



## INTRODUCTION

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At RUC we long to see God's kingdom advancing in Johannesburg, and we want our Church to faithfully be a part of this.

We believe that our Church has the potential to have an even greater impact in the years ahead – through more significant spiritual growth and maturity amongst those who are part of the Church, through more effectively and extensively reaching the lost in our city, country and beyond, and by having a greater influence on our society's culture.

We believe that a healthy leadership structure is critical to achieving this goal, and thus the nomination process of Elders is one not to be taken lightly.

## 1. THE BIBLICAL OFFICES OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP

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The leadership structure at RUC is built around the Biblical offices of Elder, Deacon & Pastor. The clearest of these offices in scripture is that of Elder & Deacon, as seen together in 1 Timothy 3:1-13:

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus”

The term 'Pastor' only comes up once in a ministry context (Ephesians 4:11), and even then it is not referring to an office, but a ministry gifting. At RUC our Pastors are also Elders, but with additional full-time ministry responsibilities.

At RUC Deacons are recognised as those who directly oversee and implement RUC's various ministries, whether administrative or spiritual.

## 2. THE OFFICE OF ELDERS

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Other Biblical texts relating to the office of Elder include 1 Tim 5:17-25, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-2 and Acts 20:17, 28.

In reading through these texts we see that the words 'Elder' and 'Overseer/Ruler' are used interchangeably to describe the office of Eldership. This is intentional as each word focuses on a different aspect of this office:

- 'Elder' refers to those recognised as the wise and natural leaders of the community. The term implies that they provide wise counsel to the Church, as well as the ability to personally 'shepherd' (cf 1 Peter 5:1-2) or 'disciple' the Church.
- 'Overseer' (or 'Ruler') implies a more strategic oversight and governance role.

In our leadership structure at RUC we elect one team of Elders, from which a sub-group is elected to focus on the oversight and governance aspects.

Thus every potential Elder must at the least display the broader Elder/Shepherding characteristics, but also have some oversight ability. These roles are described more fully in section 4.

## 3. THE CHARACTER REQUIREMENTS OF ELDERS

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It is instructive that most of the Biblical texts describing the office of Elder focus more on the character of the Elder than the duties!

It is thus imperative that potential Elders exhibit these character requirements:

- Elders must be above reproach (v2, 4, 7): This speaks to a general upstanding character whereby it is widely acknowledged in the Church, home and community that the person displays a consistent pattern of godliness.
- Elders must be self-controlled (v2, 3): This refers to a mature spirituality whereby issues of anger, drunkenness, infidelity, materialism etc are not prevalent.
- Elders must be hospitable (v2): Thereby displaying an openness to investing in personal relationships with the congregation.
- Elders must be faithful at home (v4-5): Therefore demonstrating godly characteristics not just in the public arena of ministry, but in their homes as well.
- Elders must be able to teach (2): This does not mean that they must teach in a formalised capacity (such as 'preach'), but they must be able to:
  - Lead someone to faith in Christ (ie accurately comprehend the Gospel).
  - Assist someone with growing in Christ (ie be able to 'Disciple' someone).
  - Be able to point out heresy (ie guarding the doctrine in the Church).
  - Be able to assist the congregation with basic questions relating to the faith.

This last requirement may be discharged in a formalised capacity, but it primarily refers to the theological requirements of an Elder (see also Titus 1:9). It is thus a critical characteristic required of Elders in order to effectively discharge the list of responsibilities mentioned earlier (see also Titus 1:9).

## 4. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

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The dual nature of the Biblical description of Elder means that there are two broad responsibilities to this office.

In order fulfil the oversight role an Elder will be responsible for:

- Guarding the Church from theological error, including oversight of preaching, community groups and other teaching platforms (such as young adults, youth, children etc).
- Discerning and overseeing the mission & vision of the Church, including ensuring accountability of the goals and objectives required to meet the mission & vision in our current context.
- Certain governance aspects such as:
- Oversight and involvement in membership applications and removals.
- Oversight of the appointment of staff.

