



The Church of Scotland

Mission and Discipleship Council

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA FROM CONSULTATION WITH THE ELDERSHIP OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The General Assembly of 2011 set up the Eldership Working Group to review the eldership in the Church of Scotland. The main purpose of the group is to look at patterns and models of eldership currently in use across the Church today and to bring to the attention of the General Assembly ways in which these could be shared, reflected upon and, in some cases, adapted to encourage appropriate practice in changing contexts.

In April 2013, the Mission & Discipleship Council facilitated discussions between elders throughout the country. A second phase was carried out with a discussion document being sent out to all kirk sessions. Questionnaires representing the views of 518 Sessions were received as a result of this second phase of consultation.

Mission and Discipleship staff conducted an initial interrogation of the findings. It was then decided that a more detailed analysis of the 518 responses should be carried out by an independent research analyst and, in August 2015, Dennis McCoy Consulting was appointed to undertake this task.

The narrative responses in the completed questionnaires were analysed by using the technique of content analysis.

RESULTS

What distinguishes an elder from others in a congregation?

- Most respondents agreed that having a clear sense of both call and commitment to the role of elder is essential
- Just under one in ten said that only commitment is essential
- Both calling and commitment were thought to develop as people grow into the role of elder

Roles carried out by an elder

- A majority agreed that an appraisal of gifts should put be in place to help match elders to roles
- In small congregations, the process should be as flexible or informal as possible

- Gifts and talents should be identified either by a process of discovery (shadowing existing elders or trying out) or by formal assessment
- Elders should be placed initially where their talents can be best used and then supported and encouraged to grow and discover talents they did not know they had
- There should be a system of regular review and discussion of talents and roles

Seeking new elders

- More than nine out of ten agreed that clear guidance should be provided to help in the process of seeking new elders
- Expectations placed upon elders should be made explicit during the approach, particularly the roles and responsibilities, the meaning of vows, expectations of involvement in the church and church activities, “core duties”, the time commitment and the legal responsibilities
- There is a need to explain that eldership is a spiritual office.
- Prospective elders should be supported in prayerful consideration or through a process for the discernment of the Holy Spirit.
- Guidance would be welcomed on how to identify and assess gifts and talents, testing the strength of calling, identifying training needs and how to introduce shadowing, mentoring and buddying systems

Preparing to serve

- Just over half said “yes” to the question “Should elders be expected to undertake a period of training before being ordained, preferably alongside prospective elders from other congregations?”
- A uniform system for all congregations and training alongside others was thought to be unworkable where parishes might have different structures, outlook and expectations
- Specific areas suggested for pre-ordination training included:
 - activities associated with district visiting and pastoral care
 - the general expectations of an elder and the roles of eldership including the history of, and scriptural basis for, eldership
 - the duties, workings and responsibilities of the kirk session
 - setting up mentoring, buddying and shadowing systems

- church history, church governance and church procedures
- elder involvement in worship, spiritual and church duties, growing and sharing faith, leading prayer, taking part in communion and undertaking Bible teaching
- the meaning and doctrine of Christian faith and leadership, prayer and scriptural life, and spiritual growth

Ongoing support and development of elders.

- Eight out of ten agreed that elders should be expected to engage in recognised post ordination training opportunities, as necessary, for the purpose of ongoing development and equipping for whatever responsibilities they are called to exercise within the local congregation
- Training should be flexible in its delivery, for example, online, locally available or in-house, recognizing that Elders' time to attend training is limited. Specific areas suggested for post-ordination training included:
 - training in pastoral work and district visiting
 - roles in worship, public speaking, prayer, communion, taking funerals, mission and discipleship, Bible teaching and Bible study and spiritual care of the congregation
 - legal and formal obligations
 - the history of the church, church law, church structures and any changes or developments to the role of an elder
- When asked how might the Presbytery (or Presbytery grouping, where this is appropriate), assisted by the Congregational Learning Team of the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Congregational Learning Facilitators, support the learning and development of elders, the following suggestions were made
 - by providing regular training, conferences, updates and workshops, locally, online or through distance learning
 - by acting as a central resource for materials, contacts, guest speakers, facilitators and trainers
 - by providing information about training opportunities
- When asked if it would be helpful if mentoring and support were made available not just for new and inexperienced elders, but for all members of a kirk session, the most frequent response was that the kirk session itself has a

duty to promote fellowship and mutual support and, in most cases, this is enough

Other factors to consider about the deployment of elders

- The most frequently mentioned roles in which elders can bring a particular contribution to the life of a church were:
 - Their role in worship
 - Pastoral visiting and outreach roles
 - Spiritual care of the congregation/ leading Bible study
 - Leadership at kirk session and committees
 - Initiating and leading outreach and work in community along with general stewardship of congregation
 - Administration and organisational leadership, financial stewardship, care of fabric and property
 - Working with youth and children, taking Sunday school and uniformed organisations
 - Mentoring and encouraging the best use of gifts talents
 - Christian Teaching / Education
 - Setting a personal Christian example and attending church
- Seven out of ten consultation responses said that there would be merit in providing a resource that assists with understanding the merits of the unitary and other constitutions and how they might be adopted
- Thirteen percent of comments said that there was enough flexibility in their current constitutions without changing over to the unitary model
- Some commented that seeking advice from another church or material based on another church's experience of the unitary constitution would be (or already had been) the best way to learn about constitutions.
- Nine out of ten responses from those already operating under a unitary constitution said that they would be willing to share, or are already sharing their experiences with others

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The General Assembly of 2011 set up the Eldership Working Group (EWG) to review the eldership in the Church of Scotland. The main purpose of the group is to look at patterns and models of eldership currently in use across the Church today and to bring to the attention of the General Assembly ways in which these could be shared, reflected upon and, in some cases, adapted to encourage appropriate practice in changing contexts.

It was the view of the EWG that it was of prime importance to hear directly from elders. Hence, in April 2013, the Mission & Discipleship Council facilitated discussions between elders throughout the country (Inverness, Aberdeen, Perth, Cumnock, Glasgow and Edinburgh). Those facilitated discussions were effectively the first phase in a consultative process. One hundred and sixty-six congregations from 30 presbyteries took part, with some ministers also participating.

A second phase to the consultation was carried out with a discussion document being sent out to all kirk sessions. The content of this document was shaped by the findings from the first phase. Each kirk session was invited to create an opportunity for a conference-type session in order to contribute to this consultation either at an extended regular meeting, at an additional special meeting or at a joint meeting with neighbouring kirk sessions. Questionnaires representing the views of 518 Sessions were received from 43 Presbyteries as a result of this second phase of consultation. A copy of the questionnaire appears in the Appendix.

Mission and Discipleship staff conducted an initial interrogation of the findings and made some broad recommendations. It was then decided that a more detailed analysis of the 518 responses should be carried out by an independent research analyst and, in August 2015, Dennis McCoy Consulting was appointed to undertake this task.

3. ANALYSIS PROCESS

Information, including the full narrative from the consultation responses, was entered by Church of Scotland staff onto Excel worksheets. The narrative responses in the completed questionnaires were then analysed by the independent research analyst using the technique of content analysis. This involved reading through all of the material and extracting the key ideas and themes. These were then coalesced into categories so that similar ideas and themes were brought together in a classification.

By this means the detailed narrative responses were reduced to a more manageable number of ideas and clear themes were allowed to emerge.

4. REPORTING

This report details the findings of the consultation analysis, question by question. The report contains both tabulated findings and narrative description. Each area of the consultation is dealt with in turn, first with a narrative commentary on the findings and then with a full set of tabulated data. Please note that the number of comments detailed in the tables can exceed or be less than the total number of responses received. This is because a single response often contained multiple comments and also because some Sessions chose not to make detailed comments on some questions.

