



The Church of Scotland

THE ELDER'S HANDBOOK

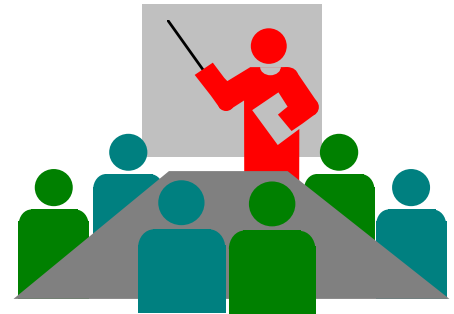


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Foreword

This booklet is not intended to be an exhaustive record of the role of Eldership within the Church of Scotland. It is simply an attempt to answer some of the more common questions associated with Eldership and to be a **guideline** to good practice.



WHAT ARE ELDERS?

Elders are the local councillors of the Kirk, but they are also much more. When they are first appointed, they are “Ordained”. This takes place at a special service of worship where the individuals taking up the office of Eldership are asked stated questions are required to answer them before the congregation. Once this is done they are invited to sign the prescribed Formula.

ON WHAT BIBLICAL BASIS/AUTHORITY DO WE APPOINT ELDERS?

The Eldership is the most ancient of all offices within the Church and we find this office of service in the Old Testament. Indeed its origins can be traced to the occasion when Moses, on the journey to the Promised Land, appointed seventy men to help him in the task of controlling and caring for the people.

Moses felt the burden of leadership, and being a deeply religious man, he brought the matter before God in prayer {Numbers 11:12,14}. God answered Moses’ prayer by telling him to appoint seventy men to help him in the task; promising that when the men were appointed the Spirit of God would fill their hearts.

This custom of appointing Elders continues; for in the New Testament, at the time of Jesus, every synagogue had its Elders. These men were the real leaders of the Jewish community. They presided over the worship of the synangogue, they administered discipline when necessary and settled all kinds of disputes which other nations would have settled in courts of law. The Elders were respected men who kept a fatherly eye on the spiritual and material affairs of every Jewish community. They were respected individuals and were faithful in their witness to God. {i.e. through their actions and behaviour.

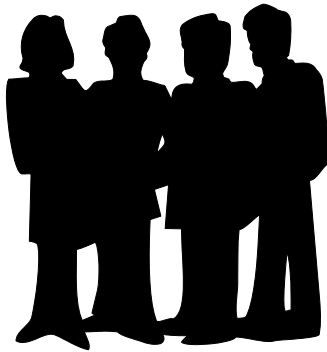
The custom of electing Elders continued, after the resurrection of Jesus, when the Church came into being. Indeed, Elders were appointed in all of the churches. We see this in the Book of Acts, where we are informed that Paul and Barnabas appointed Elders in the church they founded {see Acts 14:23}. Don’t make the mistake of assuming that all of those chosen to serve the Lord in this way were men; for we know that the Greek word *diakonia* meant both **male and female**. There is evidence around to show that both male and female were active in the early Church – But more of that on another occasion.

THE ELDER TODAY

How is an Elder chosen?

An Elder's appointment follows an election, either by the congregation or, by the Kirk Session. Both these ways are valid and it is up to each Kirk Session to decide how the appointment of Elders will be made.

Electing an Elder has a spiritual dimension to it, as those involved in the task are the people who live by the Spirit of God working in them. Therefore the choosing of an Elder should be prayerfully considered.



In choosing an Elder the Kirk Session carefully consider the individual's integrity as a person. He or she should be a regular attender at worship and should be seen to be a person who walks with God. In other words, someone who believes in God and accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; and by doing so, attempts to put their Christian faith into practice.



The Elder's character is also considered. This does not mean that an Elder is "holier than thou," nor does it mean that s/he is infallible. It simply means that the individual attempts to lead a good and honest life, **but**, like the Minister and other members of the Church, Elders make mistakes...they are human. The important thing to remember is that God has called you to serve Him in this capacity and therefore He has asked you to do this work for Him, knowing your weaknesses as well as your strengths.

The Eldership is a Spiritual Office

The Eldership is a "spiritual office". It is a commitment to share the "rule" or government of the Church and that includes rule in spiritual matters as well as temporal. Therefore Elders attend the **Kirk Session** meeting to carry out these spiritual or temporal matters.

