

What's on your mind?

How do we admit previously ordained elders when they are elected to the session?

Sometimes people elected to the session are already ordained. They may have been ordained in a previous congregation, or if your congregation employs term service for elders, they would have been ordained when first elected and could be in the position of being elected again. Presbyterians believe 'once ordained always ordained', therefore these elders are not re-ordained when they are re-elected.

When a session decides that it needs to add more elders to its number, previously-ordained elders should not automatically be admitted to the session. The congregation still needs to engage in an election and discernment process (Book of Forms 132) that identifies individuals as being Christians equipped with gifts needed to "share with the minister in the leadership, pastoral care, and oversight of the congregation" at a certain time in the history of the congregation. (*Living Faith* 7.2.4). We re-elect, but we do not re-ordain.

The Book of Common Worship, available from the Book Room at 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, includes a chapter called "Ruling Elders - A Service of Ordination." As the title suggests, this is a service designed to ordain new elders as part of the procedure of admitting them to the session; however, it can easily be adapted to admit previously-ordained elders as well.

Blessings,
Don Muir
Associate Secretary
General Assembly Office.

Responsive scriptures - unchanged

Apostles' Creed – unchanged

Narration of steps – as appropriate

Preamble – unchanged

Vows

It is appropriate for previously-ordained elders to renew their vows by answering the four standard questions listed here just as ministers renew their vows each time they are called.

Congregation vows – unchanged

Ordination Prayer

Instead of a prayer of ordination, a prayer seeking God's continued blessing upon those elected could be offered. Naturally, the prayer of ordination would also be used if others elected at the same time have not been ordained.

Declaration

For previously-ordained elders, the declaration should be adapted to leave out the words "declare you to have been ordained." The declaration would then state, "In the name of Jesus Christ, the only king and head of the church, and by the authority invested in me by the Presbytery of (name of presbytery), I now admit you to the session of this congregation ..."

Right Hand of Fellowship – unchanged



What's on your mind?

Do you have a question about the polity of our church? Do you wonder why Presbyterians do things the way they do? Are you confused by something that happened at session, presbytery, synod, or General Assembly? Puzzling over a section of the Book of Forms?

If you send your questions to The Rev. Don Muir, he will include answers in issues of *Equipping for . . . Elders* in a manner that maintains confidentiality and seeks to be helpful to the church at large.

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