5. RESULTS

5.1. GENERAL COMMENTS

Before detailing the analysis question by question, we describe below, some of the overarching themes that became apparent during the course of the analysis.

The responses are quite diverse. Some issues are specific to small congregations. The results suggest, for example, that whilst larger congregations may have access to a larger pool of potential elders, enabling them to match calling or aptitude to specific tasks, smaller congregations are more likely to have to ask elders to work across multiple areas, sometimes outside their comfort zone. Smaller and more isolated congregations tended to ask for support and training to be brought to them rather than having to travel to central venues.

There is also a diverse range of views on the relative importance of spiritual and organisational matters. Some congregations put spiritual and scriptural matters above all else; some placed organisational fitness and a more business like model first and some gave roughly equal weight to both.

There was a range of views on bureaucracy, with the responses from some congregations decrying the possibility of what they saw as unnecessary “form filling” or “tick boxing”. Some were antagonistic to what they saw as the potential for rules being handed down from the centre. Whilst some welcomed involvement from the centre in training, guidance and support along with the consistency that this could bring, others were opposed to such uniformity, arguing that different situations, sizes and geographical locations warranted different and locally tailored approaches.

This kind of diversity often played out in an opposition to a “one size fits all” approach, pleas for informal guidance rather than fixed rules and flexibility when it comes to the design of guidance, training and the implementation of new policies.

5.2. WHAT DISTINGUISHES AN ELDER FROM OTHERS IN A CONGREGATION: COMMENTARY

Although most respondents agreed that having a clear sense of both call and commitment to the role of elder is essential, just under one in ten said that only commitment is essential (Table 1). More than three out of ten of those making further comment on this question expressed uncertainty that call is necessary. They commented that it is difficult to define or recognise and argued that call comes through the elders on the kirk session which makes an individual's recognition of it less important (Table 2). Commitment was seen as more important, at least initially, even in the absence of call. Both calling and commitment were thought to develop as people grow into the role of elder.

Those who said that call and commitment were necessary were asked how this could be tested and confirmed. The most frequent response was that an elder should publicly evidence call and commitment through:

- involvement in the church and spiritual matters
- regular attendance at church, being active in church life and exhibiting spirituality
- giving diligent service
- having a strong commitment to pastoral work
- by putting faith into action as part of the fulfillment of vows (Table 3).

The second most frequent response was how an external source or person could help the individual to test their call and commitment either during the course of training sessions or through discussion with the minister or other elders.

A third theme, albeit less frequent, questioned the idea of testing call and commitment, asking who would do so and expressing the need to make any such process supportive for the individual elder. A fourth theme concerned how an individual should take personal responsibility for testing their own call and commitment, through self appraisal, inner examination and taking personal responsibility to exercise their talents and gifts wisely.

Those who said that it was not essential to have both call and commitment were asked how these might be fostered. Giving elders information and supporting them

with appropriate training and mentoring were the most frequently suggested means of fostering call and commitment (Table 4). The idea that people grow into call and commitment also came through in these answers and was said to be effectively fostered when new elders were introduced gradually to the role and the use of their gifts, supported by fellow elders, the minister and the kirk session.

5.3. WHAT DISTINGUISHES AN ELDER FROM OTHERS IN A CONGREGATION? TABLES

Q1a. Being in an ordained position in the Church is it essential that individuals have a clear sense of call and commitment to the role of elder?

TABLE 1 YES/NO BREAKDOWN Q1a	
	%
Yes to both	86.5
Yes to commitment only	8.9
Yes to call only	1.1
No to both	0.9
Not sure	0.7
Yes and no	2.0

TABLE 2: COMMENTS Q1a		
	% of all citings (n=119)	number
Not sure if there needs to be a sense of call. The word "call is difficult to define and some find it hard to understand or recognise. Personal call is less important than commitment partly because the call comes from the eldership.	32.8	39
Commitment is the key ingredient even in the absence of call	28.6	34
Call and commitment may not be there initially. People approached to be elders because their talents have been recognised may later develop call and commitment	16.8	20
The strength and the experience of call can vary	6.7	8
Not sure what the role of elder is. More guidance is needed on the role of an elder	3.4	4
Need to be sure of what the commitment is before ordination	3.4	4
Need to understand that pastoral care of the congregation is important	2.5	3
Should be committed to doing the best for their church	1.7	2
Should have both calling and spiritual awareness	0.8	1
Those approached must question strength of call and commitment	0.8	1
Elders need to be nominated because they are committed, but this should support a clear call from the Holy Spirit	0.8	1
A "desire to serve" is also important	0.8	1
Training, probation, mentoring and buddying are all important to support new elders	0.8	1
TOTAL	100	119

Q1b. For those who answered yes to the above question how should that sense of call and commitment be tested and confirmed?

TABLE 3: COMMENTS Q1b

	% of all citings (n=1189)	number
Should be active in the church and church organisations with regular attendance at congregation and exhibiting spirituality	16.8	200
Test call/ commitment/ understanding of role through training sessions (pre and post ordination), discussion with or shadowing/mentoring with minister and/or other elders	13.6	162
Commitment, passion and willingness to give service. Participating diligently and faithfully in assigned duties. Exhibiting leadership and teamworking ability	12.4	148
Mission, service, pastoral work, devotion and care of members of the congregation/ district and communication between church and member	9.5	113
Tested by putting faith into action, taking vows, dedication through faith, duty and fellowship and through Christian witness and prayer	6.4	76
By time and commitment put into the work and record of attendance at kirk sessions	6.0	71
By living a Christian lifestyle and setting good example	5.3	63
Through prayer /prayerful consideration/ validation by the Holy Spirit	4.5	53
By approval of Session, congregation and peers	3.9	46
Through willingness to receive training and through the effects of training	3.8	45
Don't like word (or the concept) "tested". Who would do it? "Checked", "confirmed", "challenged" or "fostered" would be better words.	3.1	37
By self appraisal and inner examination of call	2.9	35
Taking responsibility and exercising their talents and gifts wisely and as best they can	2.9	34
Being caring, welcoming, having humility, patience and respect for others. Listening and treating others with kindness and respect	2.6	31
Prospective elders need information on the role and time expected of them	1.3	15
By exhibiting qualities set down in scriptures/taking account of scriptural guidelines	1.2	14
Capacity, call and commitment can develop (and wax and wane) over time	0.7	8
By connecting local and global, connecting with wider church membership	0.5	6
By example, compared to other elders	0.4	5
Through job description and/ or interview	0.4	5
Being responsive to the needs of the congregation, using theirs and others gifts.	0.3	4
The commitment of church to an elder is shown by support and mentoring	0.3	4
Calling and vows should be enough, we should not be testing call	0.3	4
By rolling/ continuous testing	0.3	3
Through rising to challenges/ willingness to go the extra mile	0.2	2
Through a good level of self-awareness	0.2	2
There should be fixed term appointments	0.2	2
We don't like the word "call"	0.1	1
TOTAL	100	1189

Q1c. For those who answered no to question 1a how might a sense of call and commitment be fostered?

