

THE ELDERS AND THE CHURCH MANUAL

Volume 4

Section D



General Conference
Ministerial Association

“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

Timothy 4:13-16



Let us go over the instructions in the *Church Manual* which are directly related to church elders. It is imperative that the elders be aware of what the church expects of them, just as it is established in the *Church Manual*.



I. Spiritual leadership



“Elders must be recognized by the church as strong spiritual leaders and must have good reputations both in the church and community.”

Church Manual (2010), p. 71



“In the absence of a pastor, elders are the spiritual leaders of the church...”

Ibid.



“...by precept and example [elders] must seek to lead the church into a deeper and fuller Christian experience.”

Ibid.



“Elders should be able to conduct the services of the church and minister in both word and doctrine...”

Ibid., p. 72



“[E]lders should not be chosen primarily because of social position or speaking ability, but because of their consecrated lives and leadership abilities.”

Ibid.



*“Elders may be reelected,
but it is not advisable for
them to serve
indefinitely.”*

Ibid.



“The church is under no obligation to reelect and may choose others whenever changes seem advisable.”

Ibid.



“Upon the election of new elders, the former elders no longer function as elders but may be elected to other church offices.”

Ibid.



II. Ordination of elders



“Election to the office of elder does not in itself qualify one as an elder. Ordination is required before an elder has authority to function.”

Ibid.



“Between election and ordination, the elected elder may function as church leader but not administer the ordinances of the church.”

Ibid.



“The ordination service is performed only by an ordained pastor currently credentialed by the conference.”

Ibid.





“As a courtesy, a visiting ordained pastor may be invited to assist. However, only on the specific request of conference officers would a visiting ordained pastor or a retired ordained pastor conduct the ordination.”

Ibid.

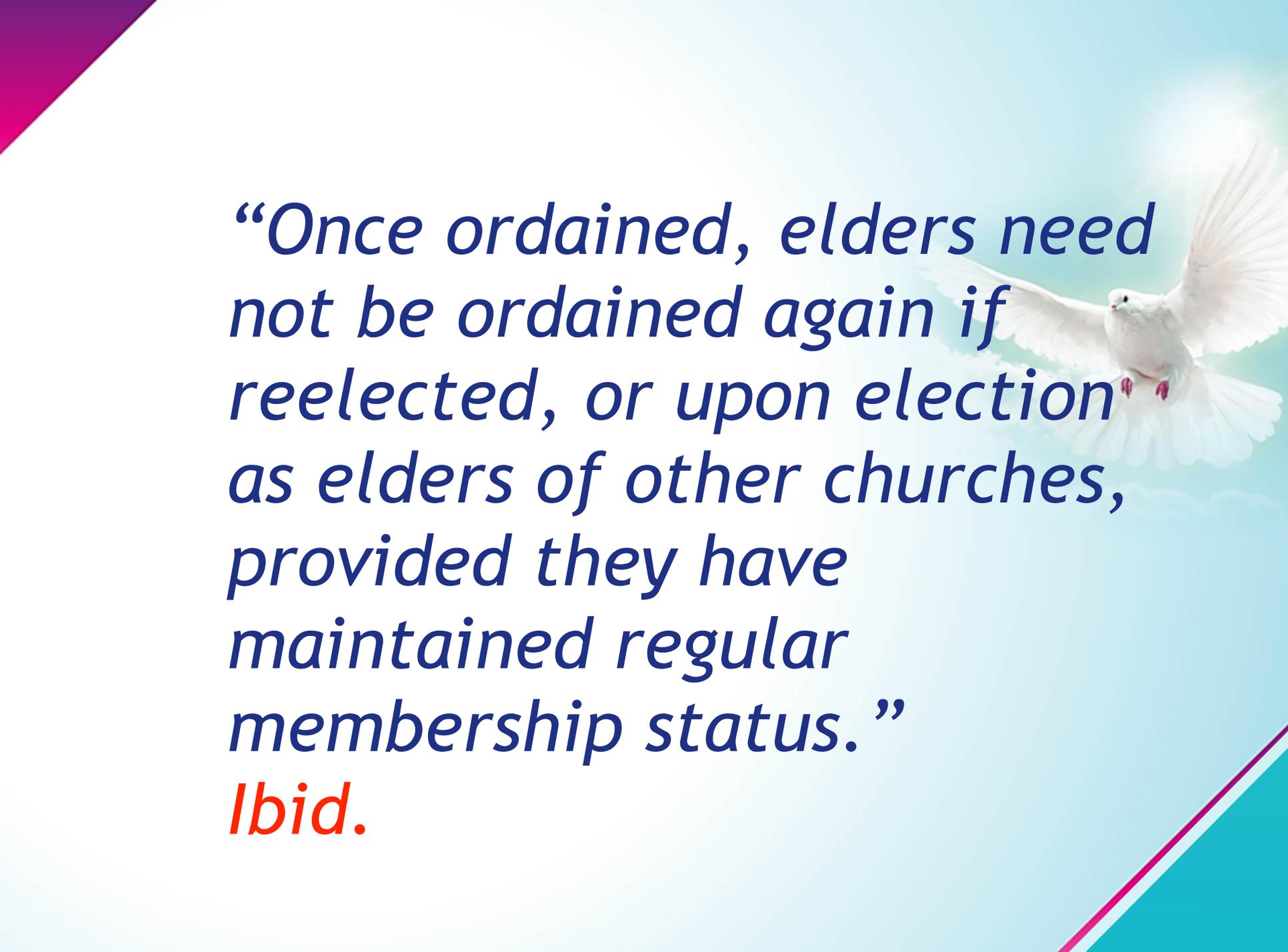
It is recommended that the ordination ceremony takes place in the church where the elders officiate as such. However, this is not a must.



