

Revised

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259

FORM FOR THE ORDINATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS _ _

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The consistory has now twice published the names of the brethren who were elected and appointed to the office of elder and deacon in this church, to learn if anyone had objection against their ordination.

Since no one has brought forward anything lawful against their doctrine and life, we shall now in the Name of the Lord proceed to their ordination.

Let us first hear what Holy Scripture teaches about the offices of elders and deacons.

Institution

already in the old dispensation the people of God enjoyed the leadership and guidance of elders.
~~The people of God have never been without elders.~~

- Ex. 3:16 The LORD told Moses to gather the elders of Israel together in Egypt and to inform them of His promises to deliver them from bondage. These elders were with Moses in the desert.
- Ex. 17:5
- Num. 11:16 LORD told them to select from their midst seventy men to bear the burden of the people with him. Together with Moses these elders had ~~the~~ authority to command the people. At the end of his ministry Moses gave to all the elders of Israel the Law to rule God's people. Once in the promised land, these elders fulfilled their calling in every city.
- Deut. 27:1
- Deut. 31:9
- Josh. 20:4
- Judg. 8:16 When our Saviour had come, the elders made common cause with His enemies as the Gospels show abundantly. Christ knew that He must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and other leaders, ~~They~~ ^{who} delivered Him to Pontius Pilate to be crucified.
- Mk. 8:31
- Acts. 1:8
- Acts 6:12 Notwithstanding Peter's appeal to the rulers of the people and the elders, they continued to persecute the church. Therefore Jesus Christ, through His Spirit, rejected them and replaced them.

In His unceasing care for His flock the good Shepherd called apostles to be the foundation of His catholic church.

The apostles, in turn, appointed elders in every church with the cooperation of the congregation.

Acts 15:23 Apostles and elders gathered together, ~~and also elders had~~
 Acts 16:4 ~~authority~~ to take decisions to which the churches had to
 Acts 20:28 submit. Paul charged ^{the overseers} them to take heed to the flock in which
 the Holy Spirit had made them guardians.

IPet. 5:1 Peter admonished the elders to tend the flock of God that is
 their charge.

Phil. 1:1 In his epistle to the Philip^dpians the apostle adressed the
 saints together with the overseers and deacons.

ITim. 3:1-13 In order that these offices might remain he also gave his
 fellow-workers detailed instructions for selecting brethren
 Tit. 1:5-9 to these offices of overseers and deacons. Paul directed
 Titus to appoint elders in every town.

The New Testament calls these office-bearers not only pres-
 byters or elders but also bishops or overseers as well as
 shepherds and guardians.

The office of elder is, therefore, one of authority given
 by Christ. They fulfill their duties by reminding God's
 people of His ordinances and by exercising discipline over
 the disobedient; by caring for the flock and defending the
 sheep against the dangers that threaten them.

Mandate

Cls to their mandate. First, the task of the elders is, together with the ministers
 of the Word, to have supervision over Christ's church, that
 I Thess every member in doctrine and life may conduct himself pro-
 2:11-12 perly according to the gospel.

Tit. 1:9 For this purpose they ^{shall} faithfully visit the members of the
 congregation in their homes to comfort, instruct and admo-
 nish them with the Word of God, ~~They~~ ^{ing} reprov^{ed} those who behave
 improperly, ~~and watch that the sacraments not be profaned.~~

They ^{shall} exercise christian discipline according to the command
 of Christ against those who show themselves unbelieving and
 ungodly and refuse to repent. *They shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned.*

Mat. 18:17, 18 Second, ^{being stewards of the house of God, they are} ~~their office is~~ to take care that in the congrega-
 tion all things are done decently and in good order, ~~because~~
~~they are stewards of the house of God.~~ For this purpose they

I Tim. 4:4 form, together with the ministers of the Word, the presbytery
 or consistory of the church.

I Pet.5:1-4 Together they tend the flock of God which is in their charge. They must prevent that anyone serves in the church without having been called lawfully.

Third, it is their duty to assist the ministers of the Word with good counsel and advice. They are also charged with the supervision over the doctrine and conduct of these fellow-servants. They may permit no strange doctrine, so that in every respect the congregation is edified by the pure doc-

Acts 20:29-31 ~~that~~ ^{NO} ~~against the wolves which try to~~ enter the sheepfold of the

John 10:7-13 good Shepherd.

To do their work well as shepherds of God's flock, the overseers should train themselves in godliness and diligently search the Scriptures which are profitable in every respect, that the man of God may be equipped for every good work.