TABLE 4: COMMENTS Q1c		
	% of all citings (n=123)	number
Commitment can be tested (and support given) through information, mentoring and training	22.0	27
Gradual involvement of potential may help foster eventual call and commitment	16.3	20
Finding fellowship and encouragement of the kirk session	13.0	16
Foster/test call, commitment and understanding of role through training sessions, discussion with minister and/or existing elders/ kirk session	11.4	14
Elders need support, encouragement and direction	8.9	11
By identifying and acknowledging an individual's gifts and talents	5.7	7
Prospective elders need to be given information on the role and the time expected of them	4.9	6
Through involvement in church life and church services	4.1	5
Through teamwork	4.1	5
Support through prayer	3.3	4
The idea of "call" or "calling" is not wholly appropriate for elders	1.6	2
Commitment may follow call	1.6	2
By involving elders in all aspects of the church	0.8	1
Better teaching about "call" and how we are called would be useful	0.8	1
Through lived example of nurturing call and commitment	0.8	1
The idea of testing or appraisal could be offending	0.8	1
TOTAL	100	123
		123

5.4. ROLES CARRIED OUT BY AN ELDER: COMMENTARY

A majority (more than eight out of ten) agreed that some kind of appraisal of gifts should put be in place so that elders can, as far as possible, be matched to roles (Table 5). Such a process was said to be of benefit in ensuring that talents, skills and gifts can be identified and acknowledged and so that they can be used to the greatest benefit of the congregation (Table 6). However, this was thought to pose practical difficulties in many cases, for example, where the congregation is small and the number of posts or duties is greater than the number of people available to take them on. For this reason it was suggested that the process should be as flexible or informal as possible. It was also noted that elders, peers and ministers are, or become, aware of their own gifts and the gifts of others, so that there is often a natural process of informal matching, not requiring a formal procedure.

Some suggested self assessment of gifts and talents accompanied by people volunteering for the roles that they felt most comfortable with. Whilst it was said that not all elders can fill all roles and that volunteering for specific roles could help new elders to “find their feet” it was also suggested that people should be gently stretched beyond their comfort zone and encouraged and supported to discover gifts that they did not know they had.

Some respondents did not like the word “appraisal” or the idea of fitting elders to a role, finding this too formal and in opposition to the idea that one should prayerfully seek guidance and follow one’s calling.

Answers to the question “*If that process does exist (a process for appraising gifts) or were to exist in your context how would you describe it?*” fleshed out some of the ideas given above. The most frequent type of comment was that elders’ gifts and talents should be identified either through a process of discovery (by shadowing existing elders, mentoring or trying out) or by a more formal assessment through training, survey, questionnaires or assessment of professional skills (Table 7). In similar vein to the answers to the previous question, it was suggested that elders could be placed initially where their talents would be best used and then supported and encouraged to grow and discover talents they did not know they had. A system of regular review and discussion of talents and roles was proposed.

Again, there was some opposition to any system of appraisal that was too formalised or inflexible. Where the congregation was small and the minister and existing elders knew each other’s talents and skills, it was suggested that a process of informal matching was sufficient. Some respondents took this question to be, in part, about a performance appraisal system. Those who did so were opposed to such an idea.

5.5. ROLES CARRIED OUT BY AN ELDER: TABLES

Q2a. In renewing the kirk session and developing its leadership role should there be a process in place for appraising the gifts of elders to ensure that all the roles are covered by those suited to them?

TABLE 5 YES/NO BREAKDOWN Q2a	
	%
Yes	86.0
No	6.6
Not sure	4.7
Yes and no	2.7

TABLE 6 COMMENTS Q2a

	% of all citations (n=678)	number
In an ideal world a process is needed (or at least guidelines) so that talents, skills and gifts can be identified reviewed and acknowledged.	22.7	154
Not too formalised, especially for small congregation. Tasks and talents should be matched informally. elders, peers and ministers are, or become, aware of their gifts.	18.4	125
Identify roles, match skill/talent/gift to role where possible for the benefit of the church and congregation.	13.3	90
In small, rural and ageing congregations matching skill, talent, gift to role is more difficult. In smaller congregations people often have to cover more than one role.	9.0	61
Encourage people to stretch if comfortable. Help elders to develop. elders may find that they have skills they did not know they had or can grow existing talents	6.8	46
There is a role for self assessment of talents or for saying what you are interested in and volunteering for certain roles.	6.2	42
minister and others (other elders, team leaders) should help identify strengths, talents of potential and existing elders.	3.4	23
Who can appraise or judge? Appraisal carries negative connotations.	3.4	23
Not all elders can fill all roles.	2.9	20
Respect the biblical role as teachers, seek prayerful support, respect calling, accept the gifts we have.	2.1	14
Duties may fall outside the current comfort zone, that can be a fulfilling challenge as long as we reassure that support will be given.	2.1	14
Dislike word and concept of appraisal; too formal, too much like business. "identified" "recognising" are better words.	2.1	14
Involve congregations in suitable roles where they have needed talents and/or elders cannot fulfil the role.	1.5	10
The notion of appraisal could discourage people.	1.5	10
Elders should be appointed even if their skills do not meet vacancies.	1.2	8
There should be fixed term appointments or opportunities to change role.	0.9	6
Elders need formal training.	0.7	5
A formal process is more important for large congregations/ kirk sessions.	0.4	3
We already have an appraisal system in place.	0.4	3
Adapt roles to suit individuals.	0.3	2
Make sure there is a diversity within kirk session.	0.3	2
Kirk session structures and the work of individuals and committees may need to be appraised.	0.1	1
Appraisal needs to be handled tactfully.	0.1	1
Need to cover districts first, then look at matching talents to roles.	0.1	1
TOTAL	100	678

Q2b. If that process does exist or were to exist in your context how would you describe it?

TABLE 7: COMMENTS Q2b

	% of all citings (n=727)	number
Identify gifts skills and talents of individuals (possibly through shadowing, mentoring trying out, training or questionnaire/assessment of skills).	17.3	126
Appoint or encourage individuals where their talents will be best used initially and/or stretched and developed. People discover new talents they didn't know they had.	11.9	87
minister, Session congregation and elders already know who has what gifts.	11.5	84
Through discussion/knowledge of each other and peer assessment of gifts.	8.8	64
We don't need a formal system / use informal matching.	8.8	64
Elders should meet with minister Session Clerk), to agree/ review individuals and roles regularly.	8.0	58
Elders should consider where they could contribute most/ volunteer for specific roles.	6.6	48
Through self evaluation/ assessment, possibly with guidance.	5.8	42
Develop a list of tasks and roles and identify what kind of person would best fit.	4.4	32
Approach/ interview or allot tasks to those who we feel have necessary gifts.	4.4	32
Carry out Gifts of Spirit exercise or Time, Talents and Gifts, survey/ use scriptural guidelines.	2.9	21
Support, courses, training and mentoring to identify and develop individuals' talents gifts.	1.9	14
Guidance through prayer.	1.6	12
Allow people to do what they are called to do.	1.4	10
A system preferable looking at roles and gifts as well as developing gifts.	1.1	8
Different elders have different gifts, find out what prospective elders are interested in.	0.8	6
Don't agree with formal appraisal or don't know who would be able to do it.	0.7	5
Nomination committees can identify and utilise talents.	0.4	3
Trial period/ apprenticeship.	0.4	3
Adapt tasks to suit talents.	0.3	2
There should be reviewable tenure.	0.3	2
Process should look at whether elders have credibility in standing on for minister.	0.1	2
Comparison with peers.	0.1	1
There should be a central pool of resources.	0.1	1
It should be a full recruitment process.	0.1	1
TOTAL	100	727

5.6. SEEKING NEW ELDERS: COMMENTARY

More than nine out of ten agreed that clear guidance should be provided including things to consider when approaching individuals, details about the roles of an elder and the responsibilities of being a member of the kirk session (Table 8). By far the most common response was that all such guidance would be welcome, because it would lead to more informed choices and would make the process more transparent and accountable (Table 9)

It was felt that the expectations placed upon elders should be made explicit during the approach, particularly the roles and responsibilities, the meaning of vows, expectations of involvement in the church and church activities, “core duties”, the time commitment and the legal responsibilities including the role of ministers. Some went as far as to suggest a job description (Tables 9 and 10)

Time commitment to the kirk session and the expectation that an elder will take on a pastoral role with practical and spiritual responsibilities to the congregation were also emphasised as being important things to explain to prospective elders. Background information on the historical, legal, constitutional and scriptural aspects of eldership was also proposed.

