



# Choosing new elders

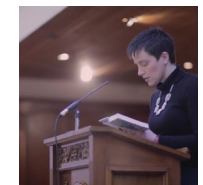
## FURTHER READING

If you want to read more on how the Presbyterian Church in Ireland defines the role of elders, look up these references in 'The Code': Code 16, 30, 34-44, 180. The Code is available to download from [www.presbyterianireland.org/thecode](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/thecode)

*Elders need to have particular gifts in leadership and pastoral care and a desire that people's lives would be transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."*

1 Peter 5:2-3



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**Choosing new elders to join the leadership team of your congregation is a very important decision. As part of this process, the elders of your congregation are asking all voting members to propose a name or names of potential new elders.**

The role of an elder is clearly outlined in Scripture. The following Bible passages refer specifically to the qualities and gifts of an elder: 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Your minister will also preach on the role of the eldership and outline the process to be undertaken over the next number of weeks.

**Here are some things to pray and think about as you consider who might have the potential to carry out this important role within your congregation.**

*An elder needs to have both godly character and the necessary gifting for the role.*

### BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

**The people you propose should be:**

- **Full members of the congregation.** An elder can be male, female, single or married – age is not as important as spiritual maturity.
- **Clearly Christian in their belief and lifestyle and clearly display Christlike character and conduct.**
- **Regular attenders at Sunday worship and show a willingness to serve in the life of the congregation.**
- **Someone you have known for some time.** They should have evidence in their life of having grown in faith in Christ. This means you can be more confident of the next two requirements which are gifting and godly character.

As well as what is mentioned above (which would include many people in the congregation), an elder needs to have **both** godly character **and** the necessary gifting for the role. It is possible to be very gifted in some areas but to lack the spiritual maturity required of an elder. Elders need to have particular gifts in leadership and pastoral care and a desire that people's lives would be transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### GIFTING

The questions below are intended to help you identify people with the gifts necessary to serve as an elder. As you reflect on these gifts, you might think of other questions to consider. No one has all these gifts in equal measure but if the answer is a strong 'no' to any, it will probably eliminate someone as a candidate. If the answers are more positive for most questions, that may point to people who would be good candidates.

#### Leadership

- Who takes the initiative and makes things happen?
- Who is encouraging and more often speaks positively than negatively?
- Who is open to change and yet displays wisdom and sensitivity to others?
- Who works well alongside others?
- Who encourages others to become involved?
- Who responds graciously when they don't get their own way?

#### Pastoral care

- Who is friendly and welcoming?
- Who listens well and asks questions about others which show they care?
- Who would you go to in a time of crisis?
- Who would pray for you when you need prayer?

#### Outreach

- Who has an open heart towards others no matter who they are?
- Who has an eye to see the needs people have and takes action?
- Who has a desire to see people come to know Jesus?

### GODLY CHARACTER

Having thought about gifting, the following questions are intended to help you reflect on the godly character of people you might be considering. Again, bear in mind that some may be gifted but lack the corresponding godly character to be an elder.

- Who shows evidence that they are continuing to grow and develop as Christian disciples?
- Who displays a desire to understand and share God's Word with others?
- Who displays the fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – in their lives and in their interactions with others?
- Who has a good reputation as a follower of Jesus with people outside the church as well as inside?

Being perfect is not necessary otherwise no one could be an elder, but do look for a consistent pattern of Christlike behaviour.