

# TABLE OF CONTENT

## THE CHURCH AND PUPORSE OF ORGANIZATION

The church is God's ideal.....	3
Since God is an organizer.....	3
The Bible uses the word.....	3
The church plan is a divine.....	4
But when the flood came.....	4
The church was founded by Christ.....	4
A Christian is one who loves Christ.....	4
What is a church?.....	7
A church is a group of Christian people.....	5
To be precise, a church.....	5
A church must not focus.....	5
There should be no discrimination.....	6
A church is a group of Christian people.....	6
"Learning to love." .....	6
The church must never assume itself.....	6
"Love God and each other." .....	7
A church is a group of Christian people.....	7
A church is often tempted.....	7
Is it safe for a non-member or non.....	7
A church is a place for healing.....	8
What is a church?.....	8
The organization of the church.....	8
Bible models.....	8
Body model.....	8
Function.....	9
New Testament model.....	9
The Holy Seed Church.....	9
This world view provides.....	10
The holy Seed Church grew.....	10
Papal, where the Pop.....	10
Levels of the holy seed church.....	10
Institutions.....	11

<b>Finances.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Importance of the church Elder.....	12
Old Testament elders.....	12
“So the Lord said to Moses.....	12
Inspiration tells us.....	13
<b>New Testament elders.....</b>	<b>13</b>
The Holy Seed Church Elders.....	14
The church Manual now stipulates.....	14
Church dependent upon elders.....	14
The need for effective pastors.....	15
The holy seed church is torching.....	15
The holy seed church respect.....	15
The role of church leaders.....	15
<b>Baptism.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Child dedication.....	18
Church standards and discipline.....	21
Support for conference/mission.....	24
<b>The elder’s call and qualifications.....</b>	<b>26</b>
Job description.....	27
Ordination.....	34
<b>The elder as supporter.....</b>	<b>36</b>
Support church secretary.....	37
Support church deacons and deaconesses .....	38
Support church treasurer.....	39
Support church ministries.....	40
Support communication .....	45
Support Christian education.....	45
Support health and temperance.....	46
Support literature ministry.....	47
<b>The elder and church growth.....</b>	<b>47</b>
World church growth.....	47
Local church growth.....	48
We suggest three.....	53
Reclaiming missing members.....	53
Holding new members.....	56



## THE PILLARS OF THE HOLY SEED CHURCH

### THE CHURCH AND PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATION

1. The church is God's ideal. – Everywhere God is at work there is organization. Focus a microscope on the tiniest of His creations. What do you see? Precise, predictable organization. Train a telescope on the vastness of His universe. What do you see? Organization so precise and predictable that all societies have used the sun, moon, and stars to measure their time and steer their ships. People, who want to be part of God's plan, but not part of an organization, do not understand how God works. "System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe" Wherever God is at work there is organization.
2. Since God is an organizer and since He is in the work of saving sinners, you would expect Him to put together an organization to help Him do it. This He has done from the beginning. His first organization was the home and family. We call it the patriarchal system. Later, He used a nation the people of Israel. Since New Testament times He has used a community of believers called out from the world to be together in what we call the church. God has designated elders as important leaders in this church organization. But they must love the church to serve it effectively, and to love it intelligently they must first understand it. Thus it is both appropriate and imperative to begin this by focus on the nature and purpose of the church.
3. The Bible uses the word "church" in at least two ways. When used in a general sense it refers to God's regenerate people in every place and in every time (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:10). Israel was called the "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). Thus, church may refer to God's people anytime in history. It includes the universal or world church.

When used in a particular sense, church refers to one localized assembly, perhaps in a stipulated city (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). Thus, church may refer to a specific, local congregation. Both understandings of a church will be discussed. However, since elders are first of all leaders in local congregations, that meaning of church will be emphasized.

**4. The church plan is a divine, not a human plan.** Acts 2:47 stipulate, “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The ideal of adding people to the church did not originate with the pastor, evangelist, or conference president. It is the Lord’s ideal. Also, there is some relationship between salvation and church membership, for the text states that God adds to the church those who are being saved. The church today is like the ark in Noah’s day. Noah’s ark was no doubt an imperfect boat for it was built by humans.

**5. But when the flood came it did the job of helping God save His people,** for it was built after God’s plan. The church is an imperfect organization for it is made up of humans. But it will do the job of helping God save His people, for it is built after God’s plan. God is deeply committed to the success of this His church organization, in spite of its imperfections. “I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the holy object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard He comes personally by his Holy Spirit into the midst of His church”

**6. The church was founded by Christ.** – Jesus was speaking of Himself when He said, “On this rock I will build my church” Matthew 16:18. These few words say at least three very significant things about Christ and the church: He built it, He built it on Himself, and it is His church. Christ is “head of the church” Ephesians 5:23. He appointed its first leaders Mark 3:14. He loves His church as a bridegroom loves his bride Ephesians 5:25-32. In Eden, Adam slept. His side was opened, and Eve emerged. At Calvary the second Adam, Jesus, slept. His side was opened, and the church emerged. As Eve stood before Adam in Eden, he loved her. As his church stands before Christ today, He loves her. Be very cautious about criticizing the church, for you are criticizing Christ’s bride. And no good man takes it lightly when you criticize His bride not even if she deserves it.

**7. A Christian is one who loves Christ and wants to do as Christ does.** In considering our relationship with the church all we need to know is what Christ did, for that is what we will want to do too. Ephesians 5:25 states, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.” Improve the church. Reform the church. But not until you have first loved the church. To be Christ like is to love the church and give yourself for it.

**8. What is a church? – The Bible uses many images to represent the church:** a holy nation, a covenant people, the body of Christ, the family of God, a household of faith, the bride of Christ, a royal priesthood. A local church is referred to as a congregation, a gathering, or an assembly. What does all this mean? What really is a church? Four suggestions:

**9. A church is a group of Christian people.** The church is an organism to which Christ Himself gives spiritual life. Therefore, it cannot be defined in merely human terms. However, it is very important to see the church as Christ centered and people oriented. The church does not exist for the sake of itself as an institution, but for the sake of its people. A church is a group of people. The word “church” is sometimes defined as designating persons called out, separated. While it is true that Christians are called out from the world, they are called out to be together. Christianity is a relational religion. It cannot be fully realized in isolation.



**10. To be precise, a church is not the building in which a group of people meet,** but the group of people who meet in the building. There is a subtle danger to worshiping in a fine church building, for the condition of the building may mistakenly be presumed to accurately reflect the condition of the church. Church historians think there may have been as many as five million converts to Christianity during its first century. Yet, during this period when the church was at its spiritual peak, we find no mention of church buildings. On the other hand, during the ages of the church’s spiritual history it built its most lavish buildings.

A church must be measured by the spirituality of its people, not by the magnificence of its building.

**11. A church must not focus even on doctrine to the exclusion of people.** The church does not exist for the sake of its doctrines, but for the sake of its people. Every doctrine must be defended, not only on the basis of its truth, but on the basis of its helping people become Christ like.



Truth and doctrine are significant to God but only as they help people. There should be no hierarchy in Christ's church. He taught, "But you, do brethren. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant" Matthew 23:8-11. The relationship between the leaders and the led in Christ's church is not to be that of master and servant, but church leaders, including local elders, are to be servant leaders.

**12. There should be no discrimination in Christ's church based on race, tribe, or gender.** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). To be Christian, a church must continually examine itself that not become institution centered, building centered, or even doctrine centered. Christ's church is Christ centered and people oriented.

**13. A church is a group of Christian people called out from the world learning to love God and each other.** Notice three parts of this significant sentence: "Called out from the world." The church is made up of people called by God (1 Peter 2:9. It is constituted by the action of God. Its members are God's "chosen ones," His "elect." God initiates the call, people respond. God call His church from the world. It must be in the world, but it must not be of the world. A church that is like the world will have little success in attracting people from the world.

**14. "Learning to love." Christianity is love centered living.** Babies born into this sinful world are not born loving. They are born with a need for love and with a potential for love, but they are born quite purely self-centered. How will baby learn to love? God has prepared an institution called a home where, surrounded by love, children learn to love. Born again Christians do not come from the baptistery able to love fully. How will these babes in Christ learn Christian love? God has prepared an institution called a church where, surrounded by loving Christians, they learn to love Christ.

**15. The church must never assume itself to be made up of people who have already learned to love as fully as Christians ought to love.** A church is not a museum, but a workshop. In a museum, items finished long ago are lined up on display. It is very quiet in a museum because not much is going on. In a workshop, on the other hand, some items are in the beginning stages, some half done, and some nearing completion. Changes are taking place. Things are happening. A church is like that. Its people should be expected to be in every stage of Christian love learning and busy with the process.

**16. “Love God and each other.” Christ’s great commandment was that we love God (Matthew 22:37-39).** A church is not a social club. Its primary focus is not on enjoying one another, but on loving God. On the other hand, its secondary emphasis is on loving each other. Humans have no way of knowing whether their love for God is genuine except as it helps them love one another. In church fellowship, members accept and welcome each other as being one in Christ (Ephesians 4:32). Unity in the church is Christ’s proof to the unchurched that there is power in the gospel, “By one another” (John 13:35).

**17. A church is a group of Christian people reaching out to the world, inviting others in.** Any church that takes its mission seriously finds itself in some perpetual tension between separating from and reaching to. A church focusing on either without the other will be out of balance. Christ’s intention was that His church should separate itself from the sinfulness of the world, all the while reaching out lovingly to serve and save the world.

**18. A church is often tempted to become totally absorbed in looking at itself its meetings, its committees, its building, its children, its members, itself.** The truly Christians church, on the other hand, looks at everything it does in the light of reaching its community, inviting and befriending visitors, making sinners feel welcomed. To be Christian, a church must have standards for church membership, higher standards for church leadership, but never any standards for Christian friendship. If inquiring sinners don’t feel at home in your church, yours is not a Christian church no matter what doctrine it teaches. For such sinners always felt at home around Christ.

**19. Is it safe for a non-member or non – Christians to attending your church?** Would things be said that they could not comprehend? Would people promoting a The Holy Seed Church lifestyle embarrass and discourage them? As elder and church leader, pretend every now and then that you are a nonmember visiting your church for the first time. Does anything happen that would really make you want to come back? Every church member is meant to be a minister. “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Every church member, in receiving the Holy Spirit, receives a spiritual gift to be used in soul winning ministry. “And God has appointed these in the church: First apostles, second prophets, third teachers, fourth Evangelists, fifths pastors and including singers after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” 1 Corinthians 12:28.

**20. A church is a place for healing the hurts of life.** The nursing station in the emergency section of a hospital had a sign on the wall, “The pain stops here.” What good news to the injured and the very sick. Hospitals stop pain. In many countries hospital are expensive place to go, but people keep right on going anyway because nobody wants to stop going anyplace that stops their pain. What a blessing if every The Holy Seed Church could honestly place such a sign across its pulpit, “The pain stops here.” People will come swarming to anyplace that stops their spiritual pain. There are many definitions of former or inactive members. Some categorize them as worldly, undependable, or quitters. However, a former or inactive member might simply be whose pain the church has failed to stop.

**21. What is a church?** Its purpose is nowhere better illustrated than in the picture of those African herds who, when the lion is on the prowl, group themselves in a large circle, horns pointed out. Inside the large circle is a smaller circle. And in the small circle are the old and the young, the sick and the weak the very ones that lion is after. But the circle, if it remains united and intact, is impregnable. The lion goes hungry. The Bible says “The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1Peter 5:8). A church is a group of Christian people who form a circle of defense between themselves and Satan. The strong stand between the devil and the discouraged insisting, “In the name of Christ we declare that these are ours. We offer ourselves in their defense. You cannot have them! “That is a Christian church.

## **22. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH**

The organization is needed, not only because God ordained it, but because the church has been given such an overwhelming task and organization is necessary to get things done. A business without organization would go bankrupt. A government without organization would create chaos. But just what kind of organization should a church have?

**23. Bible models.** – Notice three Bible models of church organization: Israel model. Israel’s organization was precise and detailed. In their march through the wilderness they went in “divisions” Numbers 10:28. They were divided into 12 tribes with a prince over each and further divided into groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens Deuteronomy 1:15; Exodus 18:21-22. Each tribes had its assigned position both in the camp and when marching.

**24. Body model.** One of the most graphic and helpful models of order and organic union in the church comes from Paul’s oft-repeated illustration of the church being like a body. The human body has a head, arms, legs, and torso as



well as vital internal parts (1 Corinthians 12:12-28). Although these parts vary tremendously in appearance, placement, and function, each is essential. The whole body is dependent on each part performing its task. Paul says the church, the body of Christ, operates the same way. Members, coming from a multitude of different racial backgrounds, are very different from one another. But all become part of one body, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greek, whether slaves or free” (1 Corinthians 12:13) upon entrance into the body, each member is to perform some specific.

**25. Function.** The Holy Spirit calls each to a particular ministry in the church. Each is empowered by the Spirit to perform that ministry successfully. “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He will. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (1 Corinthians 12:11-13, 7). Just as in the human body, where the function of each part is vital to the health of the [person], so in the body of Christ the participation of each member is important to the health of the church. Though the use of his or her individual spiritual gifts, each member contributes something unique to the church. If every part functions the church thrives. The head directs the body, and the head of the church body is Christ (Colossians 1:1-8). The body is an extension of His will. It does on earth what He would do if He were here. Through His Holy Spirit He equips each local church with every gift needed to successfully do the work He has assigned it to do for Him.