Some respondents emphasised the need to explain that eldership is a spiritual office, concerning leadership, prayer and communion and requiring Christian commitment, Christian attitude and a commitment to developing faith. In this context it was also thought important that prospective elders should be supported in prayerful consideration or a process for the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

It was also proposed that the character of potential elders should be a consideration and some of the elements suggested were: Christian attitude, faithfulness, tact, discretion, perseverance and approachability. It was suggested that the kirk session and/or the minister should be looking for potential elders who are compassionate, honest, trustworthy, enthusiastic and have sensitivity, humility and good listening skills.

In terms of making the approach, guidance would be welcomed on how to conduct pre-eldership discussions with prospective elders, the value of shadowing, and the practicality and benefits of prospective elders attending meetings of the kirk session prior to ordination. Guidance would also be welcomed on how to identify and assess

gifts and talents, how to test the strength of calling, how to identify training needs and how to introduce shadowing, mentoring and buddying, both pre and post ordination.

Some respondents pointed to existing materials and DVDs that explain eldership, often pointing out that many of these resources need to be updated. One respondent suggest an “app” on becoming an elder.

Again, the theme of “flexible and not too formal” came through and it was suggested that guidance should not be binding so as to allow individual congregations to do things in ways that suit them best, taking into account their own circumstances and the range of potential elders available to them.

5.7. SEEKING NEW ELDERS: TABLES

Q3a. The kirk session is responsible for seeking and selecting members of the congregation to serve as elders. The way an individual is initially approached about their call to eldership requires careful consideration. Should clear guidance be provided including things to consider when approaching individuals, details about the roles of an elder and the responsibilities of being a member of the kirk session?

TABLE 8 YES/NO BREAKDOWN Q3a	
	%
YES	94.0
NO	3.2
NOT SURE	2.8

TABLE 9: COMMENTS Q3a

NOTE, some answered this as if it were question 3b. The detail of what should be in guidance is fully covered in 3b, not here. Here we have coded responses on whether there should be guidance or not and why.

	% of all citings (n=392)	number
Guidance is welcome/ useful both pragmatically and for accountability purposes.	41.6	163
Expectations of elders, roles, responsibilities and commitments should be explicit.	15.1	59
Could be too prescriptive, should be guidance only or be capable of being personalised by individual congregations and presbyteries.	9.2	36
It is the kirk session's or minister's responsibility to lead.	7.9	31
Kirk sessions need freedom to consider their own circumstances and individuals.	5.1	20
Different settings and size of congregation and parish require different handling.	3.8	15
The way to approach a prospective elder can be personal, one-to-one and can depend on how well those approaching know the candidate.	3.1	12
Existing books and pamphlets are useful .	2.8	11
There should be a job description.	2.3	9
There should also be prayerful consideration.	2.3	9
Consider gifts and talents . Should also set out the gifts that would help fulfil tasks.	1.3	5
Who would provide such guidance?	1.3	5
Investigate a calling.	1.0	4
The current process works well.	0.8	3
There should be a clear reason for a choice.	0.5	2
We would like the freedom to headhunt.	0.5	2
The kirk session must be clear about what it is looking for.	0.5	2
All kirk sessions are different.	0.3	1
Any approach should include recognition of the responsibilities and liabilities of Trustees.	0.3	1
Should be a two-way process of assessment and clarification.	0.3	1
There should be a pre- eldership training course before commitment.	0.3	1
TOTAL	100	392

Q3b. If the response to the above question is yes what might the content of such guidance include?

TABLE 10: COMMENTS Q3b

Note: this was answered in different ways, some asking what guidance they thought they needed, most saying this is what should be in it, some saying this is what we do.

	% of all citings (n=1558)	number
General guidance on role of an elder (role, ordination, vows, prayer, care for members, and other "core" duties"). Some suggested a job description.	14.2	221
The required time commitment and attendance at kirk sessions, committee membership and wider church activities.	7.3	114
Details of a district or parish to visit and any local district / pastoral responsibilities/ faithfulness to district and congregation.	6.2	96
Strength/test of Christian commitment/ Christian attitude/ developing faith.	6.0	94
Explanation that it is a spiritual office and concerns leadership, prayer and communion.	6.0	94
Guidance on conducting pre-eldership discussions with prospective elders, the value of shadowing, attending meetings prior to ordination.	5.4	84
Gifts, talents, interests and experience, what do people have, how do we recognise it how to assess it.	5.0	78
Identify what training would be needed so that it can be delivered both before and after ordination.	4.8	75
Kirk session work, the Presbytery and other offices of the church and what their responsibilities are.	4.3	67
Expectation on church attendance and involvement in worship.	4.2	65
Suitable material can be found in Church of Scotland publications and DVDs "Who Me?", publications from St Andrews Press and existing or proposed elders handbook. Update existing or out of date publications such as "Who Me?"	3.9	61
The duties of charity trustees, governance, safeguarding, health and safety.	3.7	58
Guidance on shadowing, mentoring and buddying, which can be before as well as after ordination.	3.6	56
The way to approach a prospective elder is usually one-to-one, usually by the minister but can depend on how well those approaching know the candidate.	3.0	46
Background information and examples; historical, legal, constitutional and scriptural.	3.0	46
Potential roles and how gifts may be applied.	2.8	43
The importance of assessing attitude, temperament, faithfulness, tact, discretion, perseverance and approachability. Look for evidence that they are compassionate, honest, trustworthy, enthusiastic and have sensitivity, humility and good listening skills. Would they be a good leader reliable, friendly, social and committed?	2.1	32
Prayerful consideration or a process for the discernment of the Holy Spirit.	1.9	30
Table continued on next page		

TABLE 10: COMMENTS Q3b (continued)

	% of all citings (n=1558)	number
Guidance on team work and fellowship.	1.7	27
How to make initial approach.	1.7	27
Session/ eldership discuss in confidence.	1.5	23
Strength of calling how to recognise and assess calling.	1.5	23
Confidentiality.	1.4	22
Elder is a link between congregation and minister/ support to minister.	1.0	16
Advise that support and guidance will be available.	0.8	13
Should not be prescriptive.	0.8	13
Expectation that the office is for life.	0.4	6
Importance of being a good communicator.	0.3	4
How rewarding it can be.	0.2	3
Respected by congregation.	0.2	3
Assessing commitment.	0.1	2
Importance of being able to accept change.	0.1	2
Should have a heart to learn and grow.	0.1	2
Should be in the congregation for a period of time.	0.1	2
Guidance on appraisal.	0.1	1
Importance of seeking advice where necessary.	0.1	1
Willingness to work with other congregations.	0.1	1
Guidance should recognise that invitation should not be a "once only" and that individuals may grow to be ready.	0.1	1
Verbal rather than written guidance.	0.1	1
All should be enabled to have the confidence to offer appropriate help, in matters domestic and practical social and spiritual.	0.1	1
Importance of a culture of caring and sharing, where all feel enabled to play a valued part, be it humble or outgoing.	0.1	1
Sharing good practice between congregations/parishes might be helpful	0.1	1
Should have regional meetings of elders and an elders page on COS website.	0.1	1
Should be an app on being an elder.	0.1	1
TOTAL	100	1558

5.8. PREPARING TO SERVE: COMMENTARY

Just over half gave a definite “yes” to the question “Should elders be expected to undertake a period of training before being ordained, preferably alongside prospective elders from other congregations?” (Table 11). Three out of ten gave a qualified yes (which was often a yes to training, but not necessarily alongside other congregations), one in ten said no. There were also some who were unsure or whose answers said both yes and no. Clearly this was a complex question that some found ambiguous and which needed to be “unpacked”.

