

## Trustees, Elders, and Deacons in a Local Church

While offices and functions will vary from church to church, with some not even using one or two of the offices below, here is general overview of the roles of trustees, elders, and deacons in a local church.

### Trustees.

These are elected officers of the church who are entrusted with the responsibility to faithfully represent the congregation regarding legal, financial, risk management, liability, insurance, business, and property matters in a local church. They will be listed in the church's Articles of Incorporation and submitted to local and state level government entities as needed, and will most often sign any legal papers as a measure of accountability on behalf of the church. In churches without elders, a board of trustees will sometimes function as elders in all or some of the ways as described below. While not a precise Biblical office, the role of a trustee is still a valid and critical office in the local church, and those serving could be viewed as "chief stewards" in the house of the Lord.

### Elders.

These are nominated, interviewed, and elected officers of the church who are entrusted to oversee and make decisions or recommendations to the church family on spiritual, ministry, crisis, business, legal, and strategic matters in the local church. Biblically, the terms *elder* and *overseer* (*presbuteros*; *episkopos*) are used interchangeably, with qualifications listed in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, to perform functions such as praying, ordaining, confirming, preaching, teaching, ruling, shepherding and serving along with overseeing in (Acts 6:1-6 and I Peter 5:1-5, 17).

### Deacons.

The term "deacon" (*diakonos*) literally means "servant," or "minister," and can be found in masculine or feminine forms in New Testament Greek.

In churches without elders, these are elected officers that may have a wide variety of functions ranging from the overseeing types of functions listed under "trustees" and "elders" above, to every day practical and task oriented ministries such as caring for widows and serving tables as seen in Acts 6:1-6. Their qualifications are listed in I Timothy 3:8-13.

In churches with elders, (more new churches are going this way), deacons are the elected men (and sometimes women in a few churches) that are not exercising direct spiritual authority over the congregation as a pastor or elder may gently wield, rather, they are empowered by the church and focused on task oriented and service ministries (such as a Deacon Family Ministry plan) in their local church. In some churches, the trustees and elders call them together for consultation and input as critical matters of the church are being considered and prayed through, before a recommendation is brought to the entire congregation for a vote or "bearing witness" with a proposal.

For more details, I would be honored to come and meet with you and your team as needed!

Serving the King with you,

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