The Kirk Session is a court and therefore all that is said at that meeting is understood to be **confidential. Therefore nothing which is discussed, or mentioned should be stated outside the meeting of the court.** Obviously if an individual is troubled by what has taken place s/he can go to the Minister and discuss it.

THE KIRK SESSION AND HOW IT OPERATES

The Kirk Session meets on a monthly basis and is responsible for overseeing the spiritual affairs of the Church. Since the Kirk Session is a court of the Church all its meetings are in private and therefore the business discussed is treated as confidential and should not be discussed outwith Session meetings.

The Kirk Session takes takes responsibility for the oversight of the Sunday School {the Minister is head of the Sunday School}, the Bible Class and all church youth organisations. It is for this reason that each of the organisations have an elder affiliated to them. **N.B. Non Church organisations are not under the jurisdiction of the Kirk Session.**

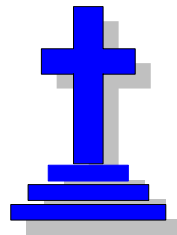
The Kirk Session is also responsible for setting times of worship, {although worship, and all that happens during worship, is the sole responsibility of the Minister} and for deciding how many services of worship there will be. It is also responsible for setting the dates for the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

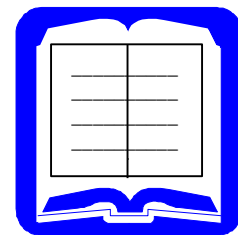
Throughout the meeting of Session much business is discussed and Session bear a collective responsibility for all decisions made, therefore alleviating any one individual from responsibility of a particular issue.

One of the Kirk Session's duties is to keep the Communion Roll up to date and this work is largely undertaken by the Roll Keeper who keeps the Communion Roll in order. However, Elders also have a part to play in this, since they are responsible for the pastoral oversight of members within their **district**. Therefore it is important to inform the Roll Keeper when an individual within your district is moving address {assuming, of course, they inform you of this}.

If individuals have failed to attend church for a period, usually two or three years, without good reason, they are taken off the Communion Roll and are placed on a Supplementary Roll. This in essence means that they are no longer regarded as full-communicant members of the Church and therefore lose all rights as a member of the church. However, it is always hoped that they will once more be reinstated as full-communicant members.

There are also opportunities for Elders to be involved in the wider work of the Church. Often papers are passed down from General Assembly for discussion and comment. These are distributed, via the Minister, to Kirk Sessions for discussion, thus allowing us not only to be aware of what is happening in the Church, but also to play our part in the work of the Church.





KEY PEOPLE IN SESSION

Each Elder plays an important role in the Kirk Session and it is therefore important they are present at meetings. However, there are “key positions” within the Eldership which are necessary if a local church is to function at its best. These are as follows...

Session Clerk

The Session Clerk is appointed by the Kirk Session and holds office during its pleasure. On taking up his duties he takes the oath *de fideli* {“I promise to carry out faithfully the duties of Session Clerk.”}. Where a Minute Clerk is not present, it is his/her duty to take regular minutes and to engross them in a permanent record, to keep Session documents, and, when so authorised, to issue extracts of Session minutes. Indeed, the Session Clerk not only takes responsibility for the Session minutes and any correspondence of Session, but is involved in many other aspects of the church’s work including taking responsibility for the distribution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and sitting {*ex officio*, “by virtue of his/her office”} on all of the church’s committees alongside the minister. However, just as important, the Session Clerk is, in many ways, the Minister’s confidant.

Roll Keeper

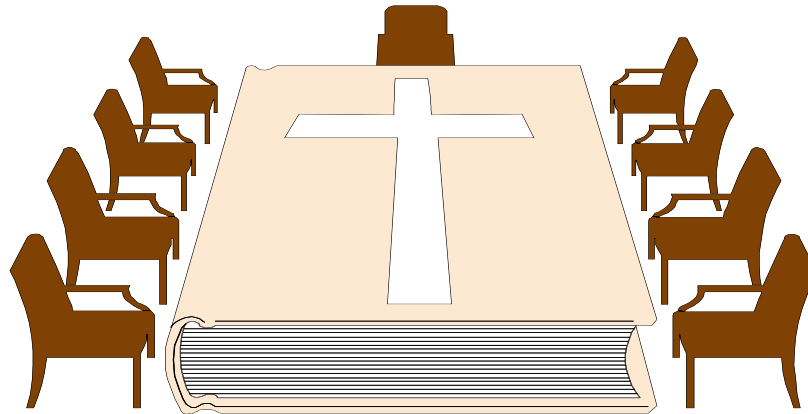
The Roll Keeper is responsible for the Congregational Communion Roll. It is an arduous task keeping the Communion Roll up to date as the changes to it are constant due to death, changes of address, or individuals being removed from the Roll and being placed instead upon the Supplementary Roll.