**26. New Testament model.** The early church model is that of an organization gradually developing as needs arose. The first organizational group consisted of the apostle’s council in Jerusalem (Acts 6:2; 8:14). As numbers and needs exploded, other leaders were chosen to relieve the apostles of work for which they were not well suited (Acts 6:2-4). Eventually, churches in some areas apparently grouped together in organizations similar to what we today call local conferences (Galatians 1:2). Underlying and guiding this expanding organization was the admonition of Paul, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). The Holy Seed church has patterned its organization after that of the New Testament church.

**27. The Holy Seed Church.** – The savior’s gospel commission of taking the gospel to the whole world is an awesome task (Matthew 28:19-20). All denominations accept to some extent this responsibility. But The Holy Seed Church in a very unique purposeful way must always remain organized with an overwhelming emphasis on a world mission. Any local church that focuses only on local activities has lost the unique The Holy Seed Church world vision. The Holy Seed Church believes the work will not be finished anywhere until it is finished everywhere.

**28. This world view provides an awesome organizational challenge** that must be understood by local elders and their churches before they can truly appreciate the Holy seed Church organization: (a) the task is enormous and so the organization must be efficient. (b) The task is global and so there must be enough authority delegated to levels of government outside the local congregation to assure equitable worldwide distribution of personnel and finance. (c) The task is multi-national and multi-cultural and so the organization must be flexible.

**29. The holy Seed Church grew out of a reform group** that had become disillusioned with and pulled away from other denominational organizations. Thus, there was reluctance to start another organization would it not become like the ones they had left? But the necessity of organization soon outweighed the skepticism toward it. Note the five reasons for church organization as delineated in summary, "As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable ." Four forms of church government. Churches are usually thought of as being organized under one of following types of government:

**30. Papal, where the Pop has supreme authority.** 2. Episcopal, where final authority rest with church bishops. 3. Congregational, where full authority within its domain rests with the local congregation. 4. Representative, where authority rests with church members, but responsibility for planning and coordination is delegated to other levels. The Holy Seed Church follow this representative form of church government is reviewed at periodic "sessions." At these sessions reports are given, leaders are held accountable and new leadership is chosen. Delegates to these sessions are typically chosen by the entity just beneath the one being reviewed. For example, before a local conference session, each local church chooses delegates from its congregation to represent it at the session.

**31. Levels of the holy seed church,** - There are five levels of administrative and four levels of constituent's organization in the holy seed church. The four nonstudent levels are: 1. The local church, an organized body of individual believers. When a group not yet organized as a church has growth in membership and spiritual maturity, has demonstrated spiritual gifts sufficient to

provide for its own nurture and to witness in its community, and is able to show that it has sufficient finances to sustain itself, it may apply to the local mission or conference for status as an organized local church and to be included in the sisterhood of churches. Before that time, the group, in counsel with the district pastor or some other conference/mission representative may form a company.

When the local conference or mission is satisfied that such a company is ready to assume the status of an organized church, a conference /mission representative will bring the company together and officiate in the organization of a local church. 2. The local conference or local field/mission, an organized body of churches in a state, province, or territory. 3. The union conference or union mission, a body of conferences or fields within a larger territory. 4. The General Conference, the larger unit of organization, headquartered in western province in Kenya.

**32. Institutions, - The outline of the holy seed church organization** is incomplete without mention of the church's institutions. From its beginning, denominational structure has included educational, health care, publishing, and other institutions, separately organized, but designed to play a significant part in fulfilling the church's mission. General conference authority. The General Conference in session, and its executive committees between sessions, is the highest organization in the administration of the church's worldwide work. "Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and to say what plans shall be followed. But when, in General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private in dependence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered."

**33. Finances.** A global organization such as the holy seed church could not operate unless it had an efficient financial system. Even though the church has little interest in the riches of this world, it needs money to operate its worldwide work. Most of the church's income is gained through the tithe received from members who faithfully follow God's plan and give one tenth of their increase to assist the church in its work (Malachi 3:10). One significant uniqueness of the holy seed church is that while the local conference does use a portion of each tithe and special offerings to pay local pastors, significant percentages are sent to each level of church government to be distributed among mission programs and soul winning projects around the world. This method of sharing money given in the local church is practical proof of the congregation's belief in itself as part of a worldwide movement .Further income is received through various offerings of the church.

The annual Ingathering appeal, conducted by churches in their local communities, similarly assists in the benevolent and educational outreach of the church.

**34. Importance of the church Elder; the church, like every organization,** prospers only when there is good leadership. Jesus Christ is the church's principal leader (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18). In a sense, the church is a monarchy and Christ is its king. Christ, in turn, prepares, chooses, and assigns others to work with? Him in leading His church. Scripture reminds us of dynamic leaders such as Moses, Elijah, Daniel, Peter, and Paul. However, it is a mistake to think that the "big names" were the only leaders functioning in the church. There was another level of leadership operating throughout Scripture, and although often overlooked, it contributed enormously to the development of the church.

The second level of leadership was provided by the elders in local congregations. The term "elder" is used 194 times in the King James Version of the Bible, usually referring to a position of church leadership. It is used more often in the Old Testament than in the New. Faithfully serving in their synagogues and among their Christian communities scattered through the world, these elders, working at the level of the people, held together God's church and helped keep alive its mission to the world.

**35. Old Testament elders.** – The term elder in the Old Testament does not necessarily mean an old person, but does imply one of maturity and experience.

It designates those of official position such as heads of families or tribes (Genesis 50:7; Exodus 3:16; 2 Samuel 5:3). When Moses attempted to make upon himself the whole burden of leadership, God spoke to him through Jethro, his father-in-law. Referring to Moses' attempt to carry alone the whole burden of Israel's leadership, Jethro said, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself" (Exodus 18:17-18). Through this experience early in Israel's history, God was teaching His church a lesson many leaders still have not learned leadership authority is to be delegated. Leadership responsibility is to be shared.

**36. "So the Lord said to Moses:** 'Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of

the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone' "(Numbers 11:16-17).

**37. Inspiration tells us more about the qualifications of these elders,** When choosing seventy elders to share with the responsibilities of leadership, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, men possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these elders at the time of their ordination, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a wise ruler in the church. 'Hear the cause between your brethren,' said Moses, 'and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's ' "(Acts). Elders were still performing similar duties in Israel at the time of Christ (Matthew 15:2; 21:23; 26:3, 47).

**38. New Testament elders.** – The New Testament speaks of work of an elder as bring "a noble task" (1 Timothy 3:1). In the New Testament, the words "elder," "bishop," and "overseer" are used interchangeably (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17-28). The title denotes just the senior age of the leader, but a role as spiritual guardian of the congregation (1 Peter 5:1-3). The office of elder in the New Testament church was evidently suggested by the office of elder among the Jews, and was invested with similar authority. Elders existed practically from the beginning of the Christian church. They already existed in the church at Jerusalem in AD 44, (Acts 11:30).

Elders were associated with the apostles in the government of the church (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4). They were the bishops or overseers of the local churches (Acts 20:17-28; Titus 1:5), having spiritual care of the congregation, exercising rule, and giving instruction (1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:12; Titus 1:9; James 5:1-4). It appears from Scripture that there were two types of primary leadership in the New Testament church.

(1) The apostles who cared for the overall teaching, planning, administration, and evangelism of the church. These were generally itinerant workers whose labors often extended beyond national boundaries. (2) The elders who were laypersons and performed assigned pastoral duties in their local congregations. These faithful elders exercised their spiritual gift for leadership and provided a ministry that gave strength and direction to the local church.



**39. The Holy Seed Church Elders.** – During the middle Ages the clergy largely took over the work of the church. The holy seed church still struggles to overcome that medieval tradition, and seeks to restore the biblical concept that all believers are ministers (Ephesians 4:11-12). Members in general and elders in particular need a greater vision of their significance and responsibility in the church and its work. History of The Holy Seed Church elders. The work of the local elder has rather gradually and continuously evolved through the brief history of the holy seed church. The Holy Seed church Encyclopedia traces the evolution of the church elder: The earliest churches seem to have elected deacons, but not elders.

**40. The church Manual now stipulates, in the work and organization of the church,** if a pastor has not been provided by the conference or mission, the office of elder ranks as the highest and most important.” In recent years the world church has taken the stance that where Division committees approve and where a local congregation agrees, women may serve as local elders. The Ministerial Association has now taken the responsibility to give leadership in supporting and training local elders. The Association does this in cooperation with Church Ministries and other departments. The objective is to develop strong, committed, witness and nurture oriented pastor elder teams that will provide the spiritual leadership our churches are waiting for.

Elder’s Digest is a publication of the Ministerial Association specifically for elders. Elders are encouraged to subscribe to the magazine and some conference give free subscriptions to their elders. Ministry /magazine are another fine resource for elders that help one’s ministry and can be subscribed to as well. The Ministerial Supply Center at the General Conference makes materials and equipment available for elders. Being produced to help elders in the preparation of sermons. Training materials are being made available for conference ministerial secretaries and local pastors to use in training elders.

**The churches led by the Holy Spirit not personal sense. Zachariah 4:6.**

**41. Church dependent upon elders.** On any given Sunday, probably more the holy seed church sermons are preached and more worship services are led by local elders and prophets than by pastors. There are just few ministers who are saving 7 billion people to be reached worldwide. Even when a pastor is available full time or the church is large enough to have more than one pastor, the needs of the church and its members are far too many for pastors to do all the work and according to the Bible plan they should not. Only through the faithful ministry of local church elders can churches thrive.

**42. The need for effective pastors, prophets and elders teams is even more acute in developing countries.** The holy seed church is growing faster now than even before. Seeds usually provide a route of upward mobility. New converts will eventually give to the church enough means to provide pastors for them, but at the beginning they cannot and so pastors must oversee huge multi-church districts. They may visit a given congregation only every two or three months. Only the work of faithful local elders keeps such churches alive.

**43. The holy seed church is torching thousands of soul every day;** approaching 2 million in months, through the spirit of God is preparing his people to meet Him at last hour. With majority of new members in place where few pastors are available. Who will shepherd them? Hopefully, their trained and dedicated local elders. With a decreasing ratio of salaried ministers per member, and with an increasing understanding of God's intended role for the local elder, the holy seed church today welcomes the strengths and talents of its elders as never before. As we focus to reach our goal of seven billion people and over, in all means winning souls for Christ.

**44. The holy seed church respect all churches regardless of their denomination** as we join together preparing people to meet their God. Every church has its goal as they lead church members to reach at the cross, I believe if we can have one sound and leave alone the difference arising in denominations, we shall hid our goal. In heaven we not have denominations by their names or Muslims and Hindus we shall be all like angels. Late us all join together to preach peace on the world as we wait to enter into eternal life.

#### **45. THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERS**

**Special service is normally led by pastors if they are available.** Elders are the pastors' assistants and should not assert themselves to take charge of special services in their pastors' place. The following guidelines will assist you in leading out when your pastor is absent or when the pastor asks for your assistance. This fundamental belief has purposely used significant portions of the work of pastors and elders must be kept purposely parallel. This final chapter will especially reflect the church fundamental beliefs. The same guidelines should be followed for special services whether conducted by pastor or elder. Quotation marks will not be used when adapting the church fundamental beliefs. It is not being quoted as authority, both resources were prepared by the same source, and some adaptations will be made continuously, making the use of quotes tedious.

## 46. BAPTISM

Baptism is a symbol of death to the old life and the beginning of a new life in Jesus. It demonstrates a person's desire to become a member of God's family. It shows a willingness to receive the Holy Spirit and to use His gifts in a ministry to others.

**{a} Elders and baptism.** –Church elders play a significant part in a baptismal service. Often elders have visited, encouraged, and given Bible studies to the candidates and prepared them for baptism. On the day of baptism, elders often play a large part in organizing, directing, and giving support throughout the service. In fact, elders themselves perform baptisms under certain conditions. The church fundamental beliefs says, “In the absence of an ordained pastor, the elder shall request the president of the conference or local field to arrange for the administration of the rite of baptism to those desiring to unite with the church.” The president may respond by arranging for ordained fundamental beliefs to perform the rite or by giving permission to the elder.

**{b} Place of baptism.** – Baptisms may be held indoors or outdoors, in a church baptistery or in a river, lake, or ocean. On some occasions baptisms have been held in water tanks, baths, swimming pools, and even barrels or bathtubs. Sufficient water to immerse a person and the ceremony may be conducted with decency, in good taste and decorum, then that place is appropriate.

**{c} Preparation for baptism.**– The time and place of baptism ought to be announced and advertised. Those persons involved in the ceremony should be aware of their duties and coached in their responsibilities. Deacons and deaconesses will need to have the place of baptism prepared.

**{d} Dressing for baptism.**– Advise candidates on suitable clothing to wear. In some places, the church has a supply of baptismal gowns and candidates need to bring only a change of underclothing. Beware of clothing floating up while entering the water or clinging to the body while leaving the water. Gowns should have weights sewn into the hem. Dark colors are least revealing when wet. If gowns are not available, candidates should be instructed to bring clothing that will not show transparent when wet. They will need to bring a towel and a change of clothing. Everything should be carefully planned beforehand so that during the baptism a quiet dignity and propriety is maintained, and no one may be embarrassed or offended. If an outdoor baptism is planned, a secure place for changing clothes should be arranged. When a candidate is elderly, sick, physically handicapped, or exceptionally large an elder or deacon should provide assistance during the baptism.

