Session. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick; they should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the Church; and all those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them (Ruling Elders) by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties; they should pray with and for the people; they should be careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock; and should inform the pastor of cases of sickness, affliction, and awakening, and of all others which may need his special attention.

—THE BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER.

“Of the Church Session”

The Session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church, for which purpose it has power to inquire into the knowledge, principles, and Christian conduct of the church members under its care; to censure those found delinquent; to see that parents do not neglect to present their children for baptism; to receive members into the communion of the Church; to grant letters of dismission to other churches, which, when given to parents, shall always include the names of their baptized children; to examine, ordain, and install Ruling Elders and Deacons on their election by the church, and to require these officers to devote themselves to their work; to examine the records of the proceedings of the Deacons; to establish and control Sabbath schools and Bible classes, with special reference to the children of the church; to order collections for Christian purposes; to take the oversight of the singing in the public worship of God; to assemble the people for worship when there is no minister; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the Church and of the congregation; to observe and carry out the lawful injunctions of the higher (church) courts; and to appoint representatives to the Presbytery and the Synod, who shall, on their return, make report of their diligence. All organizations within the local church shall be subject to

the review and control of the Session. Each organization shall, if requested, render stated reports to the Session.

The Session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. Moreover, the Pastor has power to convene the Session when he may judge it requisite; and he shall always convene it when requested to do so by any two of the Ruling Elders; and when there is no Pastor, it may be convened by two Ruling Elders. The Session shall also convene when directed so to do by the Presbytery.

Every Session shall keep an accurate record of its proceedings, which record shall be at least once in every year submitted to the inspection of the Presbytery.

Every Session shall keep an accurate record of baptisms, of those admitted to the Lord's table, of non-communing members, and of the deaths and dismissions of church members.

Meetings of the Session shall ordinarily be opened and closed with prayer.

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