Presbytery Elder

This elder is also appointed by Session and is responsible for representing the congregation at Presbytery once a month. Many opportunities are available for a keen Elder to be involved in the work of Presbytery i.e. through serving upon various committees and also in being involved in the wider work of the Church. The Presbytery Elder has the responsibility to report back to Session items of interest which have been discussed at Presbytery.

How does the meeting begin?

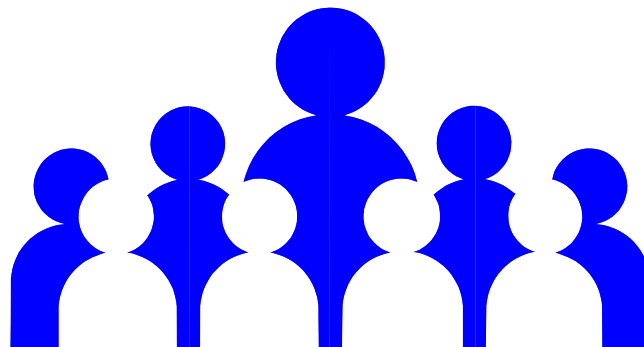
The meeting is chaired by the Minister, who is addressed throughout the meeting as Moderator. Indeed, the Kirk Session cannot meet without the Minister being present. The meeting opens with the Minister leading the people in a prayer {this is known as constituting the meeting} asking for God’s Spirit to guide the Elders in all their discussions. After this there is a Bible reading and sometimes a short homily or meditation follows. Thereafter, the minutes of the previous meeting are read and approved.

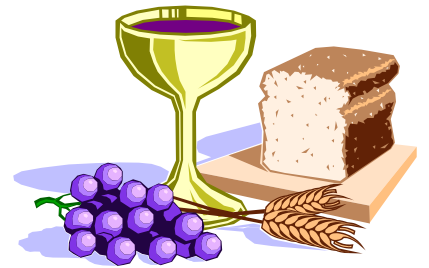


WHO MODERATES THE COURT?

During the meeting, the minister takes the 'office' of moderator and therefore he acts as chairman to the proceedings. You will hear people address the minister as Moderator during meetings. [Please note "Mr Moderator" is poor English, since the term Moderator is valuable in that it embraces both genders.] The Congregational Board is **not** a court of the Church and therefore the Minister is addressed as Mr Chairman. **N.B. No Kirk Session can lawfully meet without the minister being present – Church Law states this quite categorically.**

Kirk Session meetings vary from church to church, although most meet monthly or bi-monthly. The meetings are always constituted {i.e. they begin with a prayer asking God's blessing on the proceedings} and are followed by a Bible Reading and sometimes a short homily or reflection. This is most important as it serves as a reminder of the spiritual nature of our task. Although most meetings are concerned with the spiritual affairs of the church, it is now widely encouraged that Kirk Session meetings should have some study time built into them.





THE ELDER & THE SACRAMENTS

To many people a 'sacrament' is a name for any religious rite. Christians however, have to be more precise. The Church of Scotland teaches that we have two sacraments. These are baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. We believe that there are two sacraments from the evidence available to us in the New Testament i.e. in the teaching of Jesus Himself.

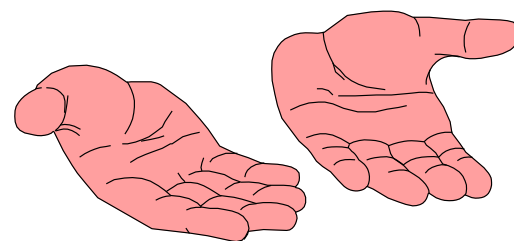
A sacrament is a means of grace given to us by God. By its action we are spiritually strengthened and through the work of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to undertake the various tasks God asks of us e.g. during the Lord's Supper we enter into communion with one another, with Christians of the past... and through the working of the Holy Spirit we are blessed by God Himself, in some mysterious, mystical way we cannot fully understand.

What are we doing when we administer the Sacraments?

In administering the sacraments we are preaching the Gospel by actions and symbols, rather than by words only. From your seat in the congregation you will have noticed how attentive members watch the minister as he takes the bread and breaks it. These actions are a powerful representation of what Christ has done for us i.e. His death and resurrection become more meaningful through the symbolic action.

