

A Commissioning Service for Elders

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According to the Design of the Christian Church: The offices of the eldership and the diaconate are ordered by the congregations, through election and recognition with appropriate ceremony, for the performance of certain functions of ministry appropriate to the offices. (a) A person elected to the eldership is authorized to exercise within the congregation which elects him or her the ministerial functions which it assigns for periods of time which it specifies, such as: sharing in the min-istration of baptism and the Lord's supper and the conduct of worship, and shar-ing in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. Eldership is a voluntary ministry, each congregation having a plurality of elders.

PARAGRAPH 97 OF SECTION VI, "MINISTRY"

The following service allows for such recognition to include the laying-on of hands with prayer if that is a congregation's policy. If this is done, the intentions, includ-ing such matters as length of service and locale and limits of authority, should be clearly stated.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We come to this glad and solemn moment in which this congregation recognizes God's gift of elders to serve the church in Christ's ministry. All ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ who is the chief minister, the great high priest, of the entire people of God. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, Christ's ministry of reconciling, healing, teaching, and serv-ing is the basis of all ministries. While the whole people of God through baptism is commissioned to share in this servant ministry, the church from earliest times has set some persons apart with prayer to serve in designated ministries.

An eldership has been established through which those named as el-ders serve together in a shared responsibility of congregational leader-ship. Together they serve as colleagues of the minister(s) who repre-sent the reconciling work of Christ and the whole church in the present day. The responsibility of the eldership is:

- To teach and express the nature of the church and the spirit of Christian living in word and deed; to give wise counsel to individual members and to the congregation as a whole, in the face of the perplexities of its life together.
- To represent with disciplined clarity The church's understanding of the significance of communion at the Lord's table through its prayers;
- To set forth to the people of God an engaging vision of the congregation's mission and ministry;
- To share in positions of church leadership in accordance with this congregation's practices;
- To guard in all things the purity, unity, and peace of Christ's holy church.

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES

Those who are to be recognized are called forth.

The church has with prayer and deliberation affirmed your call to the eldership of this congregation. Each of you have accepted this call as God's intention for your life. We therefore now proceed to install/com-mission/ordain you to the office of elder.

In the light of your calling to this new responsibility, do you reaffirm your faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and do you promise to follow him and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of your life?

I do.

Do you believe that the word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme au-thority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

I do.

Do you commit yourself to the well-being of the church and through God's grace fulfill a servant ministry of care and concern for all the church's members?

I do, God being my helper.

May the Lord bless you and give you grace to keep these vows.

PRAYER

If the elders are to be set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands, the minister and those elders appointed to do so attend to each elder one at a time. The candidates kneel for the laying on of hands with prayer.

If this is not done, the following prayer may be adapted for general use.

Gracious God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, we thank you for raising up these elders in our midst to serve you and the church in strengthening the church. By your grace assist them in the building up of the church into the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ. (Repeat for each elder being recognized): We thank you for Name and ask that you fill her/him with all the good graces of your Spirit that she/he may faithfully fulfill the ministry of Christ.

INDUCTION

I now ask the congregation to join with its elders in a covenant affirmation:

Reaffirming our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, we gladly receive these elders as leaders in our life together. We covenant to support them with our prayers, encouragement, and respect. We celebrate with thanksgiving the shared responsibilities for Christ's ministry which is ours as the church. Praise be to God.

DECLARATION

In the name of Jesus Christ, the head of the church, and in accordance with the actions of this congregation, I declare that you are now members of the eldership in this church.

BLESSING

May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter 1:2