



Elders' Workshop

The position of elder is a very ancient office and is mentioned in several passages in the Bible. In the eyes of the church, the elder is a spiritual leader in the sense that elders are ordained, ie. set apart.

As the need arises, elders (whether just ordained or having served 30 years!) are encouraged to attend workshops to receive spiritual renewal along with a review of elders' responsibilities and duties.

Recently a workshop took place in our Church Hall on 1st September 2007, under the guidance of Falkirk Presbytery trainer, Douglas Farmer, an elder at St Andrew's Bo'ness. We were encouraged in that 19 elders were present. We shared fellowship and breakfast at the start of the day, which set the "right tone" for the day.

Today's Challenges

Under the opening topic: "*Today's Church Challenges*", we realised that the Church of Scotland is no longer the recognised institution it was in the formative period of eldership (1940/50). The echo of "*we never did that before*" must change, if the Church is to adapt to meet the new challenges of this changing world in the 21st century.

Questions

Questions asked were:

† "*What makes the eldership so distinctive?*"

† "*Why did we become elders?*"

We divided into groups with each person in turn given two minutes to speak about someone who had a significant bearing on their church life and witness.

To refresh/test our memories, questions asked included:

† "*Who is responsible for fixing the number of services and the times of public worship?*"

† "*Who supervises KidZone?*"

† "*Who is Moderator at Session meetings?*"

(No answers are given, but if you are interested, ask an elder!)

Bereavement and pastoral care

After a welcome break for tea/coffee, in our next session we looked at bereavement and pastoral care. Douglas encouraged us in this session with wise words. Elders were given practical advice on visiting - consider the timing of the visit and be prepared to listen to what the member/adherent has to say. Before visiting, many elders pray that "*doors shall be open*" to them, while others pray that the member is out!!! Please do not laugh! Some elders find visiting their district something to look forward to, while others are filled with trepidation!!!!

Elders' duties

† Have you ever considered inviting your elder into your house or do you just keep him/her standing on the doorstep?

† Do you think all the elder does is deliver the communion card?

The function of the elder is to provide a pastoral concern for you and your family as well as providing information about church events. Perhaps the elder wants to get to know you better and you him/her. Please give prayerful consideration to this matter.

Listening skills

During a time of bereavement the elder should be listening even more intently and saying nothing (unless asked of course). At such a time as this, maybe the elder could offer to pray with the family. Elders were reminded that God is with them and by his Holy Spirit He will help them in how to pray.

Worship & prayer

After lunch we went into the last session looking at worship and prayer. For a church to move forward, we must adapt to meet the 21st century. Worship at Polmont has changed over the last year or so:

† individual seats in the centre give adaptability when the need arises;

† singing in the church has improved with the use of Powerpoint presentations (raised heads).

† The use of the keyboards and guitars etc. combined with the organ.

† The biggest change is that the elders lead the prayers of intercession on most Sundays.

Douglas was encouraged in this area giving guidance on prayer.

Prayer does not need to be complicated.

Over to you

As a Kirk Session we would value members' comments on such church matters – style of worship, church happenings and any matter, which is giving you cause for concern. This is a two-way process – if we don't know about it, we cannot put it right!

All those present at the workshop agreed that it was a wonderful day of fellowship and sharing together. God's presence was much in evidence on the day and we closed with a time of prayer and communion.

We give thanks to God for this experience, Douglas Farmer for his guidance and wisdom, Food 4 Friends for the catering.

Keith C Macdonald

a YAWN is:
An honest opinion openly expressed!