**{e} Acceptance at baptism.-** Because the baptism will have great personal meaning for candidates, many of the remarks made during the service should be directly specifically to them. If a sermon or short talk is to be given at the service, the topic should center around practical suggestions that will help candidates lead successful Christian lives. Assure them that they are joining a family where there will be many supporting brothers and sisters, Challenge members to show love and acceptance of these new members.

**{f} At some time candidates should be officially welcomed into the church family.** This acceptance into membership may come before the baptism or immediately after. In either case, candidates are usually asked to stand before the people with the pastor or elders and the members indicate their acceptance and support by vote. The leaders of the church will then speak words of welcome on behalf of the congregation and, with a handshake or in some other culture manner, receive them into fellowship. In some churches the friends of the candidates and members of their families take a place at the front of the congregation near to those who are to be baptized. Candidates are often assigned a mature Christian from among the membership of the church who will become their spiritual guardian. Each of these individuals stands before the congregation as an indication of their love for and acceptance of the candidate and of their desire to support them in their choice to follow Christ.

**{g} Performing the baptism.-** Candidates are brought to the officiating pastor or elder by a deacon or deaconess. Before baptizing them it may be appropriate to speak a few words about the manner in which they came to accept Jesus. In some cases they may wish to give a short testimony. A common method for immersing candidates is for them to take a firm grip on your left wrist with both of their hands. You will then lift your right hand and say a few words such as, "My dear Sister/Brother, because of your love for Jesus, and because it is your wish to your life to Him and His church, I now gladly baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the holy Spirit. Amen."

**{h} At this point you will place your right or left hand (whichever is most comfortable for you) behind the shoulders of candidates and gently lower them backwards into the water.** Some baptizer either provide or recommend that each candidate bring a handkerchief or a cloth to prevent water from entering the candidate's nose and mouth while being baptized. This can be held in your other hand and placed over the face just before the candidate goes under the water, then used to wipe the face after. A deacon or deaconess should assist candidates from the water, covering them to prevent their becoming cold and to preserve modesty. They should be led to a secure place where they may change into dry clothing.

**{l} Dangers at baptism.-** If the baptism is to take place in a flowing river or in the ocean, baptize candidates with their heads up stream, or in the direction from which the waves are coming. In this way, the water will not pull candidates away from you, but rather will assist in carrying the weight, and water will not be forced into a candidate's nose or mouth. Be careful not to step too deeply into fast flowing rivers or go too far out in the ocean when waves are large. Be aware that some people have a fear of water. Settle their fears by speaking calmly with them. Never take hold of a microphone while in the water. The resulting shock can be fatal.

**{j} Welcome after baptism.-** Following the baptism of the last candidate, it is good to make an appeal to those observing to make a recommitment of their lives to Jesus. Invite nonmembers to prepare for baptism. The appeal may be followed by a prayer of commitment. Different customs are followed for welcoming newly baptized members. Some congregations will stand in a circle, hold hands, and sing together. Flowers, small gifts, or cards are sometimes given. Hugs and handshakes are exchanged. In some place the members meet in a celebration meal, giving the seats of honor to the newly baptized. Whatever custom is followed, it is important that these new members become bonded into the church community and made to feel accepted and loved by the congregation.

#### **47. Child dedication:**

The New Testament does not command such a ritual as child dedication. However, the way Jesus related to little ones encourages dedicating children to God (see Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15, 7). "Let ministers of the gospel take the little children in their arms, and bless them in the name of Jesus. Let words of tenderest love be spoken to the little ones; for Jesus took the lambs of the flock in His arms, and blessed them." It is understandable; however, that child dedication would be questioned by those whose background leads them to associate it with churches that practice infant baptism. For this reason, in the Holy Seed Church service there are no godfathers or godmothers. It is not a christening service, and ought not to appear as such, but a time of the parents dedicating themselves to God in the upbringing of their newborn or infant child. The service should be organized to emphasize its four basic

#### **{a} purpose:**

1. To thank God for the miracles of this birth.
2. To covenant the parents and family to raising the child to love Jesus.
3. To commit the congregation to providing the facilities and support for assisting the family in its task.



4. To bless the child and dedicate it to God. If a minister is not available, an elder may officiate during child dedication. However, an elder should not officiate without the local church pastor's approval.

**{b} Planning the service.-** Place. Some cultures encourage a baby presentation in the home. However, in most circumstances the ideal is to have the baby dedication as part of the morning glory service. Since commitment of the congregation is one the purposes of the dedication, it should be held when the largest possible representation from the congregation is available. Time of year. The annual church calendar should include dates when baby dedications are planned as well as scheduling ones when occasions arise. Be sensitive to time when relatives of the parents might be able to be there for the dedication. Announce the dedication date a few weeks in advance, inviting [parents to plan for the service. Make the event evangelistic by encouraging participants to invite their families and friends. Age. Babies may be dedicated at as young an age as parents are prepared to bring them to church. Children after school age are seldom dedicated. An exception may seem appropriate in the case of children of new church members.

**{c} Conducting the service.- The typical dedication service has four parts:**

1. **Parents called forward.** Make the baby dedication an important family event. Encourage non-member spouse to attend when their children are dedicated. Invite other sibling to join the dedicatory service. They may otherwise feel a bit left out by all the attention the baby is getting. Grandparents may wish to be included. Occasionally a grandparent will bring the baby even if parents are unwilling to attend, although this is not ideal. One good plan is to invite parents to come forward during the singing of the opening hymn, chosen to fit the dedication.

Using the morning hymn would have been sung anyway. The last stanza of the hymn could be sung after the dedication as parents leave the platform. The entire dedication should take no more than four to five minutes. The homily must be very brief. Homilies before events such as weddings, baptisms, or child dedications are usually not very effective. Anticipation of the upcoming event is so strong that people hear little of what is said beforehand. Parents are also fearful their baby will cry. Five minutes seem to them like an age. If the homily is more than one or two minutes, it can be given while parents are still in the congregation, perhaps on the front row.

2. **Homily.** Parents should stand facing the congregation so worshipers do not feel shut out of the service. There is some spiritual significance in the father, as spiritual leader, holding the child. On the other hand, the mother might do

better at keeping the child quiet. It may be best to let local culture and the parents decide. The homily should emphasize the covenanting or charging of the parents and the commitment of the congregation. A thought may be brought from such passages as:

3. Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Teach them diligently to your children."
4. 1 Samuel 1:27-28 "For this child I prayed, I also have lent him to the Lord."
5. Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go."
6. Matthew 18:2-6, 10 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones."
7. Matthew 19:13-15 "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray."
8. Ephesians 6:4 "Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."
9. **Close your homily with remarks such as the following:** "Parents, before setting your child apart in dedication. I invite you to enter into a covenant with God. In bringing this little child for Christian dedication, you are accepting before God the sacred responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood. By this symbolic act you seek to express your belief that this little one is not only your child but God's. "The congregation joins you in dedicating this precious one to God, assisting you in working toward the day when this act of dedication shall be followed at an appropriate age by baptism, thus, entering into full and happy membership in this church family." "You, therefore, as parents promise to do all in your power to bring this child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Do you so covenant?" Parents answer: "We do."

**10. Prayer. Pastor or elder and parents should kneel for the dedicatory prayer.**

The congregation usually remains seated. It is important that an individualized, relational atmosphere prevail during the dedication. One way to accomplish this is for you to hold the baby while praying though one should be mindful of how the child may react. An alternate method is for the parents to hold the children and you lay your hands on the head of each child in turn as you mention each one's name in prayer. If the group is large, other elders may join in the laying on of hands. The four purposes of a child dedication, included above, should be mentioned in the prayer. Ideally, each child and parent should be mentioned by name. You could lead into the Lord's Prayer, with pastor, parents, and congregation joining their voices in congregation.

11. **Certificate and congratulations.** Certificates are usually given to parents after the dedication prayer. Typically, these include enrollment in the Sunday school cradle roll, and you may want the leader of the division to assist you

in congratulating parents and presenting the certificates. They can be obtained from the General Conference Ministerial Supply Center, The Holy Seed Church book shop, or publishing houses. Sometimes a single flower in a bud vase is put up front before the service and presented to parents as part of the dedication.

#### 48. CHURCH STANDARDS AND DISCIPLINE

- 1. The church's high standards.-** The God of heaven is a holy God. "As for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is His name, The Holy of Israel" (Isaiah 47:4). He is a righteous God. "For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright" (Psalms 11:7). Because God is holy and righteous, His church has set high standards of moral and social behavior that reflect the character of God. These standards are based upon biblical principles which are eternal and unchanging. Every person baptized into the church promises to follow these standards. Unfortunately, even though we have sworn allegiance to God and promised to follow Him, because of our human frailty, we fail to live up to the high standards God and the church have established. The Bible reminds us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). All Christians are in constant need to return to Jesus for forgiveness of their latest failings and to plead for strength to live as He designs.
- 2. Discipline of member.-** Sometimes church members fall deeply into sin. Often their problems affect the lives of the church family. Sometimes they bring reproach and shame on the name of God and His church. Remembering the holiness and righteousness of God, and remembering that all of us are sinners in desperate need of the forgiveness of God, what responsibility does the church have to correct members who are not living up its high standards? What does the church do when members are not living at peace with one another? What are the steps toward correcting the wrongs of members? When and how should the church discipline its members?
- 3. The value of a soul.-** Before we answer these questions about correcting the wrongs of a person in the eyes of God. God considers every person He has created as very precious. Whether saved or unsaved, God's love is the same for all people. We are reminded that God "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The pen of inspiration counsels, Human beings are Christ's property, purchased by Him at an infinite price, bound to Him by a love that He and His Father have manifested for them.

How careful, then, we should be in our dealing with one another.” “The soul is of infinite value. It’s worth can be estimated only by the price paid to ransom it. Calvary! Calvary! Calvary! Will explain the true value of the soul.” Whenever the church needs to take action concerning a member who has fallen into sin, let each one of us be reminded that Jesus gave His life for that erring member just as much as He gave it for us. This will help us to remember the value of the souls of those who fall. It will make us more gentle and tender with them in their trouble.

4. **Seriousness of sin.-** While gentleness, love, and mercy must be shown to members who have fallen into sin, the church has a responsibility to take action concerning that sin. If sin is permitted to continue uncorrected in the church, it will destroy all the good that the church may do in the community.

We are reminded that “he who covers his sins will not prosper” (Proverbs 28:13). Because of Achan’s sin, God was prevented from giving His blessing to the whole nation of Israel (Joshua 7:1-26). Sin cannot be ignored in the congregation. It is harmful to the well-being of the church, and leaders have a clear responsibility to see that the sin is not permitted to continue and have its effect on the whole church. “If wrongs are apparent among His people, and if the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, and are alike guilty and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty.”

5. **Christ’s method.-** Christ gave His church some very clear counsel on how to deal with members who fall into sin. He centered His counsel around four basic steps. First, He said, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother” (Matthew 18:15). As an elder, when you learn that members have fallen into sin, you should first go alone to them and offer your assistance. You should go with love and understanding. Your purpose is not to condemn but to seek to point them back to Jesus, thus helping them to forsaken their sin. You should seek to encourage, praying with them for God’s power and forgiveness.

If you are unsuccessful on your first attempt to reclaim fallen members, Jesus suggests, “But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16). Following Jesus’ counsel, you should seek the assistance of one or two other respected and spiritually minded members to accompany you on a second visit. It may be that in the presence of two or three others, the erring members will admit their wrong and ask for help and forgiveness.

If still unsuccessful after the second visit, Jesus suggests, “And if he refuses to hear them, tells it to the church.” (Matthew 18:17). If after several visits in which you have urged the fallen members with love to forsake their wrong and return to Christ, they are still unrepentant, the Lord Counsels that their names be brought to the church. This is usually done at a church board meeting where the member’s problems are discussed. The church board may specifically recommend that the case brought to a church business meeting if it is a serious matter and unresolved. If the problem comes before the business meeting, members may be placed under censure of the church to allow them a specified time to repent to their actions and to find forgiveness.

In most cases, if members have been consistently visited and have been shown love and acceptance, they will be led to reinstatement with Christ and the church. If, however, the erring members still show no desire for repentance, even after a period of censure, and even after all that is humanly possible has been done to encourage their repentance, then the counsel of Jesus is, “But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen (Matthew 18:17).

When the church has done all it can to reclaim erring members, without success, Jesus says that they should then be considered as outside the church. It is Jesus’ meaning that, because of their failure to respond to the church’s appeal for forgiveness, they have disqualified themselves from church membership. Thus, the church is free to remove them from membership by disfellowshipping them. Disfellowshipped members should not, however, be removed from the church’s love, prayers, and concern. The elders should extend their greatest effort to win them back to Jesus and His church.

**6. Disfellowshipping to be carefully considered.-** The disfellowshipping of members is an extreme action which may be taken only when every other action to reclaim them has been attempted. Follow the church fundamental beliefs most precisely and persistently when applying church discipline. Members should never be disfellowshipped unless every possible step has been taken to help them seek God’s forgiveness and reform their lives. Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 18 about how treat an erring member are very clear. If the church has not followed these instructions, it may not disfellowship a member.

“No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrong doer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed.”

