



Elder

God asks the church to be a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship, continually growing in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul describes the church as “. . . his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph.1:23).

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and community with one another. The Holy Spirit convicts our minds, leads us to repentance, and plants us within the church.

The symbol of water baptism marks our entrance into the body of Christ and also marks the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced by a new disciple. “I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of the water and the Spirit, He cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). The Holy Spirit is the vital life force of the church. When you come to Christ, you are prepared by the Holy Spirit, who has already led you to repentance, for service.

When a church serves the world, it is an expression of the love of Christ to the world. It is the body of Christ serving the world’s needs and being used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation. Thus, the church is a servant body. It was created for service. It serves the Lord in praise, serves one another in love, and serves the world in humility. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

God calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is a kingdom of priests set free to minister for Christ. Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world. An elder, like any other church officer, is a ministering servant of God. Every Christian believer is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and in baptism ordained for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

It was during the Middle Ages that the clergy became distinct from other members as a superior element in the church. The biblical concept of laity includes all believers as ministers in the body. In reality, the church today still has a great distance to go before effectively applying this concept. You should view the work of an elder as a ministry to which God calls people; it is His will operating in their lives.

Duties of the Elder

The ministry to which a person is called when they become an elder can best be described in the following ways:



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- 1. Visitation.** The elder will be responsible for the spiritual nurture and care of those members in his congregation. They will visit members in their homes for prayer and encouragement. They will also assist in giving Bible studies to prospective members.
- 2. Commitment.** It is especially important for the local elder to be committed to the outreach of the church. The congregation needs to know that its leaders have a clear vision of the mission of the church. When an elder enthusiastically models a commitment of his or her time to outreach ministry, others catch the same spirit and commit themselves to the mission of the church. An elder should schedule time for ministering to the unsaved.
- 3. Worship services.** The elder will lead the worship service as scheduled. They will review the order of service ahead of time to ensure that all responsible parties are prepared and ready to serve.
- 4. Preaching.** The elder may be asked to preach when the pastor is out-of-town or not available.
- 5. A Spiritual mentor:** The spiritual life of an elder should constantly lead members of the church to seek a deeper spiritual experience for themselves. 1 Timothy 3 describes the Christian life of an elder in these words: "... above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness or violent, but gentle..." An elder should model, by his or her devotional life, Christian personality and spiritual interest, a higher ideal for each member to reach. The elder should reflect the fruits of the Spirit in his or her relationship with others: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
- 6. Church Administration:** An elder should always attempt to make a positive contribution to the organisation and progress of the church. While doing this, he or she should not try to dominate or control but rather enable others to participate in decision-making in the church and ministry. An elder often serves in an advisory capacity to various departments, committees and projects.
 - An elder is a member of the church board and attends on a regular basis in order to provide input and counsel regarding church issues.
 - The board of elders will meet with the pastor once per month for visioning, administration, prayer, and counsel. This is typically before the scheduled board meeting.



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Appropriate Spiritual Gifts:

- **Exhortation** – The special ability God gives some to bring encouragement and comfort to others.
- **Pastor/Shepherd** – The ability to carry a personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers and act as a shepherd, overseer, protector, and guide to the church.
- **Administration** – The ability to guide the church in meeting its goals.
- **Leadership** – The ability to help others set goals and communicate these goals to others.

Time Commitment:

Including Sabbath duty, most elders will need to plan on two to four hours per week to carry out their duties.

Resource Materials

The following resources are recommended for your ministry.

- *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook*, prepared and published by The Ministerial Association, The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016.
- *Discipleship Handbook*, by the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018.
- *Designed to lead*, by Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, 2016.
- *Powerful biblical preaching*, by Derek J. Morris, 2012.
- *Values-led lives – the way Jesus wants us to think and act*, by Llewellyn Edwards, 2017.
- *Everlasting Gospel Ever-changing World – Introducing Jesus to a Skeptical Generation*, by Jon Paulien, 2008.
- *Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Youth Ministry*, prepared and published by The Youth Department and the Ministerial Association, The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002.
- *Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Children's Ministries*, prepared and published by The Children's Ministries Department and the Ministerial Association, The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005.
- *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, by The Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016.
- *Who Runs the Church? Understanding the Unity, Structure and Authority of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, by Gerry Chudleigh, 2013.
- *Help! I've been asked to preach*, by Maylan Schurch, 2007.
- *Your Church has Changed – Rebuilding Church and Mission post-COVID-19*, by Peter Roennfeldt, 2021.



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- *If you can eat... you can make disciples – Sharing Faith in a Multi-faith World*, by Peter Roennfeldt, 2018.
- *When your church goes home – Answering questions about church at home*, Peter Roennfeldt, 2021.
- *Dare to lead. Brave work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*, by Brené Brown, 2018.

Online Resources

- Official Seventh-day Adventist Church Statements and Guidelines
<https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/>
- Seventh-day Adventist Church Beliefs
<https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/>
- Ministry Magazine – International journal for pastors
<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/>
- Elder's Digest – Quarterly resource for local church leaders
<https://eldersdigest.org/>
- Developing church elders – Trans-European Division
<https://ted.adventist.org/ministerial/elders/>

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Anyone working with children at Newport Church is required to complete a Disclosure application form before assuming role.