



What is an Elder?

An elder in The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a person gifted, called, and ordained to lead, care for, and oversee the ministry and mission of Christ's church in the world. Presbyterian churches throughout the world have recognized two distinct but interdependent kinds of elders—ruling elders and teaching elders—who work as a team to govern the church.

Within the Presbyterian system of church government, courts or councils of the church, not individuals, exercise power and authority. We understand ourselves to be working together with Christ to change lives to bless creation. Helping The Presbyterian Church in Canada value and improve teamwork and collegiality among elders in designing the ministry and mission of the church is a primary concern in the work of the Elders' Institute.

What Is a Ruling Elder?

A ruling elder in The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a person who:

- has been gifted and called by Christ, elected by a congregation, and affirmed by a Session to exercise leadership, pastoral care, and oversight to further the ministry and mission of Christ's church;
- has been ordained to be part of a team, sharing with teaching elders (the clergy) and other ruling elders in the governing of the church through its various courts in ways that are faithful to the Gospel, effective with the church, and wise in the context in which Christ has placed his people;
- has the biblical and theological knowledge to foster Christian belief, worship, and service among the people of the congregation;
- has a deep desire to lead a disciplined life characterized by Christian commitment, sound judgment, exemplary behaviour, maturity in relationships, and personal concern for others;
- has the ability to recognize and value her/his own gifts and learn how they best contribute to the grit, organization, virtue, evaluation, responsibility, and nurture needed to govern the church well; and
- has a teachable spirit that constantly seeks to learn the ways in which Christ is leading the congregation and other courts of the church to build on their best and improve the church's contribution to Christ's ministry and mission in the world.

What Is a Teaching Elder?

A teaching elder within The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a person who:

- has been gifted and called by Christ, educated in accordance with the standards of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and ordained by a Presbytery to preach and teach, celebrate the sacraments, and share with ruling elders in pastoral care and oversight that furthers the ministry and mission of Christ's church;
- has been ordained to be part of a team, sharing with ruling elders and other teaching elders in the governing of the church through its various courts in ways that are faithful to the Gospel, effective with the church, and wise in the context in which Christ has placed his people;
- has a special degree of responsibility to ensure that the standards of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in Christian belief, worship, and service are maintained and reformulated in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- has a deep desire to lead a disciplined life characterized by Christian commitment, sound judgment, exemplary behaviour, maturity in relationships, and personal concern for others;
- has the ability to recognize and value her/his own gifts and learn how they best contribute to the grit, organization, virtue, evaluation, responsibility, and nurture needed to govern the church well; and
- has a teachable spirit that constantly seeks to learn the ways in which Christ is leading the congregation and other courts of the church to build on their best and improve the church's contribution to Christ's ministry and mission in the world.