Notice that no individual church member has the authority to disfellowship another member. Nor does the church board. This action may only take place in a regularly called business meeting. The board may recommend such action to



the business meeting, but it does not have the power in itself to take the action. Disfellowshipped person should not be excluded from the services of the church if they wish to attend. However, disfellowshipped members may no longer play an active part in the affairs of the church. If they wish church membership again, then there must be evidence that they have repented and made restitution for their wrongdoing. They may then apply for rebaptism. It should always be borne in mind that whatever they may have done, or whatever their present condition, their salvation is still precious in the sight of God.

**7. Love and mercy to guide all actions.-** In our dealings with those who make mistakes, love must guide everything we do. Many feel it is their duty to root out sin in the church. God has not given them this work. Never forget that we are all sinners in need of God's forgiveness. Be patient with others who fail and show others who fail and show them Jesus' love and forgiveness. It is not our work to condemn others but to labor for their salvation. "The people of God are Christ's purchased possession, and what a price He has paid for them! Shall any of us be found aiding the enemy of God and man in discouraging and destroying souls? We should not indulge in condemning others, and we will not do so if we are one with Christ. We are to represent Christ in our dealings with our fellow men."

#### **RELATIONSHIP WITH CONFERENCE/MISSION**

Local elders have no official authority outside their own church except as they may be chosen by their congregations as delegates to special gatherings such as constituency meetings where conference or union officers are elected and other business transacted. Elders need to be aware and help their congregations become aware that their local church exists by vote of the sisterhood of churches in the local conference/mission. Elder leadership must demonstrate that privilege and the local church's responsibility to the churches at large as expressed. The privilege of membership in the sisterhood of churches that has been extended to the local congregation by the family of churches can also be withdrawn.

**49. Support for conference/mission.-** Church growth comes from local churches.

Church finance is generated almost exclusively in local congregations. Conferences/mission has responsibility for all church work in there are, but their success is almost completely dependent on the loyal support of local church leadership. Trust your conference/mission leaders, support them, consult them then hold them accountable when constituency meeting time comes. Cooperate in carrying out local, union, division, and general **Conference plans.** Regard correspondence from the conference/mission office as important. Encourage other officers in the church to support plans and policies of the church at large.

**The church fundamental belief** is the most significant policy book of the denomination. The standards and practices of the church are based upon the principles set forth in it. These principles are to be followed in all matters pertaining to the administration of local churches both within the church and in its relationship to the higher organization, the conference. No attempt should be made by anyone to set up standards of membership or to make, or attempt to enforce, rules or regulations for the church which are not set forth in the church fundamental beliefs. The fundamental belief is approved by General Conference sessions and can be updated only at succeeding General Conference session.

It carries all the authority of the church. "When, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered." Close adherence to the church fundamental beliefs is not only responsibility as elder, but it is to your advantage. If you support it even where you might wish to see it changed, you can rely on its authority to support you when others press for unacceptable change. On the other hand, if you belittle these policies of the world church, your members will learn to belittle policies established in the local church.

**Support from conference/mission.-** Your conference/ mission supports your local church by providing its pastor. It also services you by providing ministerial credentials. This protects the local congregation from being deceived by someone not approved by the denomination. While invitations may come from the local church to someone to preach, you must protect your congregation by denying the pulpit to anyone claiming to be a minister but whose license has expired or been revoked. Individuals who have been dropped from the ministry, or who have been dismissed from church fellowship in other places, or designing persons who have no authority from the church, should not be permitted, no matter what they say, to gain admittance to your pulpit. Great care should be exercised to prevent this.

In each local conference or mission there are persons especially equipped to provide training and resources to assist the local churches in their outreach.

Training sessions will sometimes be conducted by them in your area. Your church board might sponsor suitable people to attend these seminars. Choose those with the ability to pass on to others what they will learn. When these people return from the seminar, it is extremely important that time and opportunity be given them to implement what they have learned. It can be very frustrating for members who have been "fired up" at a training seminar to return home and receive little or no recognition or support from the church leadership for their newly acquired skills and plans.

**The church fundamental beliefs voted by the General Conference in session,** outlines the organization of the church and the procedures to be practiced in all congregations so that unity is maintained of the world church. Details are in that manual for the overall operating of the local church, including the selection, role, and duties of church officers. Every elder should have a current edition of the church manual available to them. It is essential for your development as the Holy Seed Church leader to be familiar with its contents and to use its prescribed procedures. This church fundamental belief is written with the presupposition that you have access to a Church fundamental beliefs and an overall knowledge of the ministry each department and church leader performs. Thus, the church fundamental beliefs will not repeat in detail the church fundamental beliefs Instructions to church leaders and departments. Rather, suggestions will be made here that will help you, as an elder and overall church leader, to support them.

### **THE ELDER'S CALL AND QUALIFICATIONS**

#### **Calling and election**

Every member of God's church has been called into some ministry. All are part of a priesthood of believers called out from the world to minister for Christ. This priestly ministry serves people both inside and outside of the church. Elder's like all members of Christ's body, are divinely called to their ministry. There are, in fact, two sources of an elder's appointment: (1) they are called by God and (2) they are elected by their congregation.

**Called by God.-** The call to be an elder is a call from God. The church recognizes elders' gifts for leadership and elects them to the office; God gives the necessary gifts and creates the opportunity by guiding the church in its selection. Elders who realize that their calling comes first from God, will most appreciate how important and serious is their leadership responsibility.

**Elected by congregation.-** Elders who feel they have been called by God, nevertheless, have no official position or authority in the church unless they have also been elected by the congregation. The eldership should not be given to people who covet the position as a means of increasing their own personal influence and authority. Elders should not be elected because they already hold some position of importance in their community. They are not to be chosen because they have been successful in business or because they give large amounts of money to the church to the church. Elders are chosen because the church recognizes their call from God and sees in them the necessary qualifications for their work. Elders are usually elected for one year. The church may reelect them, but is under no obligation to do so. Elders not currently elected by the church have no authority in the congregation despite their previous position and ordination.

## JOB DESCRIPTION

The tremendous differences between elders in varying parts of the world and in various size churches makes the preparation of a job description extremely difficult. Some church elders can hardly read or write. Others are doctors, lawyers, or engineers. Elders serve in widely differing circumstances. Some rarely preach. Others preach nearly every week. Actually, an elder's job description is determined largely by five factors: (1) size of the congregation, (2) available of the pastor, (3) the pastor's plan for involving elders, (4) the elder's gifts, (5) available prophets, and (6) the elder's willingness to work. We will first suggest areas of the elder's job description common to nearly all elders, then look at a small church job description, and finally a large church job description.

**Common job description.-** The Bible does not give a detailed job description for elders. We cannot always even tell what is meant by the word "elder" in passages describing New Testament church organization. Sometimes it means an elder person. Sometimes it refers to one of the apostles (2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1). Sometimes it refers to local church leaders apart from the apostles (Acts 15:2, 4, 6). Putting all the New Testament elder passages together, we can get a general understanding of the work of local elders:

- (a) Elders were appointed in every congregation, and thus played an important role in the early church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).
- (b) They were highly respected (1 Timothy 5:17, 19; 3:1).
- (c) They carried significant leadership and administrative responsibilities (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:28; 21:18; 22:5).
- (d) They gave leadership in praying for and anointing the sick (James 5:14-20)
- (e) They were to be shepherds, (not serving for personal gain, not having a domineering attitude) overseers, and examples (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:17, 28).

**Note: In summary, elders' job descriptions** should include at least three emphases: Spiritual leadership. Elders should be respect by their congregations and be able to speak well. However, they should not be chosen primarily because of social position, or because of speaking ability, but rather because of their consecrated lives and spiritual leadership ability. Paul says an elder is to be "blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to reach; not given to wine. Not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous" (1 Timothy 3:2, 3).

**General oversight, along with the pastor.** Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2 speak of elders as "overseers." This would suggest they would tend to be generalists rather than specialists in their church view, for, in cooperation with the pastor,

they give oversight and leadership to every area of congregational activity.

Overseers are not meant to do all the work themselves. Rather, church overseers keep a watchful eye over each activity and department. Elders encourage and support the other church officers. As good overseers they should not dominate those they oversee, but include others in decision making. Elders are involved, through the church's committees and with individual members, in planning, staffing, training, and guiding the entire church program.

**Elders should be committed to outreach.** The congregation needs to know that their leaders have a clear vision of the church's mission. Elders ought to develop skills in worship leadership. At the pastor's request, or in his absence, they may serve as chairperson of board and business meetings. Nurture. Acts 20:28 and Peter 5:2 also stipulate that elders are not only overseers, but shepherds. They are under shepherds working under and care for their flock. Pastors shepherd the flock as a whole. They should, of course, be interested in individual church members, but their time and even their gifts are limited.

Also, pastors move away more often than elders. Members need to bond with elders who are more permanent in the community. Besides, pastors are professionals in the business of church. This causes some members to put pastors on a different plane from themselves or to even feel pastors serve them because they are paid to. Thus there are significant advantages for an elder as a fellow member to give personal care and counsel. Individual nurture of members should be a special responsibility of elders.

Elders should counsel, encourage, and pray for the sick, the discouraged, and any having special problems. It is ideal if they can work as teams with their spouses in such programs as home visitation. This should include taking Communion to shut-ins. Elders should forget that pastors and their families also need nurture. If elders do not provide this, who will? Elders sometimes organize a pastoral family nurturing committee dedicated to helping the pastoral family be successful and feel loved.

There should be significant involvement of elders in preparing new members for baptism. This ought to lead to the elder's direct involvement in providing the special love and nurture new members need. Elders should take special responsibility for helping them make firm friendship within the church.

**Small church job description.-** Elders' job descriptions in small churches vary most dramatically from those in large churches, not so much because of church size, but because small churches typically have the service of a pastor only occasionally. Thus, elders in small churches must take responsibility for nearly



all the detailed administration of the church, with only basic guidance from the pastor. These elders must presumably plan to preach often. The General Conference Ministerial Association makes material available to assist elders in sermon preparation.

Elders in small churches usually plan and lead out in worship service, including Communion. Their duties may include calling and chairing the church board or business meeting in the pastor's absence. They organize and participate in the visitation of members, especially those not in regular attendance. They oversee the evangelistic plans of church. They help train the congregation in stewardship and give general oversight to local church finance. Elders in small churches take special responsibility for seeing that all departments of the church are functioning. They convey to the congregation messages and plans from the pastor and the local conference/mission office. Their authority and responsibilities are very broad, but should be carried out under guidance of the pastor and in consultation with the church board.

**Large church job description.** - As congregations grow they usually need more than one elder. This was true even in the very early church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Elders in small churches may become frustrated over having so much to do. Conscientious elders in large churches may become frustrated over not knowing what they are supposed to do. Anxious to serve the Lord faithfully, most would like to do something more than calling for the offering or announcing a hymn during the worship service. They feel under-used. These elders, while having interest in and giving oversight to all church programs, should also be given specific assignments.

**The elder team.** The number of elders elected by the congregation should depend on the number of specific tasks it assigns its elders. Honorary elders are not ideal. The position of elders is a working position. Nonworking elders encourage nonworking members. All elders presently serving make up the elder team. Elders serve as members of the church board. They may also be organized as a board of elders. The board of elders should provide a pastor's support group. Not only should they minister to and encourage pastors in their personal spiritual quest, but provide an intimate, confidential, wise sounding board where special church problems can be discussed without their becoming public knowledge.

Each member of the elder team may be assigned to one or more planning groups, such as an evangelism council, worship committee, Sunday School council, or youth ministry committee. Each should have some assignment in an

outreach ministry and in visitation. One of the most significant assignments may be to find ways to reclaim inactive members and help close the “back door” of the church.

**The first elder.** Where more than one elder is elected, one should be designated as “first” or “head elder.” Head elders are special assistants to the pastor. Under the pastor’s guidance they organize the team of elders and give other elders their specific assignments. If an elder is to serve as chairperson of the church board or business meeting, it is usually the first elder.

### QUALIFICATIONS

**Certain character qualifications are expected of elders:**

**{a} Committed to Christ.**- Spirituality must have a private dimension before it can have a public influence. You dare not expect to lead further than you have been led. A significant secret of the apostles’ success was in their being able to say, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (John 1:3). Total commitment. To give others what you yourself do not have is an impossible and frustrating task. “You cannot exert an influence that will transform others until your own heart has been humbled and refined and made tender by the grace of Christ”

Without the spiritual dimension, the work of church leadership will degenerate to implementation of psychological techniques, organizational methods, and motivational cheerleading. Real power spring from spirituality that comes from a personal encounter with Christ. Saul saw a vision of Christ on the Damascus road and it caused him to ask, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” (Acts 9:6). He became a leader in the Christian church only after catching a vision of Christ and committing himself totally to Him.

**{b} Daily commitment.** Commitment, deep spirituality, and strong moral character are necessary attributes of Christian leadership, but they do not come naturally. They result from a close, daily association with Jesus. This must be a continual process whereby the elder makes time each day for Bible study, **Meditation, and prayer.** As a Christian leader, you cannot hope to have the power to lead your people in God’s way unless you make a commitment to daily devotions. Jesus felt this need to be with His Father and renew his strength and direction. “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mark 1:35). This was not an isolated experience. It was His custom to spend the early hours

of each day in private devotions (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16). Jesus' devotional life should serve as a model for all Christian leaders today.

