

Article 8 – The Ordained Ministry

“We believe that no minister has the right to administer the ordinances of the gospel but such as have been regularly baptized and called by God and comes under the hands of a presbytery.”

This eighth Article of Faith addresses the qualifications for Ordained Ministers (Elders) in the Church. In order for a man to administer the ordinances of the gospel, namely water baptism and the Lord’s Supper, he must be properly and regularly baptized, must have received a divine calling to preach the gospel, and must submit to the laying on of hands by a presbytery. These requirements are in keeping with the New Testament pattern.

The NT Church has one head, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are directly accountable to Him. There is no ecclesiastical organization on earth that has any authority whatsoever to assign, provide or certify ordained ministers to the local church. Rather, each local church has the responsibility to pray that the Lord send laborers into His harvest (Luke 10:12), to identify men called by God to preach (Galatians 1:15-16), and to call upon sister churches to assist in evaluating and certifying these men to their full work of the gospel ministry (1 Timothy 4:14).

With regard to these qualifications, the term “regularly baptized” refers to the requirement that the man come up through the ranks of the church, having submitted himself to water baptism in the same manner as all other members of the body in the regular or standard way. *“And immediately there fell from [Paul’s] eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”* Acts 9:18.

The term “called of God” refers to the provision of a special gift of instruction that has been given to that man by God to preach the glorious gospel. Ephesians 4:11; Jeremiah 1:5. The man in the best position to know whether he is called of God is that man himself; and woe to that man if he is not obedient to his call. *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* 2 Corinthians 9:6. Nevertheless, it is up to the local church to decide whether to call for a man’s ordination.

The laying on of hands is a pattern found throughout the NT. It serves to show that a man is accepted of God and has been separated to a new work. Ananias placed his hands upon Paul at his conversion (Acts 9:17); Timothy received the laying on of hands at his ordination (1 Timothy 4:14); the disciples at Antioch laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas before their journey into Asia (Acts 13:3); and the Lord gave a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritans after Peter and John prayed and laid their hands upon them (Acts 8:14-17).

In the case of an ordination of a man to the gospel ministry, Elders from other churches examine and certify that the man has, in fact, been called of God to preach. This is carried out by forming a presbytery (assembly) and by the laying on of hands. It is not just the local church that decides this in isolation. As Paul tells Timothy, *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”* 1 Timothy 4:14.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and provides us with all things that pertain unto life and godliness in His Kingdom. 2 Peter 1:3. As with all things, the gospel pattern for identifying and ordaining gospel ministers is the authorized and best way.