

Requirements of an Elder

Scriptural Foundations:

1 Timothy 5:17

1 Peter 5:1-3

James 5:17

Acts 20:17

Titus 1:5-9

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Qualities described in these scriptures:

Above reproach; faithful to his wife; having obedient children; not overbearing; not quick-tempered; not given to drunkenness; not violent; not pursuing dishonest gain; hospitable; sensible; just; devout; self-controlled; holding fast to the word; able to teach; eager to serve; not lording over those entrusted to you; examples to the flock; not quarrelsome; not a lover of money; not a recent convert; good reputation with outsiders; able to direct the affairs of the church; a shepherd of the flock

Elders are imperfect in their meeting of scriptural qualifications, fulfillment of responsibilities, and alignment with values, but they take these things seriously and strive to grow in them by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit

Book of Order – Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Charge of a Ruling Elder:

- Chosen by the people of a local church for the oversight of the church
- Watch over the spiritual welfare of the congregation
- Share authority with the Teaching Elder (Pastor)
- Represent the mind of Christ, as the elder understands it, in the various courts of the church
- Mature believer led by the Holy Spirit
- Exhibit a manner of life that conforms to the biblical description of an officer in Christ's church
- Should study and learn the Word and become equipped to teach the Word, worship, and pray
- As under-shepherds, should visit the sick, the bereaved, the lonely, the aged, the shut-in and all those who have a pastoral need
- Responsibility to see to the development of the children, to inquire after inactive members, to encourage new members in spiritual development, and to otherwise show care for those whom they serve
- Should be attentive to themselves and church members, guarding against dangers to the faith and dangers to the moral life of believers
- Responsible to warn, admonish, and reclaim those who stray
- Ordination is for life, but are elected by the congregation to serve on the Session for a term that is at least three years
- Elder who has served all or part of two consecutive full terms is ineligible for re-election for one year

See also [Evangelical Presbyterian Church - Book of Order](#):

- Section 9 - Officers of the Church
- Section 18 - The Session

Expectations of an Elder

A Ruling Elder:

- Is responsible for the oversight and supervision of the entire life of the church
- Serves on the Session (church governing body) composed of the Pastor, Associate Pastor (if applicable) and all Ruling Elders on active service
- Oversees worship, discipleship, Christian education of children and adults, and work of the Diaconate
- Initiates ministry of evangelism as first business of the church
- Monitors the spiritual conduct of the members and takes action when appropriate
- Receives, dismisses, restores, grants affiliation, removes members, and keeps roll
- Determines the budget of the church and the benevolence objectives of the congregation
- Trains/examines those elected as Ruling Elder or Deacon
- Determines policies regarding the use of the property and facilities of the congregation
- Does whatever else may be necessary for the spread of the gospel, edification of the members, wellbeing of the church, advancement of the kingdom and growth in grace of all

Policies and Practices at City of Refuge:

- Men and women may serve as Deacons, but only men are eligible for election as Ruling Elders
**Note: The EPC leaves this decision to local congregations – see EPC Position Paper
- Session terms are three years
- Regular Session meetings occur monthly. Session also has occasional special meetings and retreats
 - Session meetings may last 2-5 hours depending on the agenda or circumstances
- Fellowship and accountability among the Elders is important to the Session
- Elders are called to pray for the congregation and for individual members
- Ruling Elders may serve as liaisons to specific ministries
- Active and inactive Elders and Deacons serve communion and preside (i.e., help lead worship) at services
- An Elder may be assigned to one or more ministry areas or teams within the church to assist, support, and provide leadership as necessary
- An Elder may be assigned to one or more community groups to be a resource and point of contact/communication for those community group(s)
- Two Elders serve on the Nominating Team each year; one of the Elders serves as the Chair
- The Session values communication with and openness to the congregation
- Training will be provided for new Elders and Deacons

Requirements of a Deacon

Scriptural Qualities:

In 1 Timothy 3:8-12, Paul lists qualities of a deacon very similar to the role of elder, with the exception that deacons are not required to teach. Deacons must:

- Have integrity
- Not be heavy drinkers
- Not be dishonest with money
- Be committed to the faith
- Live with a clear conscience
- Be well respected, along with their spouses
- Not slander others
- Exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do

NOTE: Deacons, as all of us, are imperfect in their meeting of scriptural qualifications, fulfillment of responsibilities, and alignment with values, but they take these things seriously and strive to grow in them by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

Purpose of the Diaconate:

In the Early Church, the purpose of the Diaconate was to serve the church by taking care of logistical duties so the elders could focus on their calling to lead, preach, and minister to the peoples.

While the role of the Deacon is not explicitly defined in the Bible, Acts 6 is often cited as an example of where a Diaconate was formed to serve the church.

Book of Order – Evangelical Presbyterian Church Charge of a Deacon:

“The office of Deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, concern for needs, and of serving others. Therefore, the first duty of the Deacon is sympathy and service. Historically, to this office has been given the duty of being the Church’s instrument for the ministry of compassion (Book of Order Chapter 9, section 12)

See also [Evangelical Presbyterian Church - Book of Order](#): Section 9 - Officers of the Church

Expectations of a Deacon

A Deacon:

- Serves God, City of Refuge Church, and its surrounding community, and each other
- Serves through the ministries of City of Refuge
- Participates in the regular life of the church

Size, Term of Office, and Meetings:

- Men or women may serve
- Term: 3 years
 - A Deacon is eligible to serve for a second term, but a Deacon who has served all or part of two consecutive terms is ineligible for re-election for one year
- Regular Meetings: every other month
 - Every deacon should attend at least four of the six meetings per year
 - Meetings are designed for prayer for each other and the church and to conduct Diaconate business
 - Special meetings may be called upon the consensus of the Diaconate

Policies and Practices at City of Refuge:

- Diaconate assists with Sunday worship services
 - Each Deacon generally serves one or two Sundays per month, as appropriate and necessary
 - Duties include:
 - Counting offering
 - Setting up/breaking down Communion
 - Administering Communion
 - Setting up/cleaning up for baptisms
- Diaconate administers benevolence
 - Quarterly rotation
 - Two deacons serve per quarter
- Diaconate stewards congregational care, including;
 - Meal trains (e.g., new babies, deaths, other needs)
 - Connecting people to one another
 - Building community (e.g., helping with church-wide activities, promoting non-church activities the church is supporting)
 - Serving community needs in general (e.g. prayer, benevolence, other concrete means)
- Diaconate sets aside time to be trained by Elders and others in its various duties and responsibilities, including benevolence, communion, baptisms, and offering procedures
- One Diaconate member serves on the Officer Nominating Team each year (roughly 6 months)

- Diaconate duties may change in accordance with the church needs and Elder requests for assistance

While there are no set number of hours that a Deacon will serve, Deacons should expect a minimum service of 3 hours per Sunday serving, 1.5-2 hours for bi-monthly meetings, plus any additional time (~2 hours/month) for any training, benevolence or other work that may arise.