The individual comments show a similar complexity, with more than three out of ten agreeing that training should take place but locally, within their own congregation, and not necessarily alongside others (Table 12). A uniform system for all congregations and training alongside others was thought to be unworkable where parishes might have different structures, outlook and expectations. On a practical point, it was noted that elders are often appointed at different times and that this could present difficulties in coordinating training with others.

Those who explicitly supported training alongside others said that this would be useful and beneficial and a good opportunity to learn from other parishes. Those who were less sure commented, for example, that joint training would be beneficial only if other parishes were like-minded. The latter were in favour of flexibility so as to allow for training locally or in-house if that were thought desirable. Some cautioned that if other churches were to be involved, the individual candidate would need to be supported in preparation and participation.

One in ten of the comments on this question said that training should not be compulsory, but that it should be encouraged rather than “expected”.

Some pointed out that a requirement to undertake training could put prospective elders off, this often said in the context of there being a small or diminishing pool of prospective elders. It was suggested that instead of the word “training”, this might be presented as familiarisation, preparation, discussion, induction, support, education or coaching.

Respondents were asked specifically what the content of any training might include. Top of the list came activities associated with district visiting and pastoral care, particularly on how to deal with serious illness and bereavement, how to respond to

requests for prayer during home visits and how to handle difficult or complex family and home issues.

Also high on the list was a need for training on the general expectations of an elder and the roles of eldership, including the history of, and scriptural basis for, eldership. Some asked for training on the duties of, workings of, and responsibilities of the kirk session, including an opportunity to attend a Session prior to ordination.

Training was suggested on setting up and running mentoring, buddying and shadowing programmes or setting up informal support systems through meetings with other elders for mutual encouragement and discussion on areas of concern.

A further area of training that rated high on the list concerned church history, church governance and church procedures, including the work of the General Assembly and committee, church law and church doctrine.

Respondents also noted the importance of training in elder involvement in worship (including leading worship where appropriate), spiritual and church duties, growing and sharing faith, leading prayer, taking part in communion and undertaking Bible teaching. A need was also expressed for training on the meaning and doctrine of Christian faith and leadership, prayer and scriptural life, and spiritual growth.

Social and interpersonal skills were also thought to be important aspects of training especially “people skills”, communication and listening skills, how to develop and sustain relationships and developing leadership and teamwork skills.

There were a number of other individual components suggested for training as shown in Table 13, but worth mentioning here as a final category are the financial and legal obligations of eldership, including the obligations of charity trustees and responsibilities pertaining to child protection and safeguarding.

5.9. PREPARING TO SERVE: TABLES

Q4a. Should elders be expected to undertake a period of training before being ordained, preferably alongside prospective elders from other congregations?

TABLE 11 YES/NO BREAKDOWN Q4a	
DEFINITE YES	51.4
QUALIFIED YES	31.6
NO	10.4
NOT SURE	2.4
YES AND NO	4.2

TABLE 12: COMMENTS Q4a

Note: straightforward yes and no or narrative that simply suggests a full yes or no not coded

	% of all citings (n=295)	number
Yes, but not necessarily with others.	32.5	96
Should not be compulsory, encouraged rather than "expected".	10.8	32
A uniform system for all congregations and training alongside others might not work all parishes which might have different structure, outlook, expectation etc.	10.5	31
It might be difficult to coordinate training with others (timing of ordinations, travel, geography).	9.8	29
It should be alongside existing/ experienced elders as well.	9.2	27
After ordination, not before.	7.1	21
Familiarisation, preparation, discussion, assistance induction, raising awareness, support, education or coaching rather than training.	6.4	19
This could deter or put off potential elders.	5.4	16
Useful and beneficial, a good opportunity to learn from other parishes.	3.4	10
A wider forum involving other churches would be good as long as the individual candidate is supported in participation and processes.	1.4	4
Joint training if other parishes are like-minded, but flexibility of in-house as well.	1.4	4
Ideally with other elders, not just preferably.	0.7	2
Not if pre-ordained, but already accepted appointment.	0.3	1
After ordination and in-house.	0.3	1
Only train with others after ordination.	0.3	1
Should be required, not expected.	0.3	1
TOTAL	100	295

Q4b. If the response to the above question is yes what might the content of such training include?

TABLE 13: COMMENTS Q4b

	% of all citings (n=1385)	number
What is involved in district visiting and pastoral care and handling difficult situations.	13.3	184
Support, mentoring, buddying, meeting with other elders for mutual support, shadowing system as well as training and discussing concerns with others.	9.5	132
General expectations and roles of eldership, a job description.	9.2	128
Church history, government and procedures. The work of the General Assembly and committee, church law and church doctrine.	8.2	114
Worship (including leading), spiritual and church duties, sharing faith, leading prayer, communion, Bible teaching etc.	8.0	111
Understanding duties of/ workings of and responsibilities of attendance at kirk session, attending a Session pre ordination.	5.6	77
Dealing with bereavement and health issues.	5.3	74
People skills, communication and listening.	4.3	60
Responding to request for prayer (e.g. on home visits).	3.8	53
Financial and legal obligations and obligations of charity trustees.	3.7	51
The meaning and doctrine of Christian faith and leadership.	3.5	48
Prayer and scriptural life, spiritual growth.	2.9	40
Exploration of elder vows and ordination process.	2.8	39
Reflection on and exploring and using time, talents and gifts.	2.4	33
Child protection and safeguarding.	2.3	32
Leadership roles and skills.	1.9	27
Scriptural basis of eldership.	1.9	27
Organisational, administrative and meeting skills.	1.6	22
Duties to, and relationship with, minister.	1.6	22
Teamwork and fellowship.	1.4	20
History of the eldership.	1.4	19
Confidentiality.	1.1	15
Developing relationships.	0.7	10
Understanding calling.	0.6	9
Dealing with conflict.	0.6	8
Dealing with time commitments and juggling family and other commitments.	0.5	7
Counselling skills.	0.4	6
How to help with faith crises.	0.3	4

TABLE 13: COMMENTS Q4b (continued)

	% of all citings (n=1385)	number
Should be tailored to individual an/ or local needs.	0.3	4
Stewardship.	0.1	2
Identification of training and development needs.	0.1	2
Dealing with the elderly.	0.1	1
Change management.	0.1	1
Reassurance that learning is ongoing.	0.1	1
External Church of Scotland courses paid for by the church should be taken before taking any further step towards eldership.	0.1	1
Time for reflection.	0.1	1
TOTAL	100	1385

5.10. ONGOING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OF ELDERS: COMMENTARY

When asked whether elders should be expected to engage in recognised post ordination training opportunities, as necessary, for the purpose of ongoing development and equipping for whatever responsibilities they are called to exercise within the local congregation, more than eight out of ten said yes (Table 14). Of the 406 further comments made in answer to this question, a quarter said that this should be voluntary or only if requested by an elder, unless it is an essential requirement, for example, safeguarding. One fifth of comments said that “expected” was too strong a word: “encouraged” or “invited” were suggested as alternatives (Table 15).

In line with answers to previous questions, it was suggested that training should not necessarily be formal but should be flexible in how it is delivered, for example, online, locally available or in-house. It was pointed out that, although continuous development is necessary, elders’ time to attend training is often limited.

When asked about the content of post ordination training, the top responses mirrored those listed for pre-ordination training (Table 16). Top of the list were training in pastoral work and district visiting, particularly in dealing with bereavement and serious illness, including dementia, and how to lead prayer on home visits.

Roles within the church and assisting the minister formed a second grouping of training need. These included roles in worship, leading services, public speaking,

prayer, communion, taking funerals, mission and discipleship, Bible teaching and Bible study and spiritual care of the congregation.

