

What are Elders and Deacons?

October 11, 2017 by Ricky Jones

What in the world does the word PRESBYTERIAN mean anyway? I can hardly spell it much less understand it.

What a great question, I am so glad you asked. Presbuteros was the New Testament Greek word for elder. So basically Presbyterian means a church that is led by its elders.

Let me explain a little further. We have basically three types of church organizations today:

Congregational: ruled by majority vote.

Episcopal: led by one person with the help of a board.

Presbyterian: led by an elected group of leaders.

Most traditional Baptist churches and “non-denominational” churches are congregational. Most Methodist and Episcopal churches are led by bishops and are thus Episcopal. Oddly, most “mega” churches and even many smaller more Pentecostal churches are run by an episcopal style. By that, I mean whatever the pastor says goes, even though he would never call himself a bishop. It is his job to “protect the vision” and thus lead the church.

Elders who have been called by God and elected by the local congregation lead Presbyterian churches. Our pastors serve as elders who sit on the elder board, but not over it. These men are responsible to watch over the both the teaching and the morals of the church members to protect them from corruption. They should oversee the spiritual interests of the church. They should visit people in their homes to encourage, comfort, nourish and guard the children of the church. Finally, they should be men of prayer, praying with and for the people in the church. And elders should have a sound understanding of our Church’s doctrines. More importantly, they should be blameless in life, exhibiting sobriety and holiness that is becoming to the gospel. The second office in the church is that of Deacon. Deacons minister to those who are in need, the friendless and any in distress. They are responsible to encourage generous giving by church members, collect the gifts and disburse them. They have the care of the property and all the buildings belonging to the congregation.

These men should have a spiritual character, a reputation for honesty, lead exemplary lives, display a brotherly spirit, and sound judgment.

As a member of this congregation, your role is to identify those who God has called to these roles. First, we will receive nominations from the Church at large. The elders will train the nominees and once a slate is agreed upon, we will hold an election. At that time we ask that you vote each nominee up or down to the office they have been nominated. If you feel you do not know someone well enough to vote for or against him, we give you the option to abstain. We will also give you the opportunity to write out any concerns you have if you want to explain why you vote against a candidate.