**{c} One caution. Beware of spiritual pride.** While your goal is to be Christ like, the more like Christ you become, the less aware you will be of it. Anything else is pride masquerading as piety. Time commitment. No commitment is total unless it includes a commitment of time. Elders' work, like pastors' work, is never done. You will never accomplish all you would like to for the church. You must not let church work cause you to neglect your family and other responsibilities. On the other hand, unless you are able and willing to spend at least two to four hours a week doing the work of an elder, you probably should decline the position.

**{d} Example to members.-** What Jesus taught He was. That is what made His teaching so effective. Church elders must be what they ask others to be, believes what they expect their members to believe, and love Christ the way they want them to love. Elders must be able to say like Paul, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Elders are chosen and ordained in a congregation not only for the purpose of doing church work, but to reveal the character of Christ. They are Christianity with skin on. They are not perfect people, but they ought, like Christ, to be persons of principle. What people think of Christ probably depends less on what His representatives say about Him than on what people think of them as they say it.

**{e} The Bible sets high standards of living for church elders.** When Moses was counseled to choose elders they were to be "such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Exodus 18:21). Paul outlines the attributes of character that were to be displayed in the lives of elders in the early Christian church. An elder was to be "blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination not self willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wise, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" Titus 1:6-9).

"Those who are appointed to guard the spiritual interests of the church should be careful to set the right example, giving no occasion for envy, jealousy or suspicion, ever manifesting that same spirit of love, respect, and courtesy which they desire to encourage in that brethren." Setting a right example would surely include the following: Support church doctrine. Speak the things which are

proper for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:11). Never undermine the faith of those you lead by public airing of your questions and doubts.

If you have questions, discuss these with your pastor and other dependable leaders. An elder is chosen to uphold the church. Thus their teaching must be based on sound, Christ centered doctrine. Maintain strong family relationships. The Bible suggests that one way to tell whether or not persons will make good elders is to look at the kind of relations they have with their own family. The elder should be “one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his house, how will he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

**{f} As church elder, you belong to two families:** your own family and the church family. The Bible suggests that if you have learned to lead your own family so that they enjoy a close and happy relationship both with you and with God, then you are more likely to receive the same response from the church family. “The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well ordered, well disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart.” Be sexually pure. Be an example in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Avoid sexual indiscretions by being (1) in love with your spouse, (2) aware of your vulnerability, (3) cautious of counseling the opposite sex, especially on intimate and (4) being spiritually strong. See adultery as a sin, not only against yourself and your family, but against your God.

**{g} Overcome racial prejudice.** Racism and prejudice are sinful. Christian love pulls down barriers that separate people. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). If Jesus is your brother and my brother, then you and I are members of the same family; and color or caste or tribe or language or nationality is irrelevant. Be an exemplary giver.

As a faithful tithe payer and giver of offerings, you can do much to encourage church members to be good stewards. A member who does not return a faithful tithe should not be elected as elder. Do not ask people to sacrifice for the church more than you proportionally do.

**{h} Admit your mistakes.** With God, the only “unpardonable sin” is the unconfessed sin. With congregations, the most unpardonable mistake by an elder is probably one everybody knows about, but you cannot admit. God freely forgives sins we confess. Congregations usually forgive mistakes we admit. Be a Christian example to your members, but remember that a first step in Christianity is admitting your mistakes. Elders are expected to have

exemplary characters. But remember, God asks nothing of you that he is not willing and able to empower you to do. High standards, however, are a significant reason for not choosing an elder prematurely.

{i} **Said the inspired apostle:** ‘Lay hands suddenly on no man.’ In some of our churches the work of organizing and ordaining elders has been premature; the Bible rule has been disregarded, and consequently grievous trouble has been brought upon the church. There should not be so great haste in electing leaders as to ordain men who are in no way fitted for responsible work.”

{j} **Leader of members.-** Romans 12:8 lists the gift of leadership as one of the gift of the Spirit. The gift of leadership is the ability to give direction and guidance to God’s people so that they will work together to accomplish what God would have them accomplish. It is a gift especially needed by elders. Love your members. If you love those you lead, most will love you in return. And if they love you they will follow your leading. On the other hand, If your members do not like you, it is almost impossible for you to lead them to love Christ. Elders must love people. If you cannot get along with people you cannot get along as an elder.

Loving people in general is both very popular and fairly easy. But loving certain people in particular is one of the toughest tasks of church leadership. Elders must be able to see people as they are, warts and all, and not lose sight of what they can become by God’s grace. When Jesus saw the multitudes, “He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). To be compassionate as Jesus was compassionate is to go beyond sympathizing to alleviating. It not only accepts people’s imperfections, but longs to help them grow.

Even abusive people become lovable when you focus, not on what they do, but on the hurt that is causing them to do it. All church leaders are sometimes abused, criticized, misunderstood, falsely accused. A test of Christian love is being able to genuinely forgive those who have abused you. One of the most successful ways to learn to love your members and help them learn to love is to invite them into your home. Elders should extend hospitality, not only to church members, but to nonmembers and visitors as well. Unite your members. Hitch two large horses to a small load. Can they pull it” Not if they are pulling in opposite directions. They may bow their necks and pull with all their might, but someone just winds up patching the harness. Put two gifted members “Prophets” in a congregation and ask them to help the church lord. Can they do it? Not if they are pulling in opposite directions. The pastor and elder have to spend their time patching things up. Helping members pull together in unity is one of the most important parts of an elder’s leadership



**{k} Consult your members.** Do not be a heavy handed leader, making all the decisions. Help your congregation set its own goals. Church goals then tend to be owned goals. And people will work to reach owned goals. Plan those you lead, not just for them. Follow your leaders. Elders unwilling to follow their leaders will be unsuccessful in leading their followers. If you do not follow, why should they? “Men who move in accordance with their own strong traits of character, refusing to yoke up with others who have had a long experience in the work of God, will become blinded by self-confidence, unable to discern between the false and the true. It is not safe for such ones to be chosen as leaders in the church; for they would follow their own judgment and plans, regardless of the judgment of their brethren.”

**{l} Enable of members.-** The most important work in the world for any individual is whatever work God asks that person to do for Him. The grandest work in the world is the work of serve, and God calls all –every member of every congregation to some ministry of service. As an elder, you are to be a coordinator and a facilitator using your influence to help each of your church members develop the full potential of their individual spiritual gifts for the building up of the church. Help members find what their spiritual gifts are. Then train them. You may do this yourself if you have the gift of teaching, or find others to teach classes you have helped organize. Then use your influence to organize the church to support ministries that use the gifts of those in the congregation.

## 50. ORDINATION

**Purpose of ordination.-** The biblical background of the ordination rite indicates that it “was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one’s authority in that office.” As the New Testament church expanded, individuals in the church were selected for different types of leadership. Apart from the appointment and ordination of the twelve apostles for their unique, unrepeatable role (Mark 3:13-14), the scriptures distinguish three categories of ordained officers. (1) The gospel minister was called to preach, teach, administer the ordinances and provide pastoral care for church members (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:1-5). (2) Elders were called to lead and minister to local congregations. They were overseers of all the affairs of their churches, performing pastoral functions as well (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:2-5). (3) Deacons were called to care for the physical needs of the church and its members, giving special leadership in the benevolent work of the congregation (Philippians 1:1; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:2-5). Individuals each of these three categories were set aside for their special ministry for the church by the rite of ordination.

### **The Holy Seed church follows the same practice today:**

Elder's ordination is a public recognition of: (a) God's call of the individual to this specific ministry. (b) God's enabling the person for this ministry by providing the spiritual gifts needed. (c) The congregation's recognition and approval of God's call and an expression of its willingness to follow the individual's leadership. Though ordination conveys no special powers upon the recipient, it does impose responsibilities. Accepting ordination means that, in a very special sense, you are no longer your own, but God's. Thus, ordination should not be accepted lightly.

**Prerequisites to ordination.-** As already emphasized, prerequisites to elder ordination include a call by God and election by local church.

Conference/mission approval is not necessary. However, one additional prerequisite is self-examination by the ordained. Wrongs should be made right. Commitment much to Christ and His church should be renewed. In some areas of the world there is reluctance to ordain elders until they have proven themselves over a long period of time. This may be because of the custom of other local churches that assume the candidate is making a lifelong commitment much like a pastor or priest, rather than a basically one-year commitment as in the Sunday church.

Our church teaches that elders should be persons of experience and chosen wisely. But once they have been elected, their ordination should not be unduly delayed. The church fundamental beliefs suggest that ordination should occur soon after elders are elected. In fact, it stipulates, "Election to the office of elder does not in itself qualify one as an elder. Ordination is required before an elder the full support of the church and publicly invites the Holy Spirit to bless their leadership. It is well for new elders to receive special training, but it should not be assumed that their ordination depends on it.

**The ordination service.-** Although the elder ordination service is both sacred and special, it is also kept simple. The service is performed by an ordained minister, usually holding credentials from the local conference, preferably the pastor of the congregation. Ordained ministers and elders in the congregation may assist. The ordination is held in the presence of the congregation the elder is to serve.

At the proper time, usually during the morning glory service, the candidate is invited to the rostrum where the minister speaks briefly about the qualifications and work of an elder.

Those participating kneel as the minister prays that God will approve the congregation the church is giving that the Holy Spirit has called the candidate to this office. The presiding minister's hand of ordination is laid on the candidate's head during the prayer. Assisting ministers and elders may join in this. After the

prayer, those participating share a word of blessing and encouragement with the candidate. A nice symbol is for the ordained to be invited to remain on the platform for the rest of the service, signifying the new position of leadership.

**Authority granted.-** Being elected and ordained as an elder is not for the purpose of granting status, nor does it convey an elevated position in the congregation. The ground around the cross is level. Ordination legitimatize servant leadership. Elders may officiate at the communion service. They may lead out in a funeral service. They may request the conference/mission to arrange for the rite of baptism. Usually, a minister will be sent, although elders might marriage service, although they may assist in some parts of it. All of this is to be done only in cooperation with the church pastor, who would normally perform these services if available.

The church fundamental designates procedures for conducting these services and the church fundamental beliefs gives additional details. Ordination is meant to be permanent. It will be recognized for elder's entire lives unless they disqualify themselves by pastors or improper behavior. They need not be preordained when accepting the same position either in the same or another church. If later elected as deacons they may act in that office without preordination.

**Authority limited.-** The authority of elders is limited by the election process of church. They function as elders only as long as the church elects them to the office. It is important to understand how the office of elder is purposely local church centered: (1) Only the local church can elect elders. Conferences /mission cannot. (2) Normally, the local church pastor ordains them. (3) They are to be ordained in the presence of the local congregation they will serve. (4) Their ordination authorizes them to serve only in the church that elects them, although under some circumstances they may serve in more than one church if other churches elect them.

The authority of elders is limited by their obligations to their pastor, church board, and church business meeting. They should see themselves as assistants to the pastor, and work always under the pastor's guidance. Major problems should be discussed with the pastor and, if needed, taken to the church board, rather than arbitrarily decided by an individual elder. The most important decisions of all, such as the acceptance or dismissal of members, must be made only by the church as a whole.

#### **51. THE ELDER AS SUPPORTER OF OTHER LOCAL LEADERS**

Local church elders play an important role in sustaining the morale and encouragement of the various volunteer church workers who faithfully carry on the church's ministry in a variety of capacities. "To encourage and support" should be the motto of each elder.

## 52. SUPPORT CHURCH SECRETARY

Keeping accurate records of the membership and major activities of a church is one way to maintain an efficient organization. The church secretary is the person who has the main responsibility for this function. The secretary is chosen because of his or her reliability and faithfulness in caring for all the clerical duties and correspondence of the church. The secretary attends all board and business meetings, writing a record of the actions taken. This record is known as the “minutes” of the meeting and includes such details as the date and place of meeting, the name of the chairman, the people in attendance, and opening/closing prayers. The minutes contain a careful record of all items passed by vote. These minutes are permanently recorded in the appropriate section of the Church Record book. The Church Record book also contains the names of all church members. It is essential that this list remain accurate up to date. The membership roll is important to you as elder, for it provides you with information about your members, both past and present. It tells you who your members are and where they may be found. Use this as you plan for the visitation and nurture of your members.

Each time a new member joins the church through baptism, profession of faith, or transfer in, and each time a member is lost from the church by death, disfellowship, or transfer out, their names must be immediately added to or removed from the church roll. It is one of the secretary’s duties to handle all the correspondence that passes between two churches when a member is transferring his or her membership. It is imperative that the world church be careful in transferring members from one congregation to another. Be careful in giving transferring members leadership positions in your church before the transfer is complete. One way to manage this is to elect someone to a position subject to transfer.

However, in its commendable desire to be careful in the transfer of membership process, the church has created a system that can become a bit cumbersome. The transfer of membership request must go from the member to the secretary in the new church, to the secretary in the old church, to the old church board chairman, to the old church board, to the old church first reading, to the old church second reading, to the new church second reading and vote of acceptance, to the old secretary for removal of the name from the old church’s membership roll.

For the protection of the church and its members the system must not be bypassed. But for the sake of the transferring member it must be handled efficiently. New members hardly feel wanted if months transpire between the time they ask for transfer and the time they are voted in and welcomed. The

previous paragraph shows that a church secretary, pastor, or elder must act at least 12 times before a membership transfer is completed. It is imperative that they work together closely so they can act promptly.

