



Marks of Ministry of an Elder and Marks of Ministry of an Elders Meeting*

Introduction

Elders are called to share responsibility, with the Minister of the Word and Sacraments, for the spiritual oversight of the congregation. They are ordained into the whole United Reformed Church and inducted to exercise their ministry through their local church. The Elders' meeting is intended to be a distinctive and vital part of every URC congregation with the Elders collectively possessing the abilities, skills and spiritual gifts of leadership.

The following is a description of what the United Reformed Church can reasonably expect of people who are called to be an Elder. It is expected that anyone called to the office of eldership will exhibit the following four marks:

An Elder in the United Reformed Church (URC) should be:

- **A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ:** caught up in the joy and wonder of God's will and work; seeking always to live a holy life in public and in private; to be committed to growing in faith and discipleship and developing the gifts each has been given and open to journeying as a disciple with others.
- **A person of integrity and prayer:** self-aware and committed to their own lifelong learning (especially through the URC's provision for elders); aware of their own limitations and thus willing to seek support; sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible reading and worship; upholding values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- **A person who cares for others:** sharing with others including the minister in offering and sustaining pastoral care; regarding all persons with equal love and concern; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.
- **A person of accountability:** committed to serving as an Elder within the conciliar oversight of the church; willing to engage in systems of support for elders; observing proper boundaries in relationships; willing to engage in mandatory training including safeguarding; understands their role as a Trustee (where appropriate) in administering the assets of the church; committed to the United Reformed Church and ready to collaborate with others for its mission in God's world.

The following is a concise and comprehensive description of what the United Reformed Church can reasonably expect of people who are called collectively to be an Elders Meeting. It is expected that every elder will be committed to ensuring the following marks of

ministry are in place although it is acknowledged that not all elders will embody all of these marks to the same extent:

The Elders' Meeting collectively should include the following Marks of Ministry:

- **Pastorally Caring for others:** sharing with others in offering and sustaining pastoral care; regarding all persons with equal love and concern; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.
- **Leadership and collaboration:** working collaboratively with Ministers/CRCWs in a team ministry and safeguarding the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes; sharing in spiritual leadership by praying through and discussing key issues in the life of the church and empowering church members to own and develop the ministry and mission of the fellowship; ensuring that the key functions of the local and wider church are fulfilled.
- **A focus upon mission and evangelism:** fostering in the congregation concern for witness and service to the community and evangelism at home and abroad; alive to the significance of contexts and cultures in shaping mission to live God's Kingdom of justice and peace to the full.
- **A commitment to participation in the councils of the Church:** responsive to God's call as gift and blessing to be lived out within the discipline and accountability of the denomination which ordains them and the pastorates into which they are inducted to serve.
- **A commitment to the church always being renewed** able to help congregations to discern and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit as new chapters open in the life of the Church and others close.

*Or the Council fulfilling the functions of an Elders Meeting in an LEP