It might surprise you to learn that administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as Elders, is a privilege, not a right. The minister may choose any group of individuals from within the membership of the church to assist in this duty. However, tradition dictates that the Elders should assist the minister in this duty and therefore this is understood to be one of the public duties of an Elder.





THE ELDER AS PASTOR

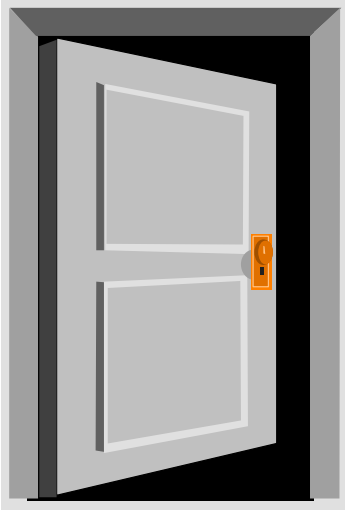
The Elder has an important pastoral role and it is his or her duty to care for the people within a district. This therefore means that the Elder should be more than a “postman.” Indeed, there should be a serious attempt to build a relationship with those under your supervision. Sometimes this may be a frustrating task, as you might never get over the doorstep, but through time you will get to know your people and their needs. Indeed it is a privilege to be able to minister to people when they are in vulnerable situations and a caring elder can support individuals just as well as the minister. Indeed the Elder may have built up a long and lasting relationship with individuals in a way in which the minister has not had the opportunity to do so. Therefore, please don’t underestimate the role you play as pastor.

The pastoral relationship takes time to develop and it is only where there is mutual trust and respect for the integrity of the individuals that the relationship will develop. From time to time, you may find that the family or a member of a family will speak to you confidentially. This **confidentiality** should never be broken, except in extreme circumstances. The **minister will never breach confidentiality** concerning anyone under your pastoral supervision and does not expect you to break confidentiality either. However, if you are worried about something someone has said, don’t hesitate to get in touch with the minister and discuss the situation with him. Often it is through the work of a sensitive Elder that families’ needs are brought to the attention of the minister. Please, when appropriate pass on this information. If you are in doubt as to whether the family wish this information to be passed on, ask their permission. However, where matters of Law are concerned, you must inform them that you are **not bound** to absolute confidentiality. Ministers and Elders are **not bound** by the confidentiality that a priest is expected to observe in the confessional.

When should I visit?

The answer to this depends upon what you consider to be the purpose of your visits. However, old people, in particular, like to be visited by their Elder and, for some, this may be their only link with the church. Indeed, older people will expect to see their Elder more often than younger people who have a busy lifestyle. How often you visit depends upon the time you have available. However, there are particular circumstances when your visit will be important and these include times of illness and bereavement, or when family difficulties arise. However, this must be done sensitively and with prayer (beforehand). The family’s needs must always be considered and therefore the Elder can simply offer help...a listening ear...and should never push themselves upon those they are pastoring to.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD AN ELDER VISIT?



As an Elder you will be given a district (that is a number of households for whom you have a pastoral responsibility) to care for. It is your duty to visit these members and to build up a pastoral relationship with them. Of course this is not always easy and getting over the doorstep can be a problem in some households. Sometimes it takes years to get over the doorstep and this is a problem which many Elders face.

Timing of visits is important. If your members have a young family you should be aware of baby's bathtime etc. Elderly members also have their own routines and if they are avid fans of a particular soap opera your visit may be seen as an intrusion.

The answer to how often you should visit, clearly depends upon the purpose of your visit. However, if you wish to build a relationship with an individual, you will need to spend time with them. There are of course occasions when you **should** visit. These include illness, death... if you notice a member of your district hasn't been attending worship for some time..., distributing the communion card.

Should I Pray With Members?

Prayer often causes individuals concern. Yet the one thing we bring to a household when we visit as a Christian, is the presence of God. I always find it helpful to pray {before I enter a household} that I may be aware of God's presence guiding me and that those being visited may be aware that I come as Christ's servant to them. However, in general, unless there is illness or sickness, or some worrying situation, I tend not to pray with families. Although, with elderly people, particularly the housebound, I take time to pray and this is greatly appreciated.



Once you get to know your people, you will be able to judge in what circumstances prayer is appropriate.

