

Position Description: Elder

Maffra Community Church
ABN:88 288 219 539

Related Bible Passages

The Maffra Community Church believes in the absolute authority, infallibility and sufficiency of the Bible. As we strongly believe that we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness, we look to no other source than God's word, the Bible, to inform us as to the role and qualifications of Eldership.

Titus 1:5–9 (ESV) - ⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint Elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

1 Timothy 3:1–7 (ESV) - ¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

1 Timothy 5:17–22 (ESV) - ¹⁷ Let the Elders who rule well (*direct the affairs of the church – NIV*) be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." ¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an Elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

James 5:13–14 (ESV) - ¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the Elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

1 Peter 5:1–5 (ESV) - ¹ So I exhort the Elders among you, as a fellow Elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the Elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Acts 20:17–38 (ESV) - ¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the Elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” ³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Position Title : Elder
Reports To : The Pastor and Eldership Team

How many Elders should the Maffra Community Church have?

The Maffra Community Church should have a minimum of two Elders with a preferable minimum of three. The Pastor also is an Elder within the church and is counted in such numbers. The New Testament always appeals to a plurality of Elders in the church (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 5:17; James 5:14). We believe it is unhealthy for both the Elder and the Congregation for only one person to fulfil the role of Eldership within a church as it leaves them unaccountable, places undue responsibility upon them and creates temptation for authority to be abused.

Requirements / Qualifications For Elders

- Must agree with the Maffra Community Church’s Doctrinal Statement. If a candidate has differing views on issues covered in the “Doctrinal Perspectives” section of the Doctrinal Statement, their suitability will be subject to discussions with the Elders on those matters.
- Must hold a current valid Working with Children’s Check (with Maffra Community Church listed as a nominated organisation that you volunteer with) even if the Elder has no role within any ministry to children. We ask this to further bolster the Biblical requirement that Elders be “above reproach” (Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:2) and “well thought of by outsiders” (1 Timothy 3:7).
- Must meet the Biblical requirements of the role as outlined in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7. These are explained (in no particular order) in more detail below.

1. Desire the role of Elder (1 Timothy 3:1)

This does not simply mean someone who wants the position. Often those who enthusiastically seek positions of authority have an unhealthy desire for power. The clearest indication that someone desires the role of Elder is that they are already naturally engaged in caring for and spiritually nurturing people within the church.

2. Is Above Reproach Inside and Outside The Church (Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:2, 7)

Clearly the phrase “above reproach” does not mean sinless. If that were the case, no church in history would have qualified Elders. However, it is important that there are no obvious observable faults in the character or behaviour of the Elder or potential Elder that would disqualify them from the role.

An eligible Elder need not only be respected by people in the church but must be in good standing within the community. Those who are appointed as Elders in the church should be of significant character that they will enhance the witness and reputation of the church within the community. There should be no known valid reason why a community member would think it inappropriate for the candidate to be a leader within the church.

Titus and 1 Timothy give just some examples of characteristics that disqualify a person from being considered (or maintained) as an Elder. These include (but are not limited to):

1. Unfaithfulness to his wife
2. Arrogance (1 Timothy 3:7)
3. Quick Temper (1 Timothy 3:7)
4. Given to drunkenness (1 Timothy 3:7)
5. Violent (1 Timothy 3:7)
6. Greedy for gain / Power hungry (1 Timothy 3:7)

3. The Role Of Eldership Is Assigned To Men (Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:2)

Both Titus 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:2 require that an Elder be a “husband of one wife”. We do not believe that Paul was excluding single men (as Paul and Timothy were both single) from the role of Elder. An Elder who is married is to be faithfully devoted to his wife and loving her in such a way that he is a worthy example to the husbands in the church. We do not believe the restriction of the role to men was temporary due to the culture of the first century. In the previous chapter of 1 Timothy (3:12-13), Paul stated that a woman is not to teach or have authority over men in the church. His stated reason for this command was not the culture in which they lived but in the perfect order of creation as ordained by God. An Elder is called to lead (have authority) and teach the church which consists of both men and women.

