

KEY THEMES FOR NEWLY ORDAINED LEADERSHIP COUPLES

The information below was derived from the collective input of the Elders and Elder Wives present in the group discussions facilitated by 360 Wellness at the March 2025 Elder Conference in Bradford. The participants were asked the following questions:

1. What do you wish you would have known regarding your transition into the role of elder?
2. What was a helpful piece of advice or counsel you received that helped you as you transitioned into the role.
3. As you think about new elders and wives coming into the role, what topics, counsel, or advice would you suggest that they received. Put another way, if you were identifying topics for the couples going through the 360 Wellness Navigating the Transition program, what would you want to make sure was included?

1. MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

- Build relationships early with fellow elders and their wives.
- Seek out one or more mentor couples.
- Reach out to other elders for wisdom and encouragement.
- Consider non-elder mentors or counselors for broader perspectives.

2. IDENTITY AND AUTHENTICITY IN LEADERSHIP

- Be yourself—it's okay not to be your predecessor.
- Accept that mistakes are part of growth.
- Lead with your own voice, gifts, and strengths.

3. BOUNDARIES AND BALANCE

- It's okay to say "no" and set firm limits on meetings.
- Be intentional with your schedule—don't let church work consume your life.
- Protect family time: prioritize date nights, vacations, and rest.
- Don't take more responsibility for solving someone's problem than they do.

4. FAMILY AND CHILDREN IMPACT

- Prioritize parenting while your children are still at home.
- Acknowledge the time and emotional impact on your children.
- Be realistic with expectations for your children.
- Avoid the tendency to parent out fear of what others think of you.
- Find ways to create special bonds and memories with each child (and grandchild).



5. SPOUSAL INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT

- Clarify what can and can't be shared with your spouse.
- Involve your wife based on her skills, interests, and availability.
- Encourage your wife in relationships with other elder wives as they support one another—through visits, calls, or video meetings.
- Sharing feelings, questions, and experiences fosters mutual encouragement and mentoring among elder wives.

6. EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE

- Practice healthy limits and compartmentalization—others' problems are not yours to carry.
- Accept that not everyone will be happy, and some people may be unkind.
- Embrace discomfort and unfamiliarity during transitions.
- Know your limits—remember that time for rest and rejuvenation are key to your well-being.
- Remember to nurture your personal relationship with Christ.

7. PRACTICAL MINISTRY SKILLS

- Recognize and accept in yourself that you have strong skills/talents in some areas, moderate skills/talents in others, and weaknesses in others.
- You may need to do some additional learning to handle situations that come up (e.g., dealing with trauma or navigating conflict).
- Not every question needs an immediate answer.

8. COMMUNICATION AND ADMINISTRATION

- Learn and understand local church processes (e.g., baptism, communion).
- Develop leadership, communication, and administrative skills.
- Practice delegation and using the gifts and talents of the people around you.
- Remember: "clarity is kind." Don't sacrifice either in your communication with others.

9. ROLE OF THE ORDAINED DEACON

- Understand the distinctions between elder, ordained deacon, and deacon roles.
- Clarify with the Ordained Deacon how he can support elder work, ministry and church efforts and encourage him to lead in appropriate areas.

10. LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE AND GROWTH

- Some things simply take time—it may take a few years to feel settled.
- Be patient—it takes time to learn acronyms and committee structures within the Elder Body.
- Learn to navigate elder documents, communications, and online tools.
- Leadership has seasons of stress and rest—both are normal.
- Choose roles and committees that energize you, and say no to others.