

## **THE CHURCH ELDER**

Exodus 8:13-26, Neh. 1:1-4, Acts 20:27, I Tim. 4:13

- A. Introduction:** - we are familiar with the truth that the Church is not a building; the Church is everyone who is born again having accepted Jesus as their Lord and saviour.

As we embark on a study about the church, we must remember that the church is not an organization or an institution. Rather the church is a living organism, constantly growing and changing. The church is a band of people attempting to glorify God in a world where God is not of primary concern.

- B. Qualifications of an Elder** 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 2:14-17; Titus 1:5-16 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Acts 20:17-37

- I. By CAC Constitutions, A person shall be qualified for appointment to the post of an Elder/Deacon if
- He/ she possess an untarnished reputation
  - He / she has been a member of the church for a period of least 10years, and has been baptised by immersion
  - He / she is a monogamist with unquestionable marital life
  - He / she does not hold any traditional chieftaincy title
  - An Elder/ Deacon shall remain in that post until he retires at age 65 / 70 years, or he / she accepts a traditional chieftaincy title with other attendant ritual practices, or he / she is suspended or removed by the Minister.

### **II. Functions**

- Act in an advisory capacity to the Pastor or the Church Teacher
- Participate in the decision making process of the Board of Elders / Deacons
- Assist the pastor or Church Teacher to conduct prayers and service, and
- Perform any other functions as may be assigned by the assembly council, the Pastor or the church Teacher.

### **II. Seventeen Characteristics of an Elder**

Elders are men / women above reproach or blameless. These are not sinless men/ women - sinless men / women do not exist. The elders who would lead the churches had to be men/ women without any outward character flaw.

- Husband devoted to wife (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:2) **one-woman one-man.**
- Children in submission (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:4-5).
- Faithful Steward (Titus 1:7). He is a steward, a manager of God's resources. He takes responsibility, **but not ownership.**
- Humble - not arrogant (Titus 1:7)

5. Gentle - not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3)
6. Moderate - **not a drunkard** (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3). This is not just overindulgence in alcohol but is idiomatic for any behaviour that fuels addictive responses.
7. Peaceful - **not violent** (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3), prone to inflict violence through his words. He is to be a peacemaker.
8. Financial Integrity - **not greedy** (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3; 1 Peter 5:3)
9. Hospitable (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2)
10. Lover of Good (Titus 1:8). **He does not just think he should love it.**
11. **Self-controlled** (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2). He is disciplined in his diet, time, mouth, exercise, relationships, sex, and money. He is consistently training in righteousness to be able to run the race set before him.
12. Upright (Titus 1:8). He is upright in his relationships and in how he treats others.
13. Holy (Titus 1:8). It is a life devoted wholeheartedly to Jesus, **externally and internally.**
14. Able to teach (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2). All of the other qualifications are character qualities. This is the only ability-based requirement. He is to be able to teach sound doctrine, not just be able to communicate in an excellent manner.
15. Spiritually Mature (1 Tim 3:6). **Positions of authority without spiritual maturity lead to the trap of pride.** When pride grows in a man sin abounds.
16. Respectable (1 Tim 3:7).
17. Example to the Flock (1 Peter 5:3). **We need models in our life to emulate.** Elders are examples of Biblical character such as sexuality, time management, marriage, parenting, worship, relationships and many others.

### **C. Lifestyle And Roles**

The elders in a church set the precedent for what faithful pastoral leadership is in that church. The duties of the elders are many according to Scripture. Elders, deacons, and members share the load.

- ✓ Prayer and intercession - Col. 4:2-4, Phil. 4:6
- ✓ Counsel to the Ministers - not supervisor
- ✓ Support the Levites – Gal. 6:6-7
- ✓ Ruling/leading the Church - 1 Timothy 5:17
- ✓ Managing the Church - 1 Corinthians 14:40 1 Timothy 3:4-5.
- ✓ Caring for people in the Church - 1 Peter 5:2-5
- ✓ Keeping the unity of the Church – Psalm 133
- ✓ Living exemplary lives - Hebrews 13:7
- ✓ Rightly using the authority God has given them - Acts 20:28

- ✓ Teaching the Bible correctly - Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:2
- ✓ Feedback to the Ministers.
- ✓ Praying & visiting the sick - James 5:13–15
- ✓ Teaching sound doctrine and refuting false teachings - Titus 1:9
- ✓ Working hard - 1 Thessalonians 5:12
- ✓ Rightly using money and power - 1 Peter 5:1–3
- ✓ Effectively use their gift
- ✓ The elders are to develop other leaders - 2 Timothy 2:1-2; Eph. 4:11-16
- ✓ Maintaining oversight

**D. Seven areas where mutual submission is expected:**

1. **Doctrinally**, each elder is expected to uphold in practice, teaching, counselling, and modelling the doctrinal statement established by the Church. An elder should be able to uphold and defend the doctrines of the church.
2. **Philosophically**, an Elder is to support the ministries of the church. An elder that openly criticizes philosophies, particularly with non-elders, is divisive.
3. **The polity of the church**. Every elder is to support and operate within the established structure. At no time is it acceptable to criticize the authoritative systems outside of the eldership.
4. **The lifestyles** of the elders are to be consistent with Scripture and mutually submissive to the other elders. An elder is to be above reproach in his attitude, actions, thoughts and words. He is to live as a model to the members of the church with regard to his family, marriage, finances, work ethic, self-control and appropriate dealings with others.
5. **An elder must respect the leadership** of all of the elders and particularly the pastor and other elders who act in a supervisory role (Heb. 13:7). Elders model submission and godly leadership principles to others in the church and on the eldership team.
6. **Leadership integrity** must be a premium for eldership. In whatever area of responsibility he has been entrusted, he is to develop and lead others toward achieving the mission and vision of the church. He must demonstrate reliability, sacrifice, dependability, competence and honesty.
7. **Trust and Confidence among the elders is imperative**. Trust is fragile and can be lost instantly or a long-earned trust may be eroded and then suddenly lost. Elders must trust one another implicitly. Systems, structures and leadership should not be forced to work around individuals who are prone to betraying this trust. Elders are entrusted with lives, with resources, with information and with the mission of Jesus. Misusing information or sharing information wrongly is a breach of trust and that elder will encounter discipline

**E. Conclusion:-** *All workers in the Church have their parts and roles in edifying the Church and glorifying Christ – Eph. 4:12 – 17. Every church which has understood this structure and every Pastor who has been blessed with mature workers/leaders, and who will allow them to do the job God has ordained for them to do, will have a very well balanced Church.*