The further group of training needs centred on legal and formal obligations such as Protection of Vulnerable Groups, safeguarding, financial, OSCR and Trustee obligations, other legal /statutory obligations, Health and Safety, food handling and data protection.

As was the case with suggestions for pre ordination training, it was proposed that training should be available on the history of the church, church law, church structures and any changes or developments to the role of an elder.

Training in skills that would help an elder work more effectively with both the congregation and other elders were also suggested, such as general people skills, working effectively with young people, communication and listening skills, confidentiality, keeping up to date with societal changes, team work, shadowing, mentoring and peer support.

When asked how might the Presbytery (or Presbytery grouping, where this is appropriate), assisted by the Congregational Learning Team of the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Congregational Learning Facilitators, support the learning and development of elders, a quarter of comments suggested the provision of regular training, conferences, updates and workshops emphasising that these should be provided at suitable locations (Table 17). The last point refers to some reservation about a centralised system where elders might have to travel to a central point for training and this was emphasised again in other comments about training being done locally or with a local lead or initiative. Online training and other forms of distance learning were also proposed as novel ways of delivering training locally.

A central resource was suggested for materials, contacts, guest speakers, facilitators and trainers that could be drawn upon by those instigating or delivering training locally. A central source of information for training opportunities was also suggested.

There were also suggestions that Presbytery or central staff could provide specialist support or a helpline and that it would be useful to have contact names at the centre.

Out of the 714 comments made in answer to this question, 34 stated that they had not heard of the Congregational Learning Team and Congregational Learning Facilitators, so there may be a need to raise their profile.

When asked if it would be helpful if mentoring and support were made available not just for new and inexperienced elders, but for all members of a kirk session, the most frequent response was that the kirk session itself has a duty to promote fellowship and mutual support and, in most cases, this is enough (Table 18). The second most frequent comment was that such support should not be compulsory, but may be helpful if needed and requested. Again, there were comments that an informal approach was preferable.

It was thought that support would be particularly beneficial for new or inexperienced elders for specific or specialist roles, or where an elder is stretching and growing into new areas of responsibility.

Some questioned where support might come from or who would provide such a service and these comments were often accompanied by questions about what the elder’s skill set might be and how mentors should be chosen. Associated comments suggested that mentors and mentees need to be carefully matched and that less formal buddying is sometimes preferable to a formal mentoring process.

5.11. ONGOING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OF ELDERS: TABLES

Q5a. Should elders be expected to engage in recognised post ordination training opportunities, as necessary, for the purpose of ongoing development and equipping for whatever responsibilities they are called to exercise within the local congregation?

TABLE 14 YES/NO BREAKDOWN Q5a	
YES	85.1
NO	7.7
NOT SURE	3.3
YES AND NO	3.9

TABLE 15: COMMENTS Q5a

	% of all citings (n=406)	number
Should be voluntary or only if requested by an elder, unless it is an essential requirement, e.g. safeguarding.	25.6	104
The word should not be “expected”, maybe “encouraged”, “invited”, or made aware of what is available.	21.2	86
Should not be too formal, should be flexibility in the way it is done and the means by which it is offered, e.g. online, locally available, in-house.	9.1	37
There is a limit to time and commitment courses should be short.	4.9	20
Ongoing training and continuous development necessary.	4.9	20
Must be relevant.	4.7	19
The eldership is not a profession or career.	3.4	14
Must keep up to date.	3.0	12
This may put people off.	3.0	12
Conferences and away days.	2.7	11
Training in bereavements and health .	2.2	9
Safeguarding.	2.0	8
Financial management, stewardship, duties of Trustees.	2.0	8
Would help in keeping abreast of changes / roles is not static.	1.7	7
To assist in the development of pastoral skills.	1.7	7
Must be high quality.	1.2	5
Yes, every 5 years.	1.2	5
“Recognised” might seem overwhelming/ not sure what this means.	1.0	4
Yes, every 3 years.	1.0	4
To assist in spiritual development.	0.7	3
Training not the right word.	0.7	3
Building relationships.	0.5	2
Training in counselling.	0.2	1
Problem solving.	0.2	1
Expectations of elders.	0.2	1
Prayer and Bible study is sufficient.	0.2	1
Not tenable over 5 year period.	0.2	1
Training in leadership roles.	0.2	1
TOTAL	100	406

Q5b. If the response to the above question is yes what might the content of such training include?

TABLE 16: COMMENTS Q5b

	% of all citations (n=1012)	number
Pastoral work/ visiting.	13.1	133
Bereavement training and dealing with serious illness including dementia.	12.3	124
Worship, leading service, public speaking, prayer, communion, taking funerals.	7.4	75
PVG and safe-guarding.	6.3	64
History of and understanding church, church law, structures and any changes.	5.6	57
People skills, communication and listening, confidentiality.	5.4	55
Finance, OSCR and Trustee obligations.	5.3	54
Team work, shadowing, mentoring and peer support.	4.4	45
Guidance on prayer and praying on visits.	4.2	42
Role of an elder and any changes, developments.	3.8	38
Legal /statutory obligations, (other than PVG) H&S, food handling, data protection etc.	2.7	27
Working with young people.	2.4	24
Mission and discipleship.	2.2	22
Spiritual care of the congregation.	2.0	20
Community and societal changes.	2.0	20
Bible teaching and Bible study.	2.0	20
Leadership.	1.9	19
Spiritual / faith development.	1.9	19
Stewardship.	1.8	18
Dealing with lapsed members or non attendees.	1.6	16
Family and relationship issues.	1.5	15
Administrative and committee understanding and skills.	1.4	14
Identifying and developing talents and skills.	1.4	14
Counselling.	1.3	13
Dealing with difficult relationships and confrontational situations.	1.1	11
Duties, responsibilities, workings of kirk session.	1.1	11
Role play.	0.7	7
How to support the minister.	0.7	7
Reflection on call and vows.	0.7	7
Dealing with conflict.	0.6	6
Alcohol and drug abuse.	0.5	5
Fundraising.	0.3	3
Tackling poverty.	0.2	2
Developing fellowship.	0.2	2
Knowing your limitations.	0.2	2
World mission.	0.1	1
TOTAL	100	1012

Q5c. How might the Presbytery (or Presbytery grouping, where this is appropriate), assisted by the Congregational Learning Team of the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Congregational Learning Facilitators, support the learning and development of elders?

TABLE 17: COMMENTS Q5c

	% of all citings (n=714)	number
Provide regular training, conferences, updates, workshops at suitable locations	24.1	172
Produce or identify good quality materials, resources, contacts and references.	13.7	98
Bring people together from other parishes/ congregations to share experience .	9.5	68
Provide online training or access to online resources or other distance learning.	7.4	53
Training should be done, where possible, locally or with local lead/ first initiative.	6.7	48
By responding to local needs with appropriate training and materials .	6.0	43
By offering good quality facilitators and trainers if needed.	5.5	39
Don't know much about / need to know more Congregational Learning Team and Congregational Learning Facilitators.	4.8	34
By keeping us abreast of training and training opportunities.	4.3	31
By providing suitable guest speakers.	2.9	21
Attend/ lead a kirk session or be available if a Session needs support help.	2.8	20
Presbytery should lead, give impetus to all training.	1.8	13
By highlighting best practice.	1.4	10
Sending materials by email.	1.0	7
By making known specific contact names in Presbytery, 121. helpline	1.0	7
Provide financial support for people to take up training/ make training affordable	1.0	7
By sharing practice and experience.	0.8	6
By bringing consistency to learning/ training.	0.7	5
By ensuring that Christian life, scripture, spirituality are included.	0.7	5
By setting agreed standards/ guidelines for Sessions to aspire to and reviewing at (3 year) intervals.	0.6	4
By providing a guidance handbook.	0.6	4
By helping to train, introduce modern social media.	0.4	3
By organising informal or social meetings.	0.4	3
By directing us to resources outside the church.	0.4	3
By visiting us locally.	0.3	2
It would be helpful to train trainers.	0.3	2
Offer confidence and esteem building to enable people to take further training.	0.3	2
121 could come in when Presbytery too busy.	0.1	1
By providing opportunities to learn by example.	0.1	1
By recognising that not all congregations are the same.	0.1	1
Provide training led by Mission and Discipleship trainers.	0.1	1
TOTAL	100	714

Q5d. Would it be helpful if mentoring and support were made available, not just for new and inexperienced elders, but for all members of a kirk session?