“[T]he ordained pastor, assisted by other ordained pastors and/or local elders who are participating in the service, will ordain the elders by prayer and the laying on of hands.”

Ibid.





“Once ordained, elders need not be ordained again if reelected, or upon election as elders of other churches, provided they have maintained regular membership status.”

Ibid.

*“Once ordained,
elders... are also
qualified to serve as
deacons.”*

Ibid.



For those who have been ordained as deacons in the past and now are appointed elders, it is necessary to ordain them as elders. The ordination of deacon does not qualify them to serve as ordained elders.



If ordained elders are disfellowshipped from the bosom of the church, they lose their ordination as elders. If they return to the church and are again appointed as elders, they need to be ordained again. (This should only be done after a careful study and with the recommendation of the Conference).



III. The elders and their relationship with the district pastor



“[The] senior pastor... should be considered the ranking officer and the local elders as assistants. Since their work is closely related, they should work together harmoniously.”

Ibid.



“The pastor should not assume all lines of responsibility, but should share these with the elders and other officers.”

Ibid.



“The pastor regularly serving the church acts as the chairperson of the board... There may be circumstances, however, when it would be advisable for an elder to act as chairperson.”

Ibid.



“The pastoral work of the church should be shared by the pastor and the elders.”

Ibid.



“In counsel with the pastor, the elders should visit members, minister to the sick, foster prayer ministries, arrange or lead out in anointing services and child dedications, encourage the disheartened, and assist in other pastoral responsibilities.”

Ibid., pp. 72-73



*“As undershepherds,
elders should exercise
constant vigilance over
the flock.”*

Ibid., p. 73



If the pastors of the district are young ministers who have not been ordained as pastors, the church district must appoint them as elders so that they can develop and perform all the rites of the church. In such a case, the conference should ordain them as elders.



“Elders, who are elected by the church, are responsible to that body and to its board... The authority and work of elders are confined to the church in which their election has been made.”

Ibid.



“In order for an elder to officiate as such in two different churches, the soliciting church must take their request up to the Administrative Board of the Conference.”

Ibid.



“Under the pastor, or in the absence of the pastor, an elder is responsible for the services of the church and must either conduct them or arrange for someone to do so.”

Ibid.



“The pastor usually chairs the business meeting. In the absence of the pastor, and with approval of the pastor or the conference president, an elder should serve as chairperson.”

Ibid.



IV. The elders and the various services



1. Baptismal service

“An elder should not officiate in the [baptismal] service without first obtaining permission from the conference president.”

Ibid.



- The permit or authorization to baptize that the conference president grants to elders, is only for a particular baptismal service and not a permanent permission to continue baptizing.
- Each time it is necessary for the elders to officiate in a baptismal service, they need the authorization of the conference president.



2. Marriage ceremony

- “*In a marriage ceremony the charge, vows, and declaration of marriage are given only by an ordained pastor...*”

Ibid., p. 73-74

- The legal documentation is to be ***signed solely by the ordained pastor*** who is, additionally, also authorized by the secular laws to conduct marriage ceremonies.



In a marriage ceremony:

“[A]n elder may deliver the sermonette, offer the prayer, and give the blessing.”

Ibid.



3. Elders are authorized to:

- Minister to the sick.
- Officiate in funeral services.
- Lead out in child dedication.
- Lead out or preside at Communion Service.



Induction Service

“All newly elected officers of the local church may be included in an induction service conducted by a pastor holding a current license or credential. If no pastor is available



an elder of the church may conduct the service for officers other than elders, deacons, and deaconesses. If the church holds an induction service for newly elected officers, it should include leaders of all departments and other organizations.”

Ibid., p. 105



**Recapitulating
what we studied**



1. When choosing elders, should their social position be considered?

Answer: NO

2. If elders have been officiating as such for five years, is it mandatory that they be chosen as elders again?

Answer: NO

3. For those who are ordained elders, can they preside in the ordination ceremony of other elders?

Answer: NO



4. When ordained deacons are chosen as elders, is it necessary to ordain them as elders?

Answer: YES

5. Is the ordained pastor the only person that needs to care for the flock?

Answer: NO

6. Can a district pastor authorize their elders to permanently officiate in baptismal services?

Answer: NO



7. Can ordained elders sign the marriage documents?

Answer: NO

8. Can ordained elders deliver the sermonette during a marriage ceremony?

Answer: YES

9. Can ordained elders officiate in the dedication of children service?

Answer: YES

10. Can ordained elders determine by their own criteria how the *Church Manual* is to be used?

Answer: NO



“The Church Manual has existed in its current format since 1932. It describes the operation and functions of local churches and their relationship to denominational structures in which they hold membership.”



The Church Manual also expresses the Church's understanding of Christian life and church governance and discipline based on biblical principles and the authority of duly assembled General Conference sessions."

Ibid., p. 18



“God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.”

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