



"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

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Leadership Guides No. 3

Appointment of Elders and Deacons

INTRODUCTION

The *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* does not centrally appoint or 'approve' the local leadership of associating fellowships. The following introduction and *Guidelines* are general guidance for local assemblies. Their aim is to encourage good practice among the churches of God.

In the Scriptures we are instructed that each assembly of Christians should be properly ordered. To this end elders and deacons are chosen by the brethren, and appraised and appointed for that purpose.

An *elder* is the spiritual overseer or shepherd of the assembly, responsible before Jesus Christ to the brethren and to the wider community for its spiritual and ethical integrity.

The term *deacon/deaconess* as presently understood is generic, and is applied to various servants of the church, including Paul, Apollos, Timothy, Phoebe - and Jesus! CGOM applies the term to officially- appointed men and women who discharge practical duties for the assembly.

In the New Testament all those who 'manage the household of God', including apostles, are termed *stewards*. In *CGOM* we have chosen for clarity and convenience to limit the term to unordained men or women who host a local assembly.

It is important for the growth and perfecting of the church to have capable brethren fulfil these functions. The following questionnaire is designed to help local congregations with the selection process. It is an outline of the instructions given by the apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus for such appointments, and will help to identify the right candidate to fulfil a local need. The details of the questionnaire should remain confidential.

We strongly recommend that there be external review of all candidates by other experienced elders - after the example of Paul and his 'apostolic delegates' such as Timothy or Titus.

It is the desire of the *Churches of God Outreach Ministries* that every servant succeed in his appointment - not as one who lords it over the people he oversees, but as a helper of their joy while faithfully and courageously upholding the Word of God. Note that there is nothing listed in the Biblical qualifications about candidates having worldly success or position as a consideration. Listed, instead, are the qualities of character that come from walking with God and the present, observable, spiritual state and conversion of the candidate to the will of God and to good works.

God chose to bring salvation to mankind through the preaching and hearing of His Word. Unfortunately, as Paul stated, "there are many unruly vain talkers and deceivers". We hope the following guidelines will help to reduce mis-judgments and mis-appointments of elders and deacons.

Leadership Guidelines - *Appointment of Elders and Deacons*

A formal interview by a panel of mature brethren from the local assembly is important. Do not be reticent about probing carefully.

- Ask the candidate to express in writing his reasons for desiring/accepting ordination
- Has the candidate been known to the congregation for an adequate time?
- Has the candidate over time in his local assembly, served willingly and humbly, and shown leadership potential? Is he co-operative? Does he 'get his hands dirty' - or does he prefer to be served?
- Does the candidate make wise decisions?
- Is the candidate hospitable and generous?
- Is the candidate respectable and a good example (appearance, speech, general behaviour)?
- Is the candidate gentle, humble and non-violent, patient and not easily irritated?
- Is the candidate responsible, reliable, truthful and honest in his dealings? (This and the next are especially important for deacons)
- Is the candidate focused on money or possessions?
- Is the candidate the husband of one wife only (not a bigamist *etc*)
- Is he without sexual aberrations now or in his past? (Even if overcome it should be known to the panel - *e.g.* paedophilia, homosexuality. Would the brethren be comfortable with such an elder?) Perhaps a delicate one, this - but needed! There are now legal requirements concerning such matters, especially for those who work around children.
- Does the candidate have a problem with alcohol or other recreational drugs? (Even if overcome the panel should be aware.)
- Does the candidate manage well his own house and affairs, and have harmonious relationships in his own family?
- Is the candidate mature in faith, showing the fruits of God's Holy Spirit? ('Not a novice')
- Is the candidate well versed in God's Word?
- Is he (for elder) able to teach and communicate effectively?
- Has the candidate shown strong support for the teachings and traditions of the church? Has he been stable in his theology - weighing 'new truth' carefully and in consultation with other competent brethren and church leaders?
- Does the candidate have a good reputation with outsiders? Weigh carefully anything negative said by brethren or outsiders
- Has counsel been sought from other churches and known past and present associates?
- Is the candidate generally acceptable to those he will be serving?
- Is the candidate able to maintain confidentiality, and is he or she of good character (as for a deacon?)
- A *steward* (male or female) should be administratively competent, hospitable, honest and of sound character

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