TABLE 18: COMMENTS Q5d

	% of all citings (n=281)	number
Mutual support within kirk session is of part of the Session's duty and should be/most often is enough.	16.7	47
When requested, not compulsory.	13.2	37
Particularly beneficial for new or inexperienced elder and for specific roles, growing into new areas.	12.1	34
From where? It is not clear always who should be a mentor, who would provide such a service, what the skill set is, or who should undertake it in a small Session.	11.4	32
It should be informal.	9.3	26
Support within and without congregation/ Session welcome.	6.8	19
A less formal buddy system would be preferable.	6.0	17
Buddies and mentors need to be well matched.	5.0	14
This should be led by the minister.	5.0	14
It should be available for experienced elders too.	3.9	11
It would be difficult and expensive to organise centrally/should not be done centrally.	2.5	7
This is not needed in small Session.	2.1	6
It might be resented by experienced elders or by any elder as implying that they are not good enough.	1.8	5
Could be helpful where elders are struggling or where there are crises.	1.4	4
It would difficult to manage without offence.	0.7	2
We need an on-call system or helpline.	0.7	2
Should be done by encouraging regular, focused reflection for each person to consider individual development needs.	0.4	1
A review process is important to ensure that the groupings have a focus on their outcomes and that results can be measured and assessed.	0.4	1
Mentoring can be too invasive and often can be a great turn-off.	0.4	1
Encourage on-going spiritual growth and development, not just skill or task based learning .	0.4	1
TOTAL	100	281

5.12. OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE DEPLOYMENT OF ELDERS: COMMENTARY

The question “What are the different leadership roles in which elders can bring a particular contribution to the life of a church” attracted more responses than any other, with a total of 2385 comments being identified during analysis (Table 19).

There was a wide variety in the responses with the four most frequently mentioned being, the role in worship, pastoral visiting and outreach roles, spiritual care of the congregation/ leading Bible study and leadership at kirk session and committees.

Because of the wide variety of responses, these top four categories accounted for just over one third of comments, with the remainder being spread across a large number of domains.

A further third of comments fell into the following broad categories:

- Initiating and leading outreach and work in community along with general stewardship of congregation
- Administration and organisational leadership, financial stewardship, care of fabric and property
- Working with youth and children, taking Sunday school and uniformed organisations
- Mentoring and encouraging the best use of gifts talents
- Christian Teaching / Education
- Setting a personal Christian example and attending church.

The remaining categories of comment can be seen in Table 19.

Seven out of ten consultation responses said that there would be merit in providing a resource that assists with understanding the merits of the unitary and other constitutions and how they might be adopted (Table 20). Of those who made more detailed comments, one third said that website and other resources would help those churches considering a change of constitution, help to give a greater understanding of different constitutions and promote informed choices. All such resources should be clear, easy to understand and provide a balanced view on the adoption of different constitutions. Thirteen percent of comments expressed the view that there was enough flexibility in their current constitutions without changing over to the unitary model, whilst 8% said that they had already adopted a unitary constitution and had no need of any further information.

Some commented that seeking advice from another church or material based on another church’s experience of the unitary constitution would be (or already had been) the best way to learn about constitutions. The information already available on the Church of Scotland website was thought by others to be sufficient.

Nine out of ten responses from those already operating under a unitary constitution said that they would be willing to share, or are already sharing their experiences with others, although 40% of these said that they were not in a position to share just yet as they had adopted the new constitution only recently.

5.13. OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE DEPLOYMENT OF ELDERS: TABLES

Q6a. Whilst elders are ordained for life there are many ways in which they can exercise a leadership role. What are the different leadership roles in which elders can bring a particular contribution to the life of a church?

TABLE 19: COMMENTS Q6a		
	% of all citings (n=2385)	number
In worship.	11.8	281
Pastoral and visiting roles (both individual and organisations).	9.0	214
Spiritual care leading prayers/ Bible study.	6.9	164
Leadership at kirk session and committees, Clerk etc.	6.8	163
Initiating, leading outreach and work in community.	5.4	128
Youth.	5.2	125
Stewardship and Finance.	5.0	120
Working with children/ Sunday school and uniformed organisations.	3.8	90
Mentoring and encouraging the best use of gifts talents.	3.7	89
Fabric, property.	3.3	78
Christian Teaching / Education.	2.9	69
Administration and organisation.	2.6	62
Personal Christian example including church attendance.	2.6	61
Mission and stewardship of congregation.	2.4	58
Generally serving and leading the congregation, taking the church to the community.	2.3	56
Involvement in church events social activities.	2.1	51
Representing at Presbytery, General Assembly, Congregational Board .	2.1	51
Being good at Communications and IT, church magazine.	1.9	46
Table continued on next page		

TABLE 19: COMMENTS Q6a continued

Music and choir.	1.8	43
Supporting the minister.	1.8	43
Working with elderly / housebound and bereavement.	1.6	39
Fund Raising.	1.6	38
Welcoming new and old members alike.	1.6	37
Bringing or being open to new ideas, helping with vision.	1.2	28
Bringing professional skills from work or other areas of life.	1.0	25
Assisting at or taking funerals.	1.0	23
Team work and decision making leaders.	0.9	21
PVG, safeguarding.	0.8	19
World mission, world church, world affairs, world outreach.	0.8	19
Evangelising, bringing new members, encouraging church attendance.	0.8	19
Catering for functions and leading hospitality.	0.8	18
Should not link to 'ordained for life', not sure what that means, what about those who left or are too ill to take an active role, there should be fixed term appointments.	0.7	17
Creating opportunities for fellowship.	0.7	16
Continuity and managing change (including interim moderator duties).	0.5	13
Flowers.	0.4	10
Commitment, keenness.	0.4	10
Supporting families.	0.3	8
Elders are servants not leaders or servant leaders.	0.3	6
Elders bring their gifts to any role, leadership is about using them wisely.	0.2	5
Fulfilling vows.	0.2	5
Confidentiality and trust.	0.2	4
Health and safety.	0.1	3
Befriending.	0.1	2
Problem solving, dealing with conflict.	0.1	2
Independent examiner in other churches.	0.1	2
Promoting reputation management.	< 0.1	1
Catering.	< 0.1	1
Staff issues.	< 0.1	1
Interviewing.	< 0.1	1
TOTAL	100	2385

Q6b. Many congregations have adopted the unitary constitution which has enabled the utilisation of those who are not elders in leadership roles. Would there be merit in providing a resource that assists with the understanding of the merits of the various constitutions and how they might be adopted?

