

### ***What qualities distinguish Christian leadership?***

It would be overly simple to argue that Christians in leadership positions should be distinguishable by the high standard of ethics and morals that they display. Sadly Christians are fallable like anyone else.

But Christians should indeed be driven by a set of high values, the principles of which have been set for them by their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. These standards are absolute, rather than relative and have been set by God for eternity.

They include:

- A high value on truth, fairness and honest dealing
- A strong sense of ethical and moral uprightness,
- A sense of the personal worth and dignity of all individuals regardless of race, creed, colour, disability or language
- A view that wealth and possessions are held in stewardship from God and should be used as a form of service.

However Christ is *not* the personification of a set of rules for living. He is a leader for today, recognised by his followers, and followed with admiration, love and enthusiasm. He is alive today and his followers are in contact with him through worship, prayer and study of the scriptures.

As well as high values, other essential and distinctive qualities of Christian leadership are:

- using freedom effectively,
- accepting and learning from mistakes and failures,
- allowing others to confront their freedom and teaching them how to do so,
- a personal belief that God is honoured:
  - in the way people exercise their freedom,
  - in the quality of their relationships with others.

### ***How is the idea of personal freedom important to Christian Leaders?***

When Christ died and rose again, he brought his people from a state of servitude to sin into a state of freedom. This freedom can be a frightening thing and many

Christians have difficulty confronting it, preferring instead to turn their Christian faith into a set of rules to follow. This is a misunderstanding of the faith.

Christian leaders should be aware of their freedom and the responsibilities that go with it. They recognise that to act on their freedom they must make day-to-day decisions about Christian living and leading people in the church. They must accept the consequences for bad decision-making and learn from it.

### ***What are the spiritual assumptions surrounding Church leadership?***

Built into Presbyterian theology are a number of assumptions that underlie the role of the elder as a leader of the church. They determine the origin of an elder's calling, his or her tenure of office, age, qualifications, etc.. They also determine the attitude expected of those who follow these church leaders.

Most significantly they seek to balance the dynamic elements of leadership with the authority that is formally assigned to it by our church's structure.

These assumptions are:

- Elders are made and called by the Holy Spirit of Christ.
- Age is not a significant factor in the eldership, the determining factor being spiritual maturity.
- The Holy Spirit gives Christians the capacity to discern true Christian leadership.
- Elders jointly hold the key to the spiritual health of the congregations within which they serve.
- Elders, ruling and teaching elders alike, act as co-pastors of the congregation.
- Submission to an elder's authority depends on whether the congregation has chosen who its elders are to be.

Elders must be chosen because of their possession of the gifts of leadership stated in the scriptures.

### **Some Questions for Discussion**

1. What leaders have been your inspiration and perhaps your mentor over the years. What qualities in them did you admire most?
2. If the role of an elder on Session is defined in the Code, how would you as an elder introduce elements of leadership in fulfilling that role?

**Elders  
Association**



## Christian Leadership and the Eldership 2

In this study:

- What qualities distinguish Christian leadership?
- How is the idea of personal freedom important to Christian Leaders?
- What are the spiritual assumptions surrounding Church leadership?