

## ***The Office of Elder at Georgetown CRC***

You have just been installed as an Elder at GCRC. You have gone through the process of being nominated by someone who saw a gift in you that would make you a good candidate to hold this Office. You have been affirmed by the congregation, which means there is support for you within the body of the church, and you have been selected through the lot system, which we believe is a call from God Himself to participate in helping to shepherd part of his flock here in Georgetown.

You may not be totally familiar with the role of an Elder other than seeing them collect money on Sundays and visiting once in a while to ask questions that may even intimidate you. And now, you are expected to take on the task of being an Elder.

There are endless resources available to you on being an Elder, both in books and on the website ([www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org)). The information in this manual is designed to give you a clearer understanding of your role as a GCRC Elder and to help you thrive as an important link in service to God and the local church.

Below you will find details regarding Council structure and meetings, Sunday worship services, the Lord's Supper, and Elder etiquette.

### ***Council Executive and Pastoral Elders***

Elders in our church is divided into two categories: **Council Executive Elders** and **Pastoral Elders**.

The **Council Executive (CE)**, along with Pastor(s), takes on the responsibility of the coordinating and supervising the ministry programs, setting agendas for Full Council and Congregational meetings and administration of the church.

The **Pastoral Elders** belong on **Pastoral Council (PC)** along with the Pastor(s) and serve the congregation's pastoral needs including visits, prayers, fellowship and relationships.

### ***Council Executive***

The Council Executive (CE) has been established to:

- Set the agendas for Pastoral, Full Council, and Congregational meetings,
- Plan, schedule and gather information for meetings
- Provide and present relative information on issues that come before Council.

The CE consists of the Chairs of Full and Pastoral Councils, Vice-Chair of Pastoral Council, Stated Clerk, Diaconal Chair, 2 Ministry Liaison Elders, and the Pastor(s). The Recording Clerk is also in attendance to transcribe minutes of the meeting.

The CE meets once per month, scheduling additional meetings as required. An agenda is prepared and along with other documentation are emailed in advance and it is also inserted in your church mail box for pick up on the Sunday prior to the meeting. You are expected to have read all the material and make note of any questions you may have concerning the minutes, reports or other material.

The Organization Chart indicates the scope of responsibilities associated with the Council Executive. Members of the CE serve as liaisons among the different facets of the ministry to coordinate, supervise and assist the different leaders of the committees and ministry groups.

### ***Pastoral Council***

Pastoral Council (PC) generally meets once a month at the church, scheduling additional meetings as required. An agenda is prepared by the Council Executive and along with other documentation are emailed to you in advance and it is also inserted in your church mailbox for pick up on the Sunday prior to the meeting. You are expected to have read all the material and make note of any questions you have concerning the minutes, reports or other material.

Pastoral Elders are assigned a group of GCRC members and/or REGULAR attendees, which is referred to as a District. Each District has approximately 30 names of congregational “members”. The goal of the Pastoral Elder is to establish a relationship with the members in their District through visits, phone calls, conversations at church etc. The purpose of this relationship is to be available for discipleship, encouraging, sympathetic, supportive, understanding, empathetic and all the other traits that a good friendship requires.

Pastoral Elders are expected to reach out (annually) to any ministry or committee leaders in their district in order to get updates from them and support and encourage them in their role as ministry leader.

Questions that could be asked are:

- 1. What is going well in your committee?*
- 2. What challenges do you face? (e.g. if there someone you can mentor to be your replacement when that need arises)*
- 3. How can we as council make processes or policy changes that will help you do your work better and how can we support your committee?*
- 4. What area of the church do you see that is being overlooked but not really part of your committee mandate?*

Pastoral Elders may be assisted by Pastoral Workers who are volunteers from the congregation enlisted to help make visits in their respective Districts. Each member in the District should be visited once per year either by the District Elder or the Pastoral Workers. However, each District Elder should visit with each member in his (her) District at least once during the three-year term of office.

### ***Full Council***

Some decisions in the Church require the approval of Full Council (**FC**), which consists of all the Elders, Deacons and Pastor(s). (Pastors do not have voting privileges). These meetings are called as needed. Agendas are set by Council Executive and will be provided. Agendas usually cover items such as the budget, elections, Classis appointments, legal matters and other broader items.

There are occasions when time is of the essence in the decision -making process and an issue is in need of a timely response. E-mail to all members of Full Council can be used in these instances to solicit comments and to arrive at a decision with a simple majority.

In an emergency or time-sensitive situation where an immediate response is required, Council Executive, with a 75% majority, is authorized to make the initial decision, with reports of the circumstances being issued to all Council members for ratification.