However, you should never impose prayer upon people. Always ask sensitively if they would like you to pray with them. Equally, once a meaningful relationship has been established with members of your district, if you **never** pray with them you may wish to re-examine the effectiveness of your role as an ambassador for Christ. If you find prayer difficult or embarrassing, "prayer-cards" can be an effective and non-threatening way of conveying the love and concern of Jesus in particular situations.

In being a pastor, we often forget that we are a pastor to one another and therefore as Elders it is important that we learn to care for one another. Praying for one another is an expression of our concern and as we do so, we bring one another's needs before God.

SHOULD I PRAY?

Individuals often find it embarrassing to pray with others, yet I have often heard it said, “The Elder never prays with me.” Prayer is important, yet it should be done sensitively. Older people, people who are ill, or are facing some crisis, often wish to have someone pray with them. Use your own instincts and be sensitive to the overall situation.

THE ELDER’S DEVOTIONAL LIFE

Being an elder and pastoring to families can be spiritually draining and emotionally demanding on occasions. So it is important that the Elder takes time to develop his/her own spiritual life.

Take time to read your Bible and to pray. It is a main source of wisdom and spiritual strength.

“Prayer is the sum of our relationship with God. We are what we pray. The degree of our faith is the degree of our prayer. Our ability to love is our ability to pray.”

{ from “Letters from a Desert” by Carlo Carretto. }

Prayer will sustain you in times of difficulty and will give you the strength to meet difficult situations as they arise; for there will be times that you will feel exhausted. Listening and empathising with others is not an easy task and you will feel spiritually drained. At times you will take away some of the individual’s problems...find yourself overwhelmed by them...worrying about them. This is the time to take their situations to God and to give it to Him in prayer...to find inner strength and to continue to care...to see your own spiritual needs.

Simple, helpful hints in visiting

- **Don’t visit at mealtimes.**
- **If necessary, phone to arrange a suitable visiting time.**
- **Take time to write down the names of members of the family, their occupations, interests and hobbies, their approximate ages, the names of family pets, etc. You can use this information fruitfully when you return. This conveys to people that you take an interest in them.**
- **Take time to pray for the family before and/or after you visit.**
- **If the family aren’t in, put a note through the door. This lets them know that you visited.**
- **Be sensitive to other people’s time. Don’t overstay your welcome.**
- **Recognise signs that your visit is an intrusion. E.g. The television left on.**
- **Sending Christmas, Easter, or even birthday/anniversary cards may help to make the family feel more comfortable with your presence when you do pay a visit.**
- **Be yourself! Don’t pretend to be someone else.**

Visiting Non-attenders

In each district it is likely that there will be individuals who are members in name only. i.e. those who are not attending church and show little interest in doing so in the future. This often leads to frustration, and the question, “What can I do?” is voiced. There are a number of things to keep in mind...

1. Raising the issue with individuals three years later is no good. If we say we are concerned about an individual not attending church, then we should be visiting them and challenging them in a sensitive way long before they are about to be placed on the Supplementary Roll.
2. Contract/Covenant: Many of our members took their vows a long time ago. Some of them may have been pressurised into “joining the Church” by other members of their family. Therefore, they may not have been sure what they were committing themselves to. Furthermore, some individuals may in fact, be no different from those who do not belong to the Church.
3. Circumstances: Some of our members may have began as enthusiastic members of the Church, attending regularly, but due to circumstances such as illness or death, they may have lost their faith, or be experiencing a crisis of faith where they blame God for life’s hardships. In these circumstances it is important to listen carefully to the individual and to respond accordingly.
4. Little sense of belonging: Non-attendance may be part of the result of feeling that they do not belong to the congregation. Some people come to church in order to feel that they can belong, and when they simply feel alone, or that they don’t matter, they feel the Church has failed them.

Church going is habit forming and for various reason individuals simply get out of the habit of going to Church. We, in concern for that individual should try to find time to question whether there is a genuine reason for them not attending church.

What can we do to help?

Beware of being the heavy parent. It is often a temptation to assume the “persecutor’s” role, to be like the school attendance officer emphasising the ‘oughts’ and ‘shoulds,’ stressing the vows once taken and, as yet, not rescinded. Most adults resent this approach.

Beware avoiding the issue. Often, through embarrassment we fail to challenge people about their non-attendance. Another temptation is to seek to avoid the issue by keeping discussion at a superficial level. If we do this, we do not help people to take the faith and the Church seriously. Our avoidance may reinforce their negative attitudes, seeming to indicate that non-participation is not worth discussing. Our avoidance of the issue will certainly not encourage others to believe that *their* involvement matters to us.