II Tim.3:14-17

The Ministry of Mercy

Concerning the ministry of mercy, assigned to the deacons, the Lord impressed upon His people Israel to show mercy to the needy. ~~Moses did not tire to repeat the command~~ ^{God repeatedly Commanded.} that

Deut. 14:28, 29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; 27:19 the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow might eat within their towns and be filled. In the old dispensation the needy and suffering were protected and provided for by God's fatherly love. His ordinances taught the covenant people to imitate that love as beloved children.

John 14:9 The Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us the Father, came into the world to serve. In His mercy He fed the hungry, healed the sick and showed compassion ^{to} ~~for~~ the afflicted. Thus He gave an example that His church should do likewise. The ministry of mercy as assigned to the deacons, proceeds therefore from this love of our Saviour.

After the example of her Lord, the first christian congregation took care that no one in her midst suffered want. To each was contributed according to need.

Acts 2:46; 4:32-37

Mt.25:31-46 Also now the Lord calls us to show hospitality, generosity and mercy, so that the weak and needy may share abundantly in the joy of God's people. No one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness and poverty.

Rom.12:13
Heb.13:2,16
I Pet.4:9

Phil. 1:1 For the sake of this service of love Christ has given deacons to His church.

Acts 6:1-7 The apostles realized that they would have to give up preaching the Word of God if they had to give their full attention to the daily support of the needy. Therefore they assigned this duty to seven brethren chosen by the congregation. It is the responsibility of the deacons to see to the good progress of this service of charity in the congregation. They shall acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties, and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy. They shall gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's Name according to need. They are called to encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love. They shall promote with word and deed the ~~manifestation of the~~ unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit, which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.

Gal.6:10
I Thess.3:12
IIPet. 1:7

In this way God's children will increase in love to ^{one} another and to all men.

Ordination

Beloved brethren, you are about to enter upon your respective offices. We request you to answer the following questions before God and His holy church.

First, are you convinced in your hearts that God Himself, through His congregation, has called you to these offices?

Second, do you receive the Old and the New Testament as the only Word of God and the complete doctrine of salvation? Do you reject all doctrines ~~that~~ ^{ing} conflict with it?

Third, do you promise faithfully to discharge the duties of your office and to adorn it with a godly life, -you elders in the government of the church, - and you deacons in the ministry of mercy? Do you also promise to submit yourselves to the discipline of the church in case you should become delinquent in doctrine or life?

What is your answer?

Answer: I do (to be given by each personally).

The almighty God and Father grant you His grace, that you may faithfully and fruitfully discharge your offices, Amen.

Charge

Brethren elders, as good shepherds of Christ's flock and faithful watchmen over the house of God, be diligent in governing the church, in comforting the distressed and in admonishing the wayward. Take heed that the congregation abide by the

I Pet.5:2-4 pure doctrine and ^{lead} a godly life. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.

Brethren deacons, be faithful and diligent in the gathering of gifts and distribute them cheerfully to those who need assistance. Support those who are burdened with cares or who are lonely, Give in your ministry of mercy a good example to the congregation of the service to which all are called by Christ Jesus.

I Tim.3:9 Be all with one accord faithful in your offices. Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. If you serve well,

I Tim.3:13 you will gain a good standing for yourselves, always have

Mat.25:21 good confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus, and finally enter into the joy of your Master.

I Thess. 5:12,13 On the other hand, beloved brothers and sisters, receive these men as servants of God. Respect the overseers who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem

Heb. 13:17 them very highly in love because of their work. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as men who will have to give account.

Take care that the deacons have sufficient means to fulfill their ministry. Be good stewards of all that the Lord has entrusted to you. Remember ~~that~~ Christ, ~~gave~~ you ~~an~~ example ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ serve ⁱⁿ the church of God.

Prayer

Since we are unable of ourselves, let us call upon the Lord our God.

Lord God and heavenly Father, it has pleased Thee for the edification of Thy church to ordain overseers and deacons besides the ministers of the Word.

We thank Thee that Thou hast given us men who are endowed with Thy Holy Spirit. Grant them more and more the gifts they need; wisdom, courage, discretion and mercy, so that everyone may fulfill his office as it is pleasing to Thee.

Give Thy grace to both elders and deacons that they may persevere in faithful service, without being hindered by trouble and sorrow or by persecution of the world.

Grant this people over whom Thou hast set them, to submit themselves willingly to the good exhortation of the overseers and to esteem ^{them} in love because of their work.

Give us ardent love for ~~one~~ ^{each} another. Grant that we may cheerfully provide the deacons with sufficient means, so that the needy ~~lack nothing,~~ *may be liberally supplied.*

We beseech Thee that by the faithful service of everyone the kingdom of Thy Son may come and Thy Name be glorified, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever,
Amen