TABLE 20 YES/NO BREAKDOWN Q6b	
YES	70.0
NO	18.8
NOT SURE	8.4
YES AND NO	2.7

TABLE 21: COMMENTS Q6b		
	% of all citings (n=245)	number
Website and other resources would help those churches considering a change and help to give a greater understanding of different constitutions.	33.1	81
Enough flexibility in current constitution without unitary "if ain't broke don't fix it!".	13.5	33
All resources should be clear, easy to understand and provide a balanced view.	12.7	31
Have adopted the Unitary Constitution, this is the only one we need to understand.	8.2	20
Seeking advice from another church or material based on that would be (was the) the best way to learn about constitutions.	7.8	19
Enough information already on Church of Scotland website	6.9	17
This would increase the congregation's involvement, particularly in congregations where numbers are small. Everyone would get the opportunity to have a say.	6.9	17
The minister would be the best person to explain	2.9	7
We think the unitary constitution is unhelpful, to us/we have no plans to change.	1.6	4
Practical examples of how the unitary constitution works would help.	1.2	3
We are currently considering the Unitary constitution.	1.2	3
It takes time to understand how a new constitution works in practice.	0.8	2
Reluctance to have more paperwork and reports from "on high".	0.4	1
Minister not always best placed to advise on operational, constitutional needs.	0.4	1
A resource for non-elders about the unitary cons would help.	0.4	1
With congregations shrinking, single system rather than separate Sessions and Boards could make better use of different skill sets within a congregation.	0.4	1
The Presbytery clerk is able to give advice.	0.4	1
The unitary constitution seems to create more problems than it has solved.	0.4	1
There is merit in enlightening and reassuring church members that they are part of the whole ministry of God.	0.4	1
All forms of information and training are welcome.	0.4	1
TOTAL	100	245

Q6c. If your congregation is operating under the unitary constitution would you be willing to share your experiences for wider use?

TABLE 22: COMMENTS Q6c		
	% of all citings (n=83)	number
Willing to share the way it works for us	38.6	32
Willing to share, but not just yet as it is still new to us	36.1	30
Willing to share, but it was not a completely positive experience for us to move to a unitary constitution	7.2	6
We are already sharing	7.2	6
Would like to hear about how others coped with the challenges	2.4	2
Willing to share our experience of the Quod Omnia constitution	2.4	2
Willing to share experiences of operating under the Model constitution	2.4	2
Willing, but would like training on how best to share	1.2	1
Willing to help share through materials, but don't wish to travel to others	1.2	1
It would be up to the individual or group to decide	1.2	1
TOTAL	100.0	83

6. APPENDIX: CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE



The Church of Scotland
Mission and Discipleship Council

**Eldership Working Group
Eldership Consultation
September 2013
Date of completion:
Congregation:**

Thank you for your participation in this consultation exercise. Your contributions today will help shape the report that the Eldership Working Group (EWG) has been asked to produce for the General Assembly of 2014 giving draft proposals on developments to the ship.

How you might gather comments:

- In the first phase of the consultation there was a lot of positive feedback about the way it had enabled *s from different congregations to come together* to chew over the issues as they considered appropriate responses. Hence, we would encourage kirk sessions from different congregations to jointly carry out this exercise if appropriate.
- It was also suggested that a *separate meeting or conference for s* would provide a more conducive environment for providing your input to this significant consultation. Whilst we would not want to be prescriptive about this and are aware that each congregation will have an idea of a way of working that will suit it, the EWG would encourage kirk sessions to hold a meeting specifically to discuss this document. This would almost certainly be necessary where a joint meeting is planned.
- Gathering feedback from groups such as a kirk session tends to be *most effective when small groups of around eight work together*, either on a selection or all of the questions, and then the small groups responses are collated. *The expectation is that one document of collated responses will be emailed to us from each congregation or group of congregations.* There may be cases where the questionnaire would be completed by an individual and we would be happy to receive these as long as it was clearly noted on the front that it was submitted by an individual.

Completing the questionnaire:

Please endeavour to provide us with *electronically completed forms* and where that isn't possible clearly written. This will enable us to make the most effective use of your contributions. Please *submit your completed form as soon as you have an agreed completed version.*

Completed forms should be emailed to eldership@cofscotland.org.uk. The cut-off date for returns is the **30th November** but it would be very helpful if we were to receive them sooner than this.

1. What distinguishes an from others in a congregation?

'The call and commitment to undertake, along with the minister, responsibility for the life of the congregation in all aspects, including worship, mission and service to the wider community.'
(Assembly Council Report on Eldership 2003)

Q 1a. Being in an ordained position in the Church is it essential that individuals have a clear sense of call and commitment to the role of ?

Q 1b. For those who answered yes to the above question how should that sense of call and commitment be tested and confirmed?

Q 1c. For those who answered no to question 1a how might a sense of call and commitment be fostered?

2. The roles carried out by an

'We need leadership. We need s with vision and flexibility. In our Presbyterian Church the role of s is crucial. In the role of the the 'one size fits all' pattern of districts is prevalent, but that does not give room for variety of abilities to be exercised. There needs to be an honest appraisal of the gifts and callings of our s, and to realise that not all s are gifted in leadership, nor are all gifted in pastoral care.' (Church Without Walls report 2001)

In some congregations s are engaged in a variety of roles, for example, sharing responsibility for leading worship, providing pastoral care and opportunities for fellowship, promoting responsible stewardship, nurturing spiritual understanding and discipleship, engaging with and witnessing to the local community, and undertaking the various administrative duties and practical tasks associated with the life and work of the local congregation.

Q 2a. In renewing the kirk session and developing its leadership role should there be a process in place for appraising the gifts of s to ensure that all the roles are covered by those suited to them?

Q 2b. If that process does exist or were to exist in your context how would you describe it?

3. Seeking new s

Q 3a. The kirk session is responsible for seeking and selecting members of the congregation to serve as s. The way an individual is initially approached about their call to ship requires careful consideration. Should clear guidance be provided including things to consider when approaching individuals, details about the roles of an and the responsibilities of being a member of the kirk session?

Q 3b. If the response to the above question is yes what might the content of such guidance include?

4. Preparing to serve

Everyone taking up the role of is required to respond in the affirmative to the following:

“Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith; Do you promise to seek the unity and peace of the church; To uphold its doctrine, worship, government and discipline; and To take your due part in the administration of its affairs?”

During the first phase of our consultation on the ship there were many requests for some sort of pre-ordination training so that individuals could be appropriately prepared to take up the role.

Q 4a. Should s be expected to undertake a period of training before being ordained, preferably alongside prospective s from other congregations?

Q 4b. If the response to the above question is yes what might the content of such training include?

5. Ongoing support and development of s

Many professions now require some form of continuing professional development to be undertaken on a fixed and recurring timescale basis, such as within a 5 yearly cycle. Interestingly enough this practice was first developed in the Presbyterian Church in the USA and subsequently taken up by secular organisations and professions around the world. Once again there were many suggestions during the first phase of the consultation that this practice be applied to the ship.

Q 5a. Should s be expected to engage in recognised post ordination training opportunities, as necessary, for the purpose of ongoing development and equipping for whatever responsibilities they are called to exercise within the local congregation?

Q 5b. If the response to the above question is yes what might the content of such training include?

Q 5c. How might the Presbytery (or Presbytery grouping, where this is appropriate), assisted by the Congregational Learning Team of the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Congregational Learning Facilitators, support the learning and development of s?

Q 5d. Would it be helpful if mentoring and support were made available, not just for new and inexperienced s, but for all members of a kirk session?

6. Other factors to consider about the deployment of elders

Q 6a. Whilst s are ordained for life there are many ways in which they can exercise a leadership role. What are the different leadership roles in which s can bring a particular contribution to the life of a church?

Q 6b. Many congregations have adopted the unitary constitution which has enabled the utilisation of those who are not s in leadership roles. Background information on the different constitutions can be found at

<https://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/eldershipconsultation>

Would there be merit in providing a resource that assists with the understanding of the merits of the various constitutions and how they might be adopted?

Q 6c. If your congregation is operating under the unitary constitution would you be willing to share your experiences for wider use?