The church roll invariably includes the names of members who no longer attend. Some of these are individuals who have backslidden from the faith. Some are people who have left the area. Where possible, the church secretary should attempt to keep in touch with these who are away from the church. The secretary may send letters to keep them informed of the activities of the church and to bring them encouragement. If it comes to the attention of pastor or elder that a member who has moved away needs spiritual help, you ask the secretary to send a letter to the pastor in the new area to ask that someone visit the person.

To assist the local conference/mission in monitoring the membership and activities of the local church, the secretary prepares a quarterly report. This report records information. The church secretary's quarterly report helps the local conference/mission keep its records in order. It also gives them an understanding of progress in the local churches. As elder, you will need to confirm that the secretary has faithfully recorded all the details asked for in the report and that it has been sent to the secretary of the local conference/mission at the end of each quarter.

### **53. SUPPORT CHURCH DEACONS AND DEACONESSSES**

Deacons and deaconesses have given significant support to the church since its beginnings. Acts 6 says that, as the early Christian church grew, the 12 apostles found themselves unable to care for all the work. Therefore, seven deacons were chosen. Their work was to help the poor and the sick, and to give both physical and spiritual support to church members. This freed the apostles to give more time to preaching, evangelism, and administration.

The New Testament also records the names of several women who served the church by helping the poor and needy (Acts 9:36-39; Romans 16:1-2). These were devout women with kind, pleasant personalities who endeared themselves to the people of their community by acts of love. Deacons and deaconesses in the church today still provide the same caring, serving ministries. Through the spiritual gifts God has given them, they regularly minister to many of the practical needs of church members and church property. They provide assistance and encouragement to the poor, the sick, and the discouraged.



They visit people in hospitals and prisons. They share leadership in administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. As in New Testament times, deacons and deaconesses greatly assist you in your ministry as an elder today. Because they are close to the [people, they can become eyes and ears for you in finding those who need your special help. Meet with them and learn where you can give assistance. As you visit your members, take them with you. When they bring their suggestions and requests to the church board give them your support.

#### 54. SUPPORT CHURCH TREASURER

**Encourage the treasurer.-** The church treasurer receives, counts, receipts, deposits, disburses, keeps account of , and reports on all money that comes into the church. Tithes and offerings are sent to the conference/mission monthly along with a financial report. Money given for the local church, money from the different entities within the church, and any other finances handled by the local congregation are distributed as directed by the church budget, or board or business meeting action.

This includes the payment of accounts, insurance premiums, utilities, rent, departmental expenses, purchases on behalf of the church, and payment for services and maintenance. The treasurer will be called on to give a financial report at each board and business meeting indicating what money has been received and how it has been expended. The above paragraph is meant to impress you as elder that treasurers work hard, very often harder than any other officers in the church. But most of their work is behind the scenes work, thus they are typically not only overworked, but under appreciated. As church elder, make it a point to show and voice appreciation for them often.

**Keep giving confidential.-** Treasurer have a special responsibility to keep members' giving confidential. Such information should never be shared with anyone except those who share the responsibility of the work. Occasionally, a pastor or designated elder or auditor may need to know about a member's tithe paying record.

One reason the pastor or elder or auditor may be placed on the nominating committee is so they can diplomatically lead the committee away from choosing non-tithers as church officers. Respect your treasurer's duty to keep the giving records of members confidential and do not ask for such information unless you have an official and specific need to know.

**Keep money time.-** Handling God's money is a sacred responsibility. It is also a practical responsibility, for when members stop trusting their church leaders

they may stop giving to their church. Never, never take church money that has not gone through the treasurer's records. When money is being counted, it is a wise practice for someone such as a deacon or deaconess to assist the treasurer. This will provide a check on the treasurer's counting and a witness to his or her integrity. If money is not to be counted until later, it should be locked away in the interim and not accessible to any one person.

It is sometimes wise to have more than one signature required before money can be withdrawn,,, pastors, elders, and other church leaders should never ask the treasurer for money the treasurer has not been authorized to give them.

Wise leaders will not ask and wise treasurer will not give it even if they do. Wherever practical, money should be received in envelopes, with amounts and the donor's name included. These envelopes are kept by the treasurer to show the auditor that funds have been properly handled. Money given to the church is God's money. Its misuse is a serious offense that can only prevent His blessing.

## 55. SUPPORT CHURCH MINISTRIES

The church ministries department is an important part of the Holy Seed church. It is recommended that a Church Ministries Council be chosen to coordinate in the local church all the activities sponsored by this large department. This council can relieve the church board of much of its detail work. Several subdivisions of the Church Ministries department are mentioned here, with emphasis on how they related to your work as elder.

**Dorcus and Community Services.-** The Holy Seed church has established the holy seed community services program as an expression of its love and concern for the needy. Some of the community projects adopted by the church include gathering and preparing of clothing, food, and other supplies for the poor and unfortunate; visiting hospitals and prisons; community health projects; agricultural projects; repairing homes for the aged; refuge centers for the abused; and disaster relief.

**The Holy Seed Community Services** program may also offer training classes in cooking and nutrition, hygiene, first aid and home nursing, homemaking, child care, family budgeting, counseling and other services. In the form of clothing, food, disease prevention, emergency first aid, and comforting care. If disasters occur of greater magnitude than local facilities are able to handle, the Conference/mission Disaster coordinator may be approached for assistance.

**Community services** are sometimes administered through the Dorcus Society, occasionally with the assistance of an the holy seed Men's Group. The program should work closely with church deacons and deaconesses. As an elder, you are anxious to find ways every member's spiritual gifts can be used in the church. The list of services above is so inclusive that people possessing almost any of the spiritual gifts can find a place in community services. Such a ministry may prove an excellent place for new members to serve. Also, those with many practical and few public skills may find a place here to serve effectively.

**Family Ministries.-** Every church must recognize the impact that the family can have in disciplining its members for Christ. It is in the family that our needs for social contact, for belonging, for love, and for intimacy are met. The family helps to establish our personal identity and individual worth. In the family, values are implanted that stay with us throughout life, "Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon hearts and lives"

To help meet the needs of families the church chooses a Family Life Leader to assess the needs of church families and provide pertinent information and data for the church pastor or elders. Elders should work closely with their pastor and family life leader to find and minister to families in difficulty, and present special family life programs to nurture all church families.

**Women's Ministries.-** Laity women play a vital role in our church, in many places they are the backbone of the congregation. Church should have a ministry specifically tailored towards these women's special needs.

**Music Ministries.-** Music enhances worship. It has a special power to reach the heart and open the mind. It inspires, teaches, and contributes toward spiritual growth. It lifts thoughts and minds toward God. To develop this gift in the church, larger congregations have a Music Leader to plan, lead, and develop the music program. If you preach or otherwise plan the worship service, work with your music leader to coordinate music and message. Help your music leader get new church members or evangelistic interests involved in the church program by inviting them to provide special music or sing in the choir. Encourage your music leader to get young people active in the church by including them in the church's music program.

**Lay Activities and Personal Ministries.-** Every church member is called to some ministries give support to the internal program of the church, some are used in reaching those outside the church. The Lay Activities/Personal Ministries Leader is chosen to encourage the development of members' gift to be used in winning

those outside the church. In a special way the Lay Activities/Personal Ministries leader works to develop the witnessing abilities God has given church members so that they may be missionaries to their community. The Lay Activities/Personal Ministries leader organizes and implements the witnessing and outreach programs of the church.

**How can you as elder support your Lay Activities/Personal Ministries leader?**

- (1) Be personally involved in some church outreach programs.
- (2) Give liberally of morning glory time to promoting outreach programs.
- (3) Cooperate in offering soul winning training in the local church.
- (4) Encourage your Lay Activities/Personal Ministries leader and others to attend conference/mission outreach training programs.

**Sunday School.-** The Sunday school provides a time for spiritual growth through Bible study, small group fellowship, and world mission outreach. Its aim is to win, hold, and train those of all ages as disciples of Jesus Christ. Support the Sunday school by faithful attendance. Encourage the training of Sunday school teachers. The small group Sunday school class is an outstanding ideal, but it is only as effective as its teacher. Encourage having a special Sunday school class for learners, where pastor or elder teach fundamental beliefs. Consider establishing branch Sunday Schools as part of your church growth programs. “The Sunday School, if rightly conducted, is one of God’s great instrumentalities to bring souls to knowledge of the truth.” Visit the children’s and youth’s divisions of the Sunday school to show your support. Affirm publically those who work in the children’s Sunday school. Encourage men to get involved in these divisions to serve as Christian models, especially for the boys. See that money is provided for adequate Sunday school supplies.

**Stewardship.-** All of us responsible to God for the way we manage what He has given us. We are reminded in Scripture, “Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). Practicing good stewardship means being faithful in our use of the time, opportunities, abilities, and finances God has entrusted to us. In short, it means the commitment of our whole lives, all that we are and all that we have, into the hands of God to be used as He wills. Therefore, the work of the Stewardship and development organization and the local church Stewardship Secretary is to encourage each church member in this commitment to God and to be good stewards through the way each develops and uses God’s gifts.

Finding funds to support the church’s program is one of the major problems church leaders face. It ranks next to that of finding sufficient volunteer personnel. Often church financial headaches are symptoms rather than the primary problems. If financial difficulties keep recurring, it is usually because

the methods used to correct them treat the symptoms rather than the problem.

The financing of the local church must be carried out carefully and with the support of the all church members.

Each year, the church board should prepare a list of all expected expenses and present it to the membership for approval. The resulting church budget should include a clearly define plan for meeting these expenses. It is often the practice that the church pastor, elders, stewardship secretary, and other selected persons visit the homes of members to explain the church budget and to encourage each family to make a personal commitment to support the church's financial program by planned giving.

To support the church stewardship secretary, be a faithful returner of tithe and giver of offerings by being on a planned giving program yourself. Don't ask your members to sacrifice more than yourself or be on some stewardship program you are not practicing. Keep stewardship principle and financial needs before the membership, emphasizing that each family should be on a planned giving program. Keep your people informed about the financial needs of the church through ongoing reports to the church and church board. Prepare morning glory offering appeals carefully and prayerfully.

**Youth.-** The young people of our churches have tremendous talent and potential, that if directed correctly, will bring great blessings to the church. In the local church the Church Ministries Council or the Youth Ministries Committee is responsible for the planning of the youth and pathfinder activities of the church.

**The Holy Seed Youth Society.-** The Holy Seed Youth society (formerly Missionary Volunteer Society) is the action and fellowship organization for senior youth in the local church. It primarily serves ages 16 to 30. While it should never be our intention to separate the youth from the other members of the church, we must recognize that their needs may be different from the other age groups in the church. Youth societies provide opportunity for fellowship and spiritual development of youth while in the company of others of their own age group. The primary goal of the youth society is to win include components of worship, fellowship, instruction, and faith sharing that direct the youth toward a saving relationship with Jesus. Ideally, meetings should be held weekly, usually on Friday evening or Sunday afternoon.

**The Holy Seed Junior Youth society and Pathfinder Club.-**The Junior Youth Society (formerly Junior Missionary Volunteer Society) serves age 10 to 15. It often centers around the local church school. Its purpose is similar to that which



the youth society performs for senior youth. The Pathfinder Club also serves this age group. In some areas it has replaced the junior society. Its activities include spiritual instruction, crafts, field trips, campouts, and sports. These programs foster personal qualities such as neatness, dependability, self-control, endurance, and outreach activities.

**Children's Ministries.-** In recent years the church has emphasized the need for a wider ministry to its children. In the past, ministries to younger children have been mainly cared for by the children's divisions of the Sunday school. In recognition of the importance of the early childhood years for spiritual development, the church has recently introduced Children's Ministries through the Department of faith and spiritual growth among younger children, not only through programs run in the church, but also through approaches made to parents in the home and through various community activities designed to appeal to children.

Children's Ministries today has materials and resources to assist the local churches in the following specialized area: children's Sunday school and camp meeting programs for the cradle roll, kindergarten, and primary divisions; Vacation Bible Schools; Neighborhood Bible Clubs; teaching children faith and morality; family and individual children's worships; home parenting support; children's guides to stewardship; mission and outreach projects for children; children's music; Christian child care centers and kindergartens; religious instruction for school and cross cultural programs for children.

Some churches are now appointing Children's Ministries Coordinators to introduce and oversee some of these concepts and activities in the programs of the church. If you do have such a coordinator, as elder, you share the responsibility to ensure that your church is aware of the importance of providing for the spiritual development of your children and to create ways of introducing activities to meet their needs.

**To further show your support for the youth** of you church, attend youth meetings. Give high priority at election time to the choosing of youth leaders. Do not fill the other offices first and give youth the leftovers. Get parents of church youth involved. They have the most at stake. Be sure facilities are available for youth and pathfinder meetings. Work through the church's youth leaders to get youth people involved in the worship service and other programs of the church.

## 56. SUPPORT COMMUNICATION

Part of the challenges facing the Holy Seed Church is to communicate our message to our surrounding communities. While this is the work of every church member, the church Communication Secretary has a special contribution to make. Part of the work of your communication secretary is to provide information about your church and its message and activities to members of the media, people of influence, and the community as a whole.