## **Sunday Worship Services**

A “Service Schedule” is produced twice per year which indicates the Sundays you are on duty as well as practical and useful data as outlined below:

**The Date column** indicates the Sunday on duty and IF Lord Supper is celebrated.

**The Group column** indicates the group with whom you serve.

**The Name column** has asterisks (\*) or the letter (g) or (e) beside Elder’s names.

***Your duties are limited to the scheduled dates only.***

**If you are unable to serve on your scheduled service, you may switch with another Office Bearer.**

**Please inform the office administrator of changes.**

The asterisk (\*) indicates the ‘**Elder in Charge**’ of the worship service for that day.

As, Elder in Charge (\*) you are required to:

- Be in the Blue Room at least 20 minutes before the service.
- Sign in on the Duty Assignment Template where you will be serving during the service.
- Record any announcements that need to be made.
- Welcome everyone when they arrive, especially any guest minister. When there is a guest minister the elder in charge is to have the minister fill out the mileage form provided and sign it. Put it in the office administrator’s mail box.
- Assign locations for elders to shake hands after the service & fire duty assignments.
- Offer a prayer in Council room asking for a blessing on the service.
- Shake minister’s hand at the front of the church (see customary etiquette).
- Welcome the congregation and visitors and make announcements as required.
- Participate in collection and Lord’s Supper.
- Shake hands with the congregation at your designated spot after the worship service.

The designation **(g)** indicates the **GREETING Elder** who greets attendees in the Fellowship Hall before each service AND will fill-in as the Greeter at the Lower MAIN Door if that designee is a ‘no-show’. The Greeting Elder also participates in the collection/Lord’s Supper and shake hands with the congregation at his/her designated spot after the worship service.

The designation **(e)** indicates the **ELEVATOR Elder** who is in charge of greeting at the elevator entrance as well as providing assistance as needed with the elevator before and after each service. The operating instructions are posted on the elevator’s level 2 door. The ELEVATOR Elder also participates in collection/Lord’s Supper and shake hands with the congregation at his/her designated spot after the worship service.

If there is no notation in front of your name, you are free to mingle with the congregation in the Fellowship Hall and welcome visitors before and after the service.

**The FDE ‘Fire Duty Exit’ column** indicates the location you’re responsible for if there is a FIRE emergency. Location designations:

‘1’ MAIN entrance on North side of church

‘2’ door closest to Trafalgar facing HHCS and if your designation is

‘5’ lower entrance on EAST side of church (basement exit door next to Pastor’s office).

Refer to the Elder & Deacon Assignment template for door numbers as it pertains to the FDE.

PLEASE READ, STUDY AND MEMORIZE your responsibilities as it pertains to the Fire Safety Plan. (see GCRC Policies and Guidelines)

**The Deacons column** has information for the Deacons who also participate in the Fire Safety Plan, and collection/Lord’s Supper.

### ***The Lord’s Supper***

We celebrate the Lord’s Supper usually once every month.

The elders to be on duty are noted in the service schedule. The Elder in charge will have filled in the duty Assignment Template where each person is to serve (for collection & Lord’s Supper). During the ‘Hymn of Preparation’ those on duty go to the front pews and the Deacons remove the plastic wrap from the bread. After the elements are distributed\*, you meet at the back of sanctuary and proceed to the front in unison. The Minister takes plate from you, places it back on Lord’s Supper table, then, after everyone is seated, those on duty are served by the Minister.

*\*if you serve on the organ or piano sides, make sure the pianist &/or the organist are served.*

After the service, it is the Elder’s task to:

- Collect bring the empty communion cups, plates, cup, trays and pitcher to the kitchen
- Dispose of the cups (recycle waste bin)
- Dispose of bread – someone usually takes it home for bird feed
- Wash communion dishes and store in cupboard in Blue Room

### ***Council Member’s Etiquette***

The Office of Elder requires behaviour that is indicative of the calling you have received. The Form of Installation gives a good set of instructions and expectations to the office. Along with these, you are also asked to:

- Be punctual at your visits and meetings
- Be pleasant and courteous
- Dress appropriately when on duty and at meetings.
- Respect your fellow Office Bearers; they were called, too.
- Speak freely at meetings when needed.
- Show brotherly/sisterly love to those with whom you serve.
- Inform the Chair of Council if you are unable to attend Council or Congregational Meetings.
- Acknowledge receipt of emails and respond ‘in kind’ when your opinions are requested.
- If you are unable to fulfill your assigned duty, please find your own replacement (and notify the office administrator).

Updated April 2022