

Among various methods for nourishing and rendering more efficient this scriptural office, stress may be laid on the Sessional prayer-meeting, monthly, weekly, or on Sabbath morning prior to the preaching; and also a union elders' meeting convened from neighboring churches at convenient seasons for closer acquaintance of face and field. Then there is great value in districting the congregation, giving to each man his own section, asking him to keep in view the families therein, rendering any service which may be properly asked, and notifying the pastor of any fact or condition that should have his attention. Moreover, let there be an annual visitation by the teaching and a ruling elder, which enters the home and manifests a prayerful interest in its peace and prosperity. No matter if the men are away; no matter if the children are mostly away; this official inspection is reported to them, and the sweet flavor of it fills the house for many a day to come. It should not shut out the personal calls of the pastor whenever he should choose to drop in, whenever he may wish to converse confidently with the household, or a y member of it. This is always his privilege, but certainly there is much to be said in favor of an annual "riding the lines," the coming round of both sides of the spiritual government of a given church, at stated intervals seeing how the people "do."

It is possible that some congregations need to be educated here. Now and then a parishioneer says to his pastor, "Oh, we don't want the elder; come yourself;" and the elder feels that he is not welcome, that the preference is for a quarter of an hour of gossip with the minister. The elder keeps the fact of the official visitation too prominent; he may be a plain man, wearing ready-made clothes; awkward and ungrammatical in address, and when he gets upon a Wilton carpet with his muddy feet and crushes a gilt chair by his thoughtless weight—he had better remain away! Stay! Is not that despising governments? This man is one of Jesus Christ's officers, and we must be careful lest in disdaining the servant we disdain the Master. Social fastidiousness is not to rule on this occasion; conscience and character count something in this man. Magnify rather than disparage him; encourage rather than criticize him. Open the way for him. See that he has access to the proper discharge of his duty, and that he is recognized as a fellow-helper in the truth. Take him along: "Two are better than one." There is further advantage by this method, in that it shows to the entire Session the real nature of the teaching elder's influence, and confirms

his fidelity in the same; and if he retires or is called elsewhere, his work is left in the sympathetic and intelligent keeping of those competent to preserve its solidarity, and promote its lasting usefulness.

In my present pastorate we have both districting and visitation. The elders respond cheerfully to the best of their ability, one helps out another, substitutes for another who cannot answer his own call, and a carriage is provided by a member of the Session for the committee in its passage through the congregation. Six out of seven are actively engaged in Sabbath-school and mission work, and in our deliberations and plans there is never a quarrel or pulling apart. But for the brave, buoyant and generous backing of these men, I am afraid I should be seriously crippled in my best efforts for preserving and helping forward the charge committed unto me. I therefore lift up my voice in behalf of the dignity and duty of the elder in connection with the King's business. Give him more honor and opportunity, if he is the right, not the wrong man. If the chair of the Assembly is opened to him, let him occupy it in alternate years with his teaching colleague. Why not? He is a citizen and a magistrate, and the genius of our spiritual republic should guarantee the humblest at least a chance for the presidency. Besides it may help to remove the insinuation (whether well grounded or not) that the church is controlled by cliques, in which the teaching elder has the final word, while the ruling elder has to find the funds. Verily a freer and bolder use of the latter would lighten burdens already crushing the former, arousing new interest and provoking new achievement in all parts of the household of faith. It is delightful to observe that his day has dawned brightly in our communion. Already important departments of church work are presided over or pushed by godly and thoughtful elders who give time, strength and substance for a furtherance of the Gospel. Heaven bless them and multiply their number.

But be it remembered that the place least filled, least occupied yet, is in the watch for souls, the superintendence of the spiritual life in the parish, the cultivation of holiness and promotion of godliness in the character and conduct of the membership. This is where the teaching elder finds himself so much alone, and where he sinks down frequently in despair of doing all that is waiting to be done. Brother elders, come up to the help, and may our God anoint us afresh with the Holy Ghost as we enter the New Year of light and love.