Here are some of the ways your communication secretary can keep the message and activities of your church before the public: news releases to newspapers, radio, and television; public service announcements in local media; letters to the editor on matters of church concern; photos coverage of church activities; becoming personally acquainted with leading media and public service personnel; arranging for the advertising of church buildings, activities and services through newspaper, telephone and motel directories, and on highway signs; church exhibits at fairs and public gatherings; arranging; for church involvement in civic occasions and community programs; religious broadcasts on radio and television.

While it is important for the congregation to communicate with people outside the church, communication within the church is also essential to keep your members informed of your church's programs. The church communication secretary can assist the church by producing a church newsletter, placing news items and photos on the church notice board, reminding members of the church radio/television broadcast times, and sending regular reports and news items to the local conference/mission communication secretary. Elders should learn to think like communication secretaries, always asking themselves, what is going on in the church that our community should know? What is going on that our members should know? Share answers with your communication secretary.

## **57. SUPPORT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

The Holy Seed church operates a school system whose principal purpose is restoring God's image in its students. The common branches of learning are taught in our schools, with additional instruction in a Christian approach to social adjustment, civic responsibility, moral and ethical values, and vocational sufficiency. "In the highest sense the work of education and the work redemption are one" "Wherever there are a few Sunday keepers, the parents should unite in providing a place for a day school where their children and youth can be instructed."

**Here are some ways you can support Christian education:** Promote the principles of Christian education. Even if your church does not have a local school available to its children, there are secondary and higher education

boarding schools available around the world. Have an annual Christian education. Shortly before the beginning of the school year, center an entire worship service on Christian education. If you have a church school, invite the teachers to the platform and have a special prayer of dedication for them. If desirable, church school children and their parents may be included in the dedication. You can dedicate youth going off to boarding schools. Even if you do not have a church school, you can still promote Christian education.

**Support Christian education by sending your own children.** If you have a local church school, provide adequate facilities. Support your teachers. Parents of the church school children sometimes feel they have special authority over teachers. Their tuition pays the teacher's salary. Some sit on the board that hires the teacher. As church members, they feel they own the school. Pastor, elders, and school board must protect teachers from parental interference. And that is doubly true if you are also one of the parents. Where it seems impossible to operate a church school, consider some structured program that brings children together before school, after school, or on weekends to get the Bible instruction and spiritual nurture they would receive if church school were available. Raise money for a worthy student fund. Use it to assist those in the church family who could not otherwise afford a Christian education.

## **58. SUPPORT HEALTH AND TEMPERANCE**

The Holy Seed Church plays an important part in every community as a model for a healthy lifestyle. Our preaching and practice of healthful living demonstrates in a practical way the gospel of Jesus. This area of church activity is fostered by your Health Temperature Leader. Activities might include programs such as stop smoking plans, cooking schools, health classes, and stress-control programs. Commence your support by committing yourself to the principles and practice of healthful living. Encourage your members to subscribe to health and temperance magazines available in your division.

Promote the reading. White health classics. Encourage members skilled in health areas to participate in community health projects. There are three occasions on the annual church calendar when special emphasis is given to health and temperance related issues. Health Ministries Day is generally the last Sunday in January. Materials to assist you in the preparation of a morning sermon and for distribution among the members will be made available from your local conference or mission.

Health Emphasis Week is normally the second week in October, when the church should be encouraged to provide health or temperance related services to the community. Generally the second Sunday of December is World Health/Temperance Offering Day when a special offering will be taken to

provide funds for the promotion of health and temperance ministries at each level of the church's organization. Your promotion of these events will greatly assist the church in fostering a healthy lifestyle.

### 59. SUPPORT LITERATURE MINISTRY

One of the most effective ways to share the gospel message is through the printed page. The church distributes Bibles, magazines, tracts, Bible correspondence courses, and a wide variety of truth filled books. Literature evangelists take our books and magazines to the homes of thousands every year. You can support the literature ministry by encouraging your church board to spend money on distributing literature in your community. Encourage your members to enroll their friends in Bible correspondence courses. If you have a literature evangelist working in your area, give that person time during the church services to share how God is using this ministry in your community. Promote the purchase and distribution of our magazines and papers. Encourage our members to read the books offered in our publishing centers. Suggest to the church that they sponsor literature racks in public places. Set up a literature rack in the church. Start a church library. Encourage gifted members to enter the literature ministry.

### 60. THE ELDER AND CHURCH GROWTH

Evangelism is the lifeblood of the church. Through evangelism the world church grows and spreads its influence around the globe. Through evangelism the local church calls men and women in its own community to join Christ's remnant people. Through evangelism the church will accomplish its mission. At the center of the evangelism message stands Jesus, sent to the world to reclaim lost humankind through His sinless sacrifice. Now we are again able to enter into a relationship with God and unite with Him for the growth of His church and the return of Christ.

### 61. WORLD CHURCH GROWTH

Any congregation that ignores the world outside its own community and centers itself exclusively on its own area cannot be Christian. Christ left the comforts of home to save an alien world. His church must do the same. Christ gladly took up His mission to our globe because He genuinely loved those so very different from Himself.

His church too must do take up its global mission out of a genuine love that crosses every racial, cultural, national, linguistic, and economic barrier. The early church was dedicated to its mission of taking the gospel beyond its Palestine birthplace. Historians estimate that half of the city dwellers of the Roman Empire were converted to Christianity.

The early the Holy Seed began as a small, regionally based movement in Kenya. But in 1870, nine years after the organization of the church, the first Foreign Mission Society was formed. Early the holy seed based their missions philosophy on Scripture: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the three angels of Revelation who come” (Matthew 24:14).

They identified with the three angels of Revelation who had “the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6). They took seriously their task of proclaiming the gospel to the whole world. Now only a century and a half old, the holy seed have a presence in over 200 of the world’s 229 countries. Just as a global mission was paramount in the early church and the early the holy seed church, it must remain paramount today. The Global mission program is the holy seed church’s systematic, planned approach of taking the holy seed church gospel proclamation to specific areas or people groups that have not heard or accepted the Three Angels’ Messages. Its support is important.

Support global mission by insisting that your Sunday school continue to include a mission’s emphasis. Promote strongly the world missions offerings. Encourage church members to give of themselves either as employed or voluntary missionaries. Consider adopting a church in another part of the world. Your conference or mission may be able to assist you in finding the holy seed church in another country or culture that you might help in its church growth program.

## 62. LOCAL CHURCH GROWTH

Because all Christian are called to be God’s ministers, they all become evangelists in one way or another. Some have been given gifts that fit them for evangelistic outreach use their gifts to support and sustain those who publicly proclaim the gospel. And all, through their consistent, practical, daily witness, display the character of Christ in the relationships they have with not-Christians in their local community. Whatever the gifts, and however they may be used, the evangelistic outreach of the church in all of its forms, needs to be well planned and coordinated so that, not only are people being approached with the gospel, but they are being disciple and brought into the community of the church.

**Involving the whole church.-** Sheep enlarge the flock, not the shepherd. Members must be involved in enlarging the congregation, not only for the sake of the lost, but for their own sakes. “In the great judgment day, those who have not worked for Christ, who have drifted along thinking of themselves, caring for themselves will be placed by the Judge of the whole earth with those who did



evil. They receive the same condemnation.” The church performs its work of evangelism in two main ways.

First, it publicly proclaims the gospel through evangelistic preaching, radio and televisions, the distribution of literature. Second, and with greater impact, the gospel reaches others through the personal relationships our members develop with people in the community. Therefore, through a balance of public and personal evangelism, your church can become an effective light in your community. Through a balance of public and personal evangelism, your church can become an effective light in your community. Through your spiritual gifts, and through your work as elder, you will be able to assist your church by helping to train and coordinate the members to use their own gifts in various forms of evangelism.

Soul winning training patterned after the method of Christ must include not only theory, but individual, hands on, practical experience. Christ’s method is best exemplified in His training of the 12. He gave them the advantage of His own companionship and example. “In their association with the Master the disciples obtained a practical training for missionary work. They saw how He presented truth, and how He dealt with the perplexing questions that arose in His ministry” If you do feel competent in a given area of soul winning, but believe the Holy Spirit has given you the gift to be successful at it if properly trained, If you are competed in a given area of soul winning, invite a learner to associate with you and learn as you fellowship and practice together. It is Jesus’ method, and His methods work.

**Evangelistic meetings.** - Every Congregation should hold some form of evangelistic meetings or seminars on a regular basis. You can measure the depth of a church’s Christian love by how much of its time and budget are spent in outreach. The fruit is always there, but it takes a plan and effort to find it. Every church should be an evangelistic center and every church service an evangelistic meeting. Even a casual visitor can quickly tell whether or not a church has become a true evangelistic center.

When it does, the worship service, the Sunday school, and every other program of the church continuously keeps visiting nonmembers in mind. Everything said is first passed through a special soul winning filter: How will this sound to a nonmember? How will this be perceived by a non-Christian? Only in such churches do members find it safe to invite nonmember friends to attend. At the proper time and in a diplomatic manner obtain the names and addresses of visitors and ensure that appropriate follow up is made.

There are many forms of evangelism. Evangelism might be through traditional meetings or a class setting, such as Revelation seminars. These might be led by a visiting evangelistic the pastor, an elder or other chairman, or the youth of the church. Once the location and type of evangelistic outreach has been decided upon, efforts should be made to involve as many of the members as possible to use their gifts in support of the program. Carefully match individual skills with the necessary tasks. As elder, you may want to lead out in your own series of evangelistic meetings. If not, there are many other areas where you or other chairman might serve in support of those who do lead out.

### 63. We suggest three:

(a) Relieve pastors of some of their church duties and free them to devote themselves exclusively to evangelism for a time. "Instead of keeping the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth, let the members of the churches say to those laborers:

Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in Christ, will maintain spiritual life."

(b) Activate inactive members. In many congregations church attendance would double if inactive members could be reclaimed. Active members, especially elders, can be especially effective in reclaiming the inactive, particularly if you been friends in the past and understand something about their reasons for not attending.

(c) Be involved in evangelistic follow up. Likely, individuals will have attended the evangelistic series who have some interest yet have not gone all the way with Christ. Find ways to continue their interest.

**Preparing baptismal candidates,-** Baptism is the symbol of entrance into the family of God's church. It symbolizes acceptance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for our sins. It is a symbol of our death to the old sinful life and resurrection to a new life in Christ. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Baptism should not take place until the candidate has been instructed, experienced conversion to Christ evidenced that conversion by a changed life.

**Instruction.-** Time spent in preparation for baptism ought to include a significant time of instruction. Jesus urged His followers to "God therefore and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Instruction preceding and following

baptism into the Holy Seed Church should include the major teaching and unique beliefs of the church presented in a Christ centered setting. Those seeking admittance to the church need to know the principles for which it stands.

They should not be asked to commit themselves without knowing what they are committing to. Prebaptismal instruction should include multiple exposure personal reading and study, Bible studies, public meetings, baptismal classes. All instructional avenues, including available visual aids, should be used. Different people learn in different ways. One of the most popular and productive means of instruction in a church's evangelistic program is the pastor's Bible class. This usually combines the baptismal class and a class for new members. If the pastor cannot teach it, an elder or another person earnest in soul winning should. The class usually meets during the regular Sunday school class time.

Only nonmembers, new members, or members bringing nonmembers normally attend. Because of pastors' heavy responsibilities, they often are prevented from studying the Bible with every new believer. You can make a tremendous contribution by studying with these people and bringing them to an understanding of Bible truth.

**Conversion.-** It is important to remember that more is required for baptism than just a knowledge of the beliefs of the church. During the course of instruction there should be several occasions when you, as the instructor, have opportunity to get personally acquainted with each candidate. This will give you time to study and to pray with them to access their needs and spiritual condition. It will also give them opportunity to ask questions and share their joys or concerns. You should satisfy yourself that the people you are instructing understand sufficiently their involvement in God's plan of salvation and their duties and responsibilities as they become members of His church.

"There is a need for more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has previously been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth, Read to them the teaching of the Bible in regards to conversion. Show what is the fruit of conversion, the evidence that they love God." Early in their spiritual experience, converts should be led through the experiences of repentance, confession, and forgiveness. Show them how to accept Jesus Christ into their lives as Lord and savior; how to overcome temptation; how to develop a strong devotional life; how to strengthen their faith in God and develop a vibrant, maturing Christian lifestyle.

At the time baptism, most candidates have a good understanding of the doctrinal distinctive of the Holy Seed Church. Unfortunately, training and understanding in the spiritual areas just mentioned have not always been taught with the same fervor. Once individuals understand their need of Christ's salvation and response to the presentation of doctrinal truth will be made from the correct motive. Jesus said, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself" (John 112:32). Hearts that have been melted by the love of Jesus will happily accept His demands on their lives.

**In summary, when are candidates ready?** To be ready for baptism, they must give evidence that Jesus is Lord of their lives (1 John 4:15; Romans 10:9; Matthew 10:32). There should be evidence that repentance and conversion have taken place (Acts 2:38; 3:19). They should display an active belief and trust in Jesus (Mark 16:16). There should be evidence of a daily, saving relationship with Jesus.

Candidates should have completed a course of instruction, hopefully more than one, in the teachings of Scripture and in the distinctive biblical doctrines of the Holy Seed Church (Matthew 28:30). They should have been prepared for responsible membership in God's remnant church. There ought to be evidence that social integration has begun. Visits should have been made by the church pastor or local elder to confirm their readiness for baptism. Candidates must be approved by the local church.