In order to fulfil the personal shepherding role to members and fellow leaders it is envisaged that an Elder will have been, or will be, involved in at least a couple of the following ministries:

- Intentionally discipling one or more individuals of their own gender, either with the Life-on-life Missional Discipleship approach or other approaches deemed appropriate.
- Leading a Community Group, or overseeing a network of Community Groups.
- Participating in one of the Ministry teams of RUC, or being a supportive presence at ministry events where appropriate.
- Assisting with one of the teaching ministries of the Church.
- Being a regular welcoming presence in the Welcome area of the Church, and/or being a supportive presence in new members classes.
- Being active in one of the prayer gatherings of the Church.
- Being on the board or management team of one of RUC's outreach ministries (eg Rays of Hope)
- Assisting with the care, visitation and counselling load of Pastors or counselling department.

Involvement in these ministries will not only result in effective shepherding of the Church, but also allow Elders to provide insights to the leadership team on matters such as the overall spiritual health of the Church, key issues and challenges in the lives of the members, and discernment of particular spiritual needs of the Church.

## 5. THE COMMITMENT REQUIRED OF ELDERS

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The following commitments and statutory requirements must be considered by potential Elders:

- Meetings: Elders will meet a minimum of six times per year, with those elected to the Elder Governing Board meeting a further eleven times. Potential Elders will need to consider their availability for these gatherings in order to effectively discharge their roles.
- Term limits: Elders are appointed for a term of 3 years, with the potential to serve two consecutive terms of 3 years before being required to take a 1 year sabbatical. After a 1 year sabbatical, the candidate will be eligible to stand for re-election.
- Other requirements: Church members shall be entitled to stand for nomination as Elders, provided they have been Members of the Church for at least two (2) years before the Meeting at which elections take place.

## 6. THE ELDER ELECTION PROCESS

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Nominations for Elders must be proposed and seconded in writing by completing the nomination form. Elder Nominees must indicate their acceptance of the nomination after careful and prayerful reflection of the contents of this document. **These nominations must be lodged with the Church Secretary not less than 28 days prior to the Bi-Annual General Meeting on 17 November (ie by 20 October)**

An Elders' Nominations Committee will meet with all nominees at least fourteen days prior to the Bi-Annual General Meeting, in order to ensure that they are aware of the biblical qualifications and evaluate their suitability for the role.

After due consideration and consultation with each nominee, the Chairperson of the nominations committee shall advise each nominee regarding his / her suitability for office and shall inform the Bi-Annual General Meeting of the names of nominees it is able to endorse.

In the event of the nominations committee not endorsing a nominee, the final decision to bring the name of a nominee before the Members shall rest with the proposer and the seconder.

The election of Elders at the Bi-Annual General Meeting shall be in accordance with the current rules (by ballot, with successful nominees requiring at least fifty percent (50%) of the votes cast and the vacancies being filled by candidates with the highest numbers of votes).

## CONCLUSION

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Whether you are considering nominating someone to the office of Elder, or simply want to be informed of this important role, we urge you to intentionally pray for this annual process in our Church, and continue to pray for the elected leadership of our Church afterward!



# Rosebank

UNION CHURCH

## ELDER NOMINATION **FORM 2021**

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**These nominations must be lodged with the Church Secretary by 20 October 2021.**

*Currently the Church Secretary is Mr Gareth Tudor. For convenience, please pass your applications on to Shelley Seiler at the church office, who will then forward nominations to Gareth.*

We, the undersigned members of Rosebank Union Church, nominate:

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for election to the office of ELDER, and we confirm that we have received his/her consent for this nomination and that both the nominee and ourselves have read the document explaining the qualifications for and role of Elders.

PROPOSER: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

SECONDER: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE AS CONSENT: \_\_\_\_\_