Recognise the bigger picture. Those who do not attend church regularly can also provide discouragement to the congregation as a whole. In a sensitive way, it is important to convey that regular attendance & sharing in fellowship is important for the body of Christ as a whole.

BEING WITH PEOPLE

Listening

Listening is a basic skill which we all have, yet it is a skill we don't always develop. We must be aware that listening is more than hearing because listening requires that we attempt to discover the meaning and significance of what we hear. When we listen properly, we hear the words used, the way they are used and the spaces and silences between the words. Listening also involves us hearing what is **not** said. Listening also involves being aware of **feelings**. Often these feelings can be expressed by the body. The clenched fist or jaw might well denote anger whilst the constant shifting of position or drumming of fingers might betray tension. **It is important to use the eyes as well as the ears when we listen.**

Here are some guidelines: -

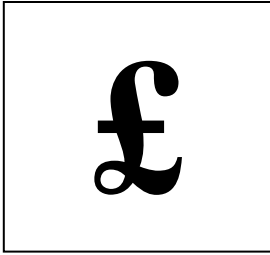
You are **not listening** to me when...

- You do not care about me.
- You say you understand before you know me well enough.
- You have an answer for my problem **before** I've finished telling you what my problem is.
- You cut me off before I finish speaking.

You **are listening** to me when...

- You come quietly into my private world and let me be me.
- You really try to understand me even when I'm not making much sense.
- You grasp my point even when it's against your own sincere convictions.
- You realise that the hour I took from you has left you a bit tired and drained.
- You allow me the dignity of making my own decisions even though you think they may be wrong.
- You do not take the problem from me, but allow me to deal with it in my own way.
- You hold back your desire {for now} to give me good advice.
- You do not offer me religious solace when you sense I am not ready for it.
- You give me enough room to discover for myself what is really going on.
- You accept my gift of gratitude by telling me how good it makes you feel to know that you have been of help.

Asking for money



This is the task which Elders dread most. This is understandable as asking for money is seldom easy and, understandably, many Elders feel uncomfortable about asking for money. It is useful to keep the following in mind...

1. The Church is *not* 'always asking for money.' What is asked of members is that they respond to the love of God and to the commitment of being His Church; to being part of the shared ministry.
2. Part of our Christian response and commitment is to the work and witness of the local congregation to which we belong as part of the worldwide Church. Obviously, local congregations require money to exist, as does every other human organisation, including the household registering the protest!
3. The Church's main source of income is the money given by its members. The largest part of the money raised by most congregations is spent on maintaining their own life and witness – i.e. minister, property, running costs... Congregations also contribute towards the wider work of the denomination to which they belong.
4. When we feel uncomfortable about asking for money, it may help to remember that the Church needs people who will offer an opportunity to their fellow members to make their financial response. This is part of our, and their, worship – An expression of what our faith is worth to us. It is an expression of what God means to us.

HELPFUL HINTS

Do not get hooked by criticism – Be aware of what the needs of the congregation are. Know the cost of how much it costs to run your church.

Be straight in your response. Help people to understand the situation and that our financial response is part of our total response to God.

Listen to any complaints and to feelings, hurts and misunderstandings. Respond without criticising and without necessarily agreeing. You will thus be sensitive to the person concerned. Listening helps you to feel less anxious and the person you are visiting to feel accepted.

Do not take criticism personally. It may feel as if the feelings are aimed at you. However, you are at the receiving end because you are there. Continue to listen to the feelings. You may be helping hurting people more than you think. A visit by a caring person may begin with hurt and end in healing, through listening and acceptance.

Be prepared to persevere! It may take years before the message penetrates.



Commitments Normally Expected of Elders

- To be in Church on Sunday mornings unless you are working, or ill, or out of town.
- To share in the communion duties, and also to involve those members in your district who are unable to attend church and who would like to have home communion. I will be available to go to the home of any housebound member and have a short communion service in the home.
- To be at Session meetings. If you cannot attend, an apology should be given.
- To recognise the Session's positive responsibility to initiate and promote the Christian good of our congregation and parish.
- To take seriously our responsibilities for our parish.
- To be aware of the wider work of the Church of Scotland. {Possibly by subscribing to "Life and Work", the magazine of the Church of Scotland.}
- To care for your district...
 1. By regular visits **into** each home. As we have four communions a year I would expect elders to visit the homes in their district at least four times in the year.
 2. By sharing any pastoral difficulties with me.
 3. By praying regularly for the members of your district by name.
 4. By sharing with me cases of special need.
 5. By making a point of visiting, especially where there is bereavement {and attending the funeral, if possible} or illness or a baptism.
 6. By having a Deed of Covenant if you are in a position to do so.
 7. By sharing in the Christian festivals with your district. For example, by sending cards at Christmas and Easter.
 8. By being prepared, **when appropriate**, to share your faith with members of your district, in a sensitive and non-threatening way.