**Church's approval.-** Final examination of candidates for baptism can be done before the entire church or a representative group such as elders, a committee, or church board. However the examination is done, it is unwise for an evangelist, or even local pastor, to take sole responsibility. No person or group outside the congregation, not even the General Conference committee, has authority to add or drop a name from the church roll. That responsibility rests solely with the local church body. The congregation will take its responsibility more seriously if it has more involvement than a mere rising of hands when a new member joins. It is especially important that you as elder are ready, not just to accept newly baptized members but to pledge yourself to support and nurture them. The ideal is that you find a way to become individually acquainted with, and personally committed to each one.

**Church's children:-** There should be considerable maturity and preparation before baptism. "Baptism is a most sacred and important ordinance, and there should be a thorough understanding as to its meaning. It means repentance for sin, and the entrance upon a new life in Christ Jesus. There should be no undue haste to receive the ordinance." Jesus counsel to His disciples is His counsel to

His church today: “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:16). Young children should be encouraged to commit their lives to Christ and given assurance of salvation. “Never allow your children to suppose that they are not children of God until they are old enough to be baptized.

Baptism does not make children of Christians; neither does it convert them.” At the proper time it is appropriate for you as church leader to tactfully invite a child to contemplate baptism. Sometime the baptism of its own children is taken too much for granted by a congregation. Make the baptism of congregation children a big event in the life of the church. Baptism represents a rite of passage to the Holy Seed children. They become full members in the congregation. They long to be taken seriously by their church. Prove to your children at the time of their baptism that they are important to the church and the church will be important to them.

**Church planting.-** Do not be afraid to start new churches. Mother churches that purposely reach out to foster new congregations seldom suffer. Sometimes they are revived. The biblical principle “Give and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38) applies. When a group of people in a new area show an interest in joining God’s remnant people, consider beginning a branch Sunday school or a new church company. When the company is established, your church can show its support by assisting in its services and other programs.

Giving birth to a new church will have the double effect of involving more members in the work of the church and establishing a congregation in a new area that must also be reached with our message. The best way to produce more fruit is to more trees. New churches win new members. New churches win former members. Church growth studies show that new churches revive inactive members more easily than do old churches.

#### 64. RECLAIMING MISSING MEMBERS

**Lost members.-** Jesus told a parable about a lost sheep. In His story, the shepherd left the other 99 sheep safely housed and went out searching for the one that was lost. When he found it, he lifted it up lovingly and brought it home, rejoicing (Luke 15:4-6). Within your church fold, you too have sheep who are lost and need help in finding their way back.

**Why members drop out.-** Their many reasons people become inactive or stop attending church. They may have: never been challenged to use their gifts, developed no meaningful devotional life, married unbelievers or had other marriage problems, committed adultery, quarreled with a church member, become involved in something illegal, taken up non-Christian habits, received



church discipline, worked on Sunday; become ill, found the church cold and unaccepting, or felt the church was irrelevant or boring. The list is long, but the souls are precious. Here is a fruitful ministry in which you as elder can engage. If visited lovingly and listened to sympathetically, many of these people could be reclaimed for Christ and His church.

**Laying plans to reclaim missing members.-** A program to reclaim former or inactive members takes planning. A list of names can be gathered from the church roll, from church members, and from relative. Literature evangelists, medical personnel, business people, and other members working with the public often come in contact with former members. Plans should then be drawn up listing the methods that will be used to visit missing members. Because this is a delicate ministry, people chosen to visit missing members should be wisely chosen and carefully trained.

**Visiting missing members.-** When visiting missing members, it is important to approach them in a friendly, open, no condemning manner. Knowing you are from the church, they will be wondering what it is you are wanting from them.

Here are seven suggestions to guide your visit:

**(1) Ask questions tactfully.** To help them feel at ease, ask them questions that will get them talking about themselves. In a natural way, ask them about their family or their work. Comment kindly about their children, their house, or their hobby. Gently move on to their past association with the church by asking which pastor baptized them or where and when they first attended church. Ask them if they have ever thought about returning. Ask if there is anything that is preventing their coming back.

**(2) Listen attentively.** Listen carefully and prayerfully to the answers they give, paying special attention to the feelings behind their answers. When they start to talk freely, encourage their conversation by listening attentively and not interrupting. At about this stage of the visit they may begin to express some of the hurt they have stored up, dating back to the time they stopped attending church. Allow them to talk out. Some may get very angry as they speak. This is a time for you to weather the storm, allowing all their anger to come out. In most cases, people will feel better once they have expressed their feelings.

**(3) Encourage confidence in God's love.** While visiting inactive members it is important for you to remain neutral in the conversation. Do not take sides. Your aim in visiting is to give them opportunity to overcome the problem that has caused them to stop attending church. It is your purpose to reclaim them for Christ. Whatever the problem, assures them of God's unfailing faithfulness, and tries to build their confidence in His love and forgiveness.

**(4) Respect confidences.** Some inactive or former members left the church because of their involvement in some incident that brought shame upon them.

If they confide in you, respect their confidence. They have spoken to you in trust; do not betray that trust by speaking about the incident to others. Your parts is to assure them that their sin is not too big for Jesus to forgive. Assist them in laying their sin at His feet and claiming His promise of cleansing (John 1:9).

**(5) Pray for them.** Before you leave the homes of missing members, pray for them. Ask for God's blessing on their home. Pray for each family member by name. Back at the church; ask your fellow officers and members to unite in prayer for their restoration

**(6) Invite them back at church.** Give an assurance to missing members that they are welcome back at church whenever they wish to return. They may not come back immediately; in fact you may need to visit them several times before they eventually return. It is sometimes suggested that you will need to make at least one visit for each year they have been inactive. However, the important message to leave with them is that your church does care about them and wants them back. When the time comes for them to return, make the road back easy. Call at their home on morning glory accompanies them to the church. Prepare church members for the reunion. Pave the way for a smooth and joyful return to church attendance.

**(7) Love them.** It is important to tell missing members you love them. It is more important, and a lot more difficult, to mean it. While visiting, your attitude can make the difference between their retuning to church or staying away forever. As you speak, do not shame them or make them feel guilty. Be godlike, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). Even though you know people have been or are living in sin, it is not your place to condemn. Show them an understanding and accepting spirit. Do not argue with missing members you are visiting, even though you know they are wrong. Respect their point of view.

Show genuine concern for their distress. Help them talk out their pain. Apologize on behalf of the church for the hurt they feel. Try to listen more than you talk. Avoid giving advice. Be understanding and patient, letting them know they can trust you. Show them Christian love. Be a friend. "We should not burden them with unnecessary censure but should let the love of Christ constrain us to be very compassionate and tender, that we can weep over the erring and those who have backslidden from God. The soul is of infinite value. Its worth can be estimated only by the price paid to ransom it."

## 65. HOLDING NEW MEMBERS

Jesus told His disciples, “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain” (John 15:16, KJV). Too many the Holy Seed Churches are like the fisherman who caught fish but had nothing to show for it because he put them in a sack with a hole at the bottom. God has blessed our church with success in fishing for people. But we are not keeping enough of what we are catching. Sewing up the hole in the sack cannot replace fishing. A church that does not evangelize will fossilize. But we must realize more fully that our business involves both catching and keeping.

**Spiritual babies.**- The Scriptures liken new Christians to newborn babies (Hebrew 5:12-14; John 3:5). It is important that babies be fed special food. As they grow, they are introduced slowly to the same solid food as the rest of the family. Eventually, they learn to walk and talk. Under the protection and guidance of their families, they develop into healthy children. Ultimately, they become mature individuals, contributing their skills and abilities to the world around them. But growing up takes a long time.

In a similar way, new Christians are “both” into the church. They too need the support and love of the church family to provide special food to nourish their early spiritual development. For many, the Christian way of life is a totally new experience. These new Christians, therefore, are going to need from the church special protection and guidance until they discover their spiritual personhood and eventually contribute their maximum to the strengthening of the church. Be patient with them. Growing up takes time.

**Stressful time.**- When people make the decision to be baptized and join the church, they are often subject to demanding social changes. Their decision is often misunderstood by relatives and friends, who may show opposition to their being baptized. Sometimes their decision to follow Jesus will cause them to be rejected by family or friends. This, of course, causes new Christians considerable stress. When people make the decision to become the Holy Seed Church Christians, there will often be quite a dramatic change in their lifestyles.

Some will be leaving membership in another church to join with your congregation. Others will have to leave one form of employment and look for another job which does not require them to work on God’s Sunday.

Some will have to turn their backs on certain social and cultural practices which are not compatible with the Christian lifestyle. Such changes are not made easily. When people are called upon to change their belief system, their

jobs, and leave behind the support and security of friends and family, they come under considerable strain. Many are leaving behind the familiar and reassuring, to pursue what, for them, is new and strange. As you lead them toward accepting new beliefs and a new lifestyle, as you help them to make new acquaintances within your church community, you need to provide them with very specially support. Encourage your church members to be accepting of these new people and to make a special effort to befriend them. Their social integration into your church family is absolutely essential to their long-term spiritual growth and security.

**Dangerous time.-** It has been found that the first 18 to 24 months can be a real danger period for new members. During this time they have a new faith but very little experience in Christian living. They are prone to disillusionment and discouragement. If special care, understanding, and acceptance are not shown at this time, they may experience the feeling of not belonging and begin the process of dropping out. Elders should play an important part in helping them become established in the church during these first two years of membership.

**Everyone's responsibility.-** The evangelist has been likened to the obstetrician, the pastor to the pediatrician, and the church members to the family. And it is the family that raises the baby. "Those who have newly come to the faith should be patiently and tenderly dealt with, and it is the duty of the older members of the church to devise ways and means to provide help and sympathy and instruction for those who have conscientiously withdrawn from other churches for the truth's sake, and thus cut themselves off from the pastoral labor to which they have been accustomed."

New Christians, by joining your church family become your brothers and sisters. Their welfare becomes your responsibility. "We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of the weak and not just go our own sweet way. We should consider the good of our neighbor and help to build up his character" (Romans 15:12, Philippians 4:4-9). Here are four basic things you can do to help "build up" and hold new members:

1. **Befriend them.** We have already considered the social and lifestyle adjustment that new members must make when they join your church. Perhaps the single most helpful way to assist their integration into the congregation is to befriend them and give them a sense of belonging. Introduce new members to other members. Research indicates that new members who make six to eight the holy seed church friends in the first six months almost always remain in the church.

Choose suitable people from your congregation and challenge them with the responsibility of being the spiritual guardians of a new member. Suggest that they invite these new members to their homes on occasion. Maybe they can accompany them to church services or other church activities even sit together.

They can pray with them or invite them to join a Bible study group. After the new member matures in the pastor's Bible class for a time, the guardians might invite them to join their Sunday school class. When new members are in need, their spiritual guardians are on hand to support and help. Most importantly, they are friends who accept them and are available when needed.

Family members seldom eat right if they do not come to the table. At the very least, include Sunday school and church attendance in your discipline formula.

The absentee ought to be visited immediately and give the help and encouragement needed. A visit should be made by the elder or pastor if the new member misses three consecutive Sunday service. You might consider having an annual banquet featuring those baptized during the year, another helpful program is for the conference/mission to sponsor an annual new member's event, in which new members come to some central place to get acquainted with and be ministered to by the conference leadership.

2. **Teach them.** "As newborn babies, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Nobody ever ate enough at one banquet to last a lifetime. No evangelistic series or course of Bible studies provides enough spiritual food to last the rest of one's life. Continue teaching after baptism. Include instruction in such Christian principles as stewardship and Sunday keeping. Assist them in discovering what gifts the Holy Spirit has given them, then train them how to usefully employ these in helping others.

If a pastor's Bible class during Sunday school time has been used in preparing candidates for church membership, new members should continue in that class for a time. It's one place where they already feel comfortable. If no such class exists, a Sunday school class for new members could be arranged, taught by someone alert to the special needs of new Christians. Help them establish the Sunday school habit. Find a way to put the holy seed church literature into new members' homes. Get them started in a meaningful devotional life.

3. **Visit them.** New members should be regularly visited to encourage them in their growth. You may see wisdom in continuing Bible studies in their home. One plans to see wisdom in continuing Bible studies in their studies. New members thus receive a doctrinal review and begin using their home for sharing



their faith. Or, studies can be given that are designed just for new members, emphasizing Christian lifestyle issues. Invite them into your home. There is no better way to teach health reform and Sunday keeping than by your own example in your own home.

4. **Involve them.** New members need to be involved in the church's activities if they are to grow and mature in their Christian experience. Arrange for their involvement in youth events, Bible study groups, Sunday services, community service projects, singing groups, singing groups, social programs, outreach and witnessing activities. Remember that new members seldom automatically involve themselves in these programs. They may need your encouragement and invitation.

It is not wise to appoint new members too quickly to heavy leadership responsibility. Their best first task is winning their own family and friends. One of the surest signs that new members have been disciple is their beginning to disciple others. "When souls are converted, set them to work at once. And as they labor according to their ability, they will grow stronger. It is by meeting opposing influences that we become confirmed in the faith."

Members may be more successful at soul winning when they are first converted than they will ever be again. While eventually friendships with those who are the holy seed church will predominate, at first their family and friends are for the most part non- the holy seed church. The combined effect of the new member's influence on old friends and the attractive example of a changed life make powerful soul winning tools. No wonder Jesus' first assignment to the former demoniac was "Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19).

