

## Scriptural Underpinnings

In his farewell address to the elders in Ephesus the apostle Paul reviewed his work among them. He said, “... *I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house...*” (Acts 20:20). Office-bearers enter the homes of congregational members as shepherds who genuinely care for the well-being of the flock (1 Peter 5:2,3). They look for growth in Christ and fruits of the Spirit.

The pastoral task of the elders implies personal care for each and every sheep. Which shepherd will not take care of the individual needs of the sheep? He will go after those who are straying from the path and comfort those who are hurting. He will guard and protect the flock against danger. Both the sheep and the lambs will have his attention. The elders, as pastors of Christ’s flock, must follow the example of the Good Shepherd (John 10).

Furthermore, the love of Christ must control an elder’s work so that he directs those who are in his charge to the redemptive work of our Saviour whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light (Matt 11:28-30; 2 Cor 5:14,15). Office-bearers are to be guided by a spirit of humility and helpfulness which indicates a zeal for the Lord and a deep love for his people.

The work of home visits is also one of the ways in which office-bearers watch over the souls of individual members (Ezekiel 3:16-21; 33: 1-9). The congregation is to receive the office-bearers into their homes as the watchmen of God’s city. The author to the Hebrews writes the following applicable words, “*Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you*” (Hebrews 13:17).

Where office-bearers exercise true care over souls the complaint of Psalm 142 should not be heard, “*I look to the right and watch, but there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me, no man cares for me*” (Ps 142:4). Having concern for the individual members of the

flock we should be able to say with the apostle John, *“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health; I know that it is well with your soul”* (3 John 2).