



RULING ELDER JOB DESCRIPTION

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Ref. "The Church of the Good Shepherd Ruling Elder Job Description"

Both the Scriptures (Numbers 11:16-17, Deuteronomy 1:9-13, Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-5) and *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America* (part of the denominational constitution, hereafter BCO, detailed in chapter eight) portray the office of elder as primarily one of leadership.

Specifically regarding the office of ruling elder, we read (BCO, chapter 8, section 8): "Christ has furnished others besides ministers of the Word with gifts and commissions to govern when called thereunto, which are called *ruling elders*." Ruling elders will lead the congregation of CTK in the development and accomplishment of its vision. As such, they are different from deacons who serve the church by executing the practical matters necessary to attain the vision.

Elders are organized as a board (called the session), made up of both ruling elders and teaching elders (ordained ministers) who have been called to serve on the session. The senior minister serves moderator of the session; the clerk of the session is elected by the session (BCO chapter 12, section 12).

Duties

Elders are responsible to oversee the congregation under their care. As ordained officers in Christ's Church, elders assume that such responsibility is one they will ordinarily have for life. They serve as examples to that congregation. They also have a responsibility to govern well. (All found in 1 Peter 5:1-3 and BCO chapter 8, sections 1 and 3). They are held accountable to God himself for their service (Hebrews 13:17) and will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1). In addition, they must "hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9, see also BCO chapter 8, sections 1 and 3).

As they lead the congregation in the development and accomplishment of its vision, they will fulfill their responsibilities as follows:

- A People Changed By Christ
 - Set an example with their lives that demonstrates a working out of Colossians 2:6: "As you received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk in him."
 - Seek to help others similarly embrace the gospel both as a means of encouragement and a means of growth.
- A Community Renewed By Christ
 - Attend monthly Session meetings and give wise input.
 - See to the spiritual growth and well being of those members under their specific care, on Sunday morning, through their community groups, and in individual settings.
 - Pray with and for those members under your care.
 - Assist non-members through the process of becoming active in the church.
 - Continue to grow in knowledge, understanding, and application of the Bible.
 - Develop additional leaders to serve the church (at least two per year).

- A City Transformed by Christ
 - Diligently develop relationships with those outside the church who are in need of Christ.
 - Intentionally and lovingly declare and demonstrate the gospel to in need of Christ.
 - Encourage, both by example and exhortation, member involvement in the various church-sponsored mission and mercy opportunities.
 - Attend at least one Presbytery meeting a year.

Recommended Ruling Elder Plan

- Daily: Pray for two members under their care by name and with specific knowledge.
- Weekly: Attend the Sunday morning worship service and serve as gifted and needed.
- Bi-Weekly: Speak with the leaders under their care. Participate in and assist with the leadership of a community group.
- Monthly: Meet with the senior minister and meet as a session.
- Quarterly: Assess the physical and spiritual health and well-being of the members under their care by making contact with them by phone or email.
- Annually: Assess the well being of their ministry with your fellow elder. Attend at least one Presbytery meeting a year.

It is estimated the duties of a ruling elder will require 5-7 hours per week.

Personal Questions to Consider

As you consider what it means to be an elder in this church, I would encourage you to “count the cost” as you thoughtfully answer the following questions (inspired by similar questions for elders from Trinity Presbyterian Church in Lakeland, Fla.):

- Are you secure in the gospel? (Do you know it? Do you preach it to yourself and to your family and friends? Are you restful in Christ, or are you striving in the flesh like an orphan?)
- Are you praying? (Are you humbling yourself before God in utter reliance upon Him? Or, is prayer like a haircut to you, periodic and only cosmetic?)
- Are you available? (Is the gospel fit into your life or is your life fit around the gospel? Do you hope Raleigh is reached for Christ, or are you ordering your life around that goal as your life’s mission until you die or God moves you elsewhere?)
- Are you related? (Is your life open to one another and to me? Or are you isolated, closed off, unknown and not intimate with any brother or sister?)
- Are you teachable? (Will you read what I give you to read? Will you come to meetings cheerfully and heartily? And will you constantly see yourself as a pupil until you die?)
- Are you humble? (Do you see leadership in Christ’s church as a means to replace the affirmation God already has bestowed upon you? Or, will you lead as one of Christ’s slaves, so that after you have done all Christ commanded you will say with others what is found in Luke 17:10: “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty”?)
- Are you joyfully willing to serve in this way? (Do you realize you will serve as an ordained officer in Christ’s Church and are you willing to serve the Church as an elder until it is clear you are no longer to serve in this way? Or, is this simply something to pad your resume or give you the authority you desire? Are you excited about serving *this specific* church? Are you willing to serve CTK as it is now, even if it doesn’t become everything you think it should become?)
- Are you qualified? (Have you read the qualifications for elder in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1? Are you above reproach in the areas listed? Do you view qualifications as a list of things to achieve or as reason to thank God for his work in your life?)

If you can’t answer these questions in the affirmative, I would encourage you to hold off on your pursuit of the office of elder. Instead, seek to develop the character necessary to answer them with a resounding “yes.”

Work with others to help you with this. Find a mentor (or mentors). Devote yourself to further study in these areas. And pray that God would help you become the person he designed you to be. Pray he would help you see and understand the gifts he has given you. And pray he would help respond with thanksgiving to the things he has done and is doing through you.

In addition, you should also make sure you can answer “I do” to the following questions required for ordination as a ruling elder in the PCA, found in BCO, chapter 24, section 5:

- Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
- Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
- Do you accept the office of ruling elder in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?
- Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
- Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?