4. Must Demonstrate Good Leadership Within His Family (Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:4-6)

An Elder must lead his family in a loving manner and in a way that is worthy of the respect of his wife and children. For a married man, their first responsibility and ministry is their family and the responsibilities of Eldership should never take them away from this commitment. As the family unit is small and is comprised of people you have great love for, it should be the easiest environment in which to lead and be found worthy of respect. A person who is unable to lead well in their family setting is not suited to lead the church (1 Timothy 3:5). Given that we are all born with a sin nature inherited through Adam, it is difficult to insist that all of the children of an Elder must be believers (Titus 1:6). However, Elders (and potential Elders) must be seen to be doing all they can (with God’s help) to raise their children in the ways of the Lord and that their children respect their father as the leader of the family (1 Timothy 3:4)

5. Must have a solid mature faith demonstrated by a life of devotion and obedience to God.

As Elders are the leaders of the church, it is necessary that they be people of deep personal faith and integrity. They are not to be recent converts (1 Timothy 3:6). Everyone matures at different rates (both their personality and spiritual life). For this reason, a candidate’s eligibility for the role will be dependent

on whether they suitably meet the requirements of a Biblical Elder and not their age. It is expected that all Elders and potential Elders maintain a committed personal prayer and devotional life.

6. Must be able to teach Biblical Doctrine and refute error (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)

Not all Elders will necessarily be gifted in preaching. However, they must have a demonstrated ability to teach Biblical doctrine clearly and explain the error of false teaching. This would include the ability to identify and teach potential future leaders within the church.

7. Must have a genuine demonstrated concern for the people within the church

Acts 20:28 (ESV) - ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Elders are to be under-shepherds caring for the congregation under the authority of the Great Shepherd.

1 Peter 5:1–3 (ESV) - ¹ So I exhort the Elders among you, as a fellow Elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Eldership is by nature a pastoral role. The paid Elder (Pastor) has the additional responsibility of the leadership of the other Elders and Deacons.

What is the role and responsibility of Elders in the church?

When Paul describes the office of Elder in 1 Timothy 3:1, he speaks of it as a “noble task”. The word “task” means that the position involves action. It is not merely an honorary title but will require intentional effort and action. Below is a summary of the role and responsibility of Elders in the Maffra Community Church.

They are expected to be:

- Facilitating and communicating to the church the vision and direction of the church.
- Shepherding the church under the direction of the Good Shepherd.
- Holding the other Elders and Pastor accountable for their responsibilities as described in their respective position description at the monthly meeting of the Elders.
- In agreement with the Doctrinal Statement of the Maffra Community Church.
- Meeting the Qualifications of Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7.
- In regular attendance in Sunday gatherings of the church.
- An example in holiness and evangelism that is worth following.
- Involved in the teaching and defence of MCC doctrine.
- Involved in most church prayer meetings.
- Invested in the spiritual growth of ministry leaders and church members.
- Committed to a life of devoted prayer and Bible reading
- Committed to looking for the next generation of church leaders and appropriate training.

How are Elders appointed?

The existing Elders of the Maffra Community Church are to be constantly seeking to identify and train potential leaders. In particular, they are to seek godly men who have demonstrated a natural inclination towards caring for and spiritually nurturing others in the church.

At such point that the existing Elders believe they have a candidate who is ready to serve the church in the capacity of Elder (and the candidate is willing), they are to run that candidate through a course training

them in the requirements and expectations of Eldership (such as Alexander Strauch's 'Biblical Eldership') and then if the candidate is willing, put forward the Elder's proposal to appoint the candidate as an Elder to the congregation. This must be announced at church and placed in the newsletter over a period of three weeks. The Elders are to encourage all congregation members to seek God in prayer and to give the current Elders feedback on the proposed candidate. If the feedback of the congregation is in support of the appointment (including that no disqualifying accusations have been raised), the Elder will be formally and publicly inducted to the church's Eldership during a church service.

How long do Elders serve in this role?

An Elder's term is for a period of three years as long as he continues to meet the above requirements. After three years, if the Eldership believe that the candidate is still the right person for the role, they will again recommend to the congregation the re-appointment of the Elder. Like their initial appointment, all congregational feedback will be considered and a decision made by the Eldership. There is no maximum number of ongoing terms an Elder may hold the position. An Elder may choose to stand down at any point or may be asked to stand down for any of the reasons shown below.

Removal from Eldership

An Elder's position is ongoing until one of the following three things happen.

1. Death
2. The Elder requests to stand down from the role of Elder. This can be for any reason but may include poor health, family matters (or other responsibilities) requiring more attention, personal struggles etc.
3. The Elder no longer meets the requirements of an Elder as shown above and their position is terminated either temporarily or permanently (depending on the situation).

Recommended Reading On Eldership

Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995)

* There is also a Study Guide for this book and a Mentor's Guide.

Further information available at <http://biblicalEldership.com/>

Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to shepherd God's people like Jesus* (Crossway Books, 2014)

Mark Dever, *By Whose Authority?* (9 Marks) – Available as a free PDF from 9 Marks.