

4. Understanding our new membership vows

#1 = a simple and universally accepted confession of faith.

(Only elders must subscribe to Westminster Confession of Faith and minister in accord with it).

#2-3 = a simple, intelligent and personal confession of faith and desire to walk with Christ. (We can't see into a person's heart – and we're not called to either).

#4 = we tend only to like authority when it's convenient... but we all need Christ's pastoring of us – with his encouragements and his challenges. We need pastors. We are all under church discipline!
(Elders' authority limited: "ministerial", and under Scripture).

#4 = presbytery has a vital role in overseeing the overseers, and our elders promise to submit to it. (But doesn't interfere in local church life).

Synod = multiple presbyteries



Presbytery = elders from multiple churches



Session = elders team in one church



Congregation

#5-6 = committed to the church family, not as consumer, but as a contributor. Strengthening the communion of saints. A common life... for the common good. (This is the responsibility of every church Member).

Resources

The benefits and blessings of ordination, by Guy Prentiss Waters

Short online article – just Google the title

Church Membership, by Jonathan Landry Cruse

Short book, easily obtainable – or borrow a copy

Joining IPC: resource list – March 2024

Links to lots of resources on church government & joining IPC. Ask Andrew to email this to you

1. How are church elders “made”?

1. By the direct call of CHRIST

Ephesians 4:8,11 – “Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” ... And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

2. Through the ELDERS of the church

1 Timothy 4:14, “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders [*presbuterion*] laid their hands on you”

3. With the consent of the CONGREGATION

Acts 6:3, “Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

2. What does ordination do (and not do)?

“ordination is less than a charm, but it is more than a form.”

James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 1868

NOT: magic... or just starting a new job

BUT: God is giving

SO: we are insufficient... → pray for and expect Christ's blessing
elders: accountable to Christ
members: to respect elders (Hebrews 11:17, 1 Thess. 5:12)

3. How will this happen on 11th January?

The congregation will be given a brief account of each man's call to eldership and explanation of the biblical basis for ordination.

Presiding Minister to the Candidates

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, without error in all matters of which they speak, including matters of history, the cosmos and ethics?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Standards as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and setting forth a true understanding of them?
3. Do you believe the Presbyterian form of Church government to be taught in Scripture?
4. Do you promise to submit in the spirit of love to the Session, the Presbytery and Synod as is taught in the Word of God?
5. Have you been motivated, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the position of Elder out of love for God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?
6. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in upholding the truths of the gospel and in maintaining the purity and peace of the Church whatever persecution or opposition you may face as a result?
7. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties, which are necessary for you as a Christian and as an Elder in Christ's Church? Will you devote yourself to prayer and the study of God's Word, and seek to live your life as an example of Christian discipleship to the flock?
8. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the task of leading and ruling the church, seeking to lead the church to greater Christlikeness and further the proclamation and the work of the kingdom of God?

Teaching Elders only:

9. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the regular preaching of the Word of God, labouring to proclaim the whole counsel of God faithfully, clearly, consistently, and openly, without fear of the cost to yourself that may result?
10. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the regular administration of the sacraments in accordance with Christ's commands, and endeavour to communicate their meaning and importance to the church that they may receive them as means of grace?

To the congregation

The candidates having answered these questions acceptably, the presiding Elder shall ask the members of the congregation the following questions:

1. Do you, the members of this church, receive Gavin, Steve, Mark & Will as Elders over this congregation?
2. Do you promise to receive teaching from the Word of God from them with meekness and in love?
3. Do you promise to give them the honour, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which the office of Elder, according to the Word of God, and the Constitution of this Church, entitles them?
4. Do you promise to encourage and assist them in their demanding work, which is for your instruction and Christian growth?
5. (In the case of the Teaching Elder only), Do you acknowledge the scriptural requirement that you should provide for your Teaching Elders the financial support that they need?

The people having answered these questions in the affirmative, the presiding Elder shall give the ordination charge, e.g., from 2 Timothy 4 or 1 Peter 5, as appropriate.

The candidates shall kneel and the Elders present shall ordain them and install them by the laying on of hands and prayer.

Membership Promises

The Presiding Elder shall then explain the importance of the membership stating the following promises, which shall be made corporately.

1. We hold to the Christian Faith in the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as expressed in the Apostles' Creed.
2. We have received from Jesus Christ the cleansing from sin and new life in the Holy Spirit which baptism symbolises.
3. We believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and we personally repent of our sins and trust in him alone for our forgiveness.
4. We recognise the authority of the Elders, and assent to the governance and oversight of the International Presbyterian Church, and are willing to accept their discipline, if that should ever be necessary.
5. We promise to support this church by prayer, giving money and time, and caring practically for Individuals.
6. We commit ourselves to building and maintaining healthy relationships within this church, treating our fellow believers as our brothers and sisters in Christ.