I am conscious that a great many elders do a great deal more than I have outlined above. Many are actively involved in the organisations of the congregation and in the running of these organisations, and that is of great value. I hope that no-one would want to do less than is outlined above. It is my job to make it as satisfying and encouraging for you as possible to fulfil these responsibilities and I hope that you will advise me on how I may best do that.

If you feel that any or all of the list above is not possible for you, then I hope you will talk to me about it rather than just ignoring it. I look forward very much indeed to working with you in the future.

ANDREW C. DONALD.

Summary Sheet



The Church of Scotland

What is an Elder?

An Elder in the Church of Scotland is a man or a woman recognised and ordained to spiritual leadership in the congregation. Elders work in partnership with the Minister in this leadership task. The leadership team, made up of Elders and Minister, is called the Kirk Session.

What is a District Elder?

The Minister alone is not able to visit all the members of his congregation on a regular basis. The Parish is therefore divided into “Districts”, each with a “District Elder”. The District is usually about 12 houses, grouped geographically. The aim of the Elder’s visit is to make personal contact on a regular basis with the Members {and any non-Members living in the same home} who live in the District to share the joys and difficulties of fellow Christians in the intimacy of their homes, and to give support and a sense of belonging to the wider family of the Church.

What is expected of the Elder?

The Elder...

- is the first point of pastoral care and help from the Congregation.
- is the main link with the Congregation’s life and work.
- prays for the family within his/her District.
- conveys any concerns that arise in the District to the Minister and/or the Kirk Session.

What should Elders normally expect from the members in their district?

- A welcome, and an invitation into members’ homes, either when they call, or at another convenient time. This is not always achieved.
- Friendship, encouragement and support.
- A relationship that will deepen over time.
- The prayerful support from members of their district.

All the aforementioned points are **wholly dependent** on the **quality of the relationship** formed between district elder and member. Realistically speaking, in some cases it may be very difficult to form any meaningful relationship with certain members, particularly where there is little active involvement in their local church, or where conflict has arisen in the past. Nevertheless, most members see their district elder as a valuable part of the Church’s witness. This is particularly true of the elderly and the housebound.

ANDREW C. DONALD.

PRAYERS FOR SPECIFIC PASTORAL SITUATIONS



IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

We rejoice before you, Creator God, in all your marvellous works.
We thank you for the miracle of new life and for the joy and happiness that this child will bring into this home.
We pray that s/he will bring much joy to this family.
Be with her/him as s/he grows.
Be with this family today and evermore.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Loving Father, we remember before you those who have known the joy of a birth into their home. We are grateful for a life given and for a life spared. As we share the gladness of the parents, we pray that you will grant them wisdom, patience and the tenderness for their tasks in the years ahead. May love be the constant companion of the home and gentleness the rod of discipline. Enfold this family in your peace, for Jesus' sake we pray. Amen.



THE LOSS OF A BABY

Gentle God, we cannot understand why has been taken from us. Help us in our pain to reach out to you, to find you and to be able to express our anger/anguish and hurt.

Lord Jesus, you took little children into your arms and blessed them. You told us that they were special and that we had to become like them to enter your kingdom – You alone know the plans that you have made for us on this earth.

We give you thanks for the life of for the love s/he brought to her/his family. We thank you for the joys they shared as they saw her/him smile for the first time and for...{the baby's special characteristics}. Be with and as they try to make sense out of all that has happened. Be with them in the days that lie ahead. This we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

DIFFICULTY IN MARRIAGE



Loving God, you taught us that all things are possible through you. Strengthen our belief in your words, especially in the difficulty and are facing now. Help them to remember the love they once shared and the joys and the sorrow they have faced together. As doubts arise and arguments abound, be with them. Help them to find your peace and to know that with your grace you will be with each of them in the hurt they now face.

BROKEN MARRIAGE

God our Father, whose patience is inexhaustible and love unconquerable, have mercy on those who now face the desolation of a broken marriage. Take from their hearts all bitterness and recrimination. Help them in their anguish of heart to seek your will and to make a right decision. Let them feel your presence surrounding them and grant them the assurance of your love. Amen.



WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Loving God, you gladden our hearts with the yearly celebration of our wedding day. Thank you for the mercies of the past. Help us to treasure the precious memories of your goodness. Deepen and in their love and commitment to one another and to you. We ask this in the name of Him who brought joy to the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

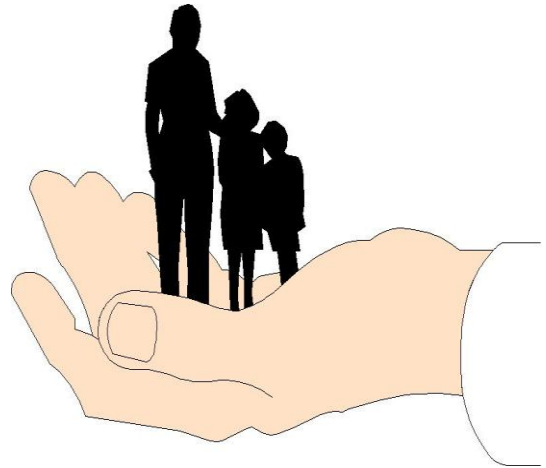
Heavenly Father, we pray for _____ and _____ as they celebrate their wedding anniversary. May they give thanks to you for all your goodness; for all your loving-kindness; and for the gift of love which binds them together as husband and wife. May they remember with grateful hearts your gifts of home, family and friends. Help them to rejoice in all their shared memories - And as they praise you for the past, may they trust you for the future. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

IN TIMES OF ILLNESS

Lord Jesus Christ, healer of humanity's body, mind and spirit, have compassion on _____. Restore her/him to health and strength. May s/he know your presence near her/him and your peace in her/his heart. Amen.

BEFORE AN OPERATION

Gentle God, you have promised us that when we pass through the deep waters you will be with us. In that assurance we commend to you _____ as s/he faces her/his operation to give her/him a quiet confidence in your love and power and the assurance that you will be with her/him.



We pray for the surgical team and ask that through their hands and skill your power might be shown more fully. Bless each of them as they prepare for surgery and let your love be shown through their dedicated work. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

TERMINAL ILLNESS

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ suffered and died for our salvation; in his name we commit into your hands this your servant _____. Lord, we find it difficult to understand why _____ is so ill, but we know that your love for him/her is strong and true. Help us to trust you and to find the strength to take each day as it comes.

Be with the friends and families of _____. Help us to support them and to understand that they need our love and care more today than yesterday. Let them feel your peace surround them and your strong arms supporting and upholding them.

Lord Jesus, you walked through death to the power of Your Father's eternal light to share the brightness of his Kingdom. Be with us when it is our turn to join you in that Kingdom knowing that throughout our journey you will be with us. Amen.

BEREAVEMENT SITUATIONS

Loving Father, we pray for _____ whose life has been shattered by the death of _____. Be with him/her in his/her loneliness and comfort him/her in his/her sorrow.

Grant to _____ the freedom from resentment, the courage and strength to seek your will in his/her new situation and the faith to look beyond their present distress to Jesus, the one who conquered death and who lives for evermore. Amen.

Gentle God, whatever comes to us in life, help us to face it with courage and hope, knowing that you are always with us and that in perfect wisdom, perfect love, you are with us in our sorrow.

Help us at this time not to think of the darkness of death but of the splendour of the life everlasting in your presence. Comfort and support us, strengthen and uphold us, until we meet again those we have loved and lost awhile, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

God our Companion, we know that life can never be the same again. The one we loved has been taken from us, and we are conscious of an overwhelming sense of loneliness, an inner emptiness and life seems to have lost its meaning. In our pain let us know that it is alright to express our anger to you, an expression of our pain and hurt at _____ being taken from us. We don't understand why this has happened, but we seek the assurance that _____ is at peace with you. Help us to know that death is not the end, and that life for us is simply different now, until at last we are reunited with _____.

Lord, we know all these things in our minds, but our hearts are sore from the grief we experience at the loss of _____. Come to us, place your everlasting arms around us and give us the courage to move forward in the knowledge that _____ is now with you, sharing in the beauty of new life. This we ask in the name of Jesus, our risen Lord and Saviour, Amen.