

Applied Theology for the Church
RPTS Ruling Elders Program

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Acts 20:28

OVERVIEW

The call to serve as a ruling elder is a high calling by the Triune God. As Paul told the Ephesian elders in the admonition contained in Acts 20:28, elders are placed by the Holy Spirit to oversee congregations that belong to the God who purchased them with the blood of His Son. As such, ruling elders are to be especially fit for this service. As Samuel Miller stated in his classic work *The Ruling Elder*,

An Elder, then, ought, first of all, to be a man of unfeigned and approved piety...To fit ecclesiastical Rulers for acting in their appropriate character, and for performing the work which pertains to it, with cordial diligence, faithfulness and perseverance, will require cordial and decisive attachment to the service of the Church; minds intent upon the work; hearts filled with love to Jesus, and to the souls of men; and preferring Jerusalem above their chief joy.

To come alongside the church in this ministry, the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary is offering a Ruling Elders Program to encourage and train ruling elders in their devotion to Christ, love for His church, and their abilities to serve His people. The program consists of five courses aimed at achieving that goal.

The primary purpose of RPTS is to train men and send them out into pastoral ministry. Yet the faculty and staff of RPTS recognize that ongoing training and encouragement are also vital to men who are already out on the field involved in kingdom work. The RPTS Ruling Elders Program is offered to help toward that end. The program will be available **September 1, 2020**.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The RPTS Ruling Elders Program is flexibly designed for participants to work through five courses taught at RPTS with modest accompanying reading material. Whether it is a man “aspiring to be an overseer” (1 Tim. 3:1) who wants to develop himself spiritually, a church desiring to have a more rigorous program to help train potential ruling elders, or a session seeking to renew itself in its work, this program should be of assistance. Participants in the program will audit actual online courses offered at RPTS over a period of time that can range from one to five years, depending on their desired pace of study. For instance, an individual might choose to take all the classes over a year to accelerate his sense of preparedness, whereas a session might decide to take one class a year for five years for steady learning and growth. A class remains open to participants for a full year.

Though no work will be required, they will benefit from the lectures of the RPTS professors and the discussion they can have with others over the material. Further, the program is set up to provide men considering or serving as ruling elders courses that would be especially helpful to their ministry, such as counseling or worship; to give options for elders serving either within or outside the RPCNA, which oversees the Seminary; and to allow participants a way to experience a broad range of professors and subjects.



Participants will ordinarily view the three required courses online first and then choose two other electives as below. A certificate of completion will be granted to those who complete five courses. As no formal degree is involved, unless otherwise specified (see under Registration), participants may also choose to stop at any time.

Three Required Courses

BC11 Intro to Biblical Counseling
NT12 Interpretation of the Bible
PT13 Ministry of Worship

Electives (Choose Two)

CH31 Reformed Presbyterian History
PT32 Care & Administration of the Local Church
ST33 Doctrine of the Church
ST51 The Westminster Confession
ST61 Reformed Presbyterian Testimony & Polity
(Other online courses may be available upon request.)

RPTS RULING ELDER PROGRAM PACKAGES AND COSTS***Single Package (for individuals)***

Cost \$249 per course/\$750 for full package

An individual may apply to audit classes at RPTS and, upon acceptance, sign up for the ruling elder courses one class at a time and pay the full rate for each course. He may also choose to pay for all five courses at once, in which case the \$99 auditing fee per class is dropped, which significantly reduces the price.

Medium Session Package (3-5 persons)

Cost \$498 per course/\$1500 for full package

The elders of a church of medium session size, or a group of men in a congregation preparing for the eldership, may apply to audit classes at RPTS and, upon acceptance, sign up for the ruling elder courses one class at a time and pay the rate for two people. If the church chooses to pay for all five courses at once, the \$99 auditing fee is dropped, which significantly reduces the price.

Large Session Package (6 persons or more)

Cost \$996 per course/\$3000 for full package

Groups of six or more from larger congregations can sign up for the ruling elder courses one class at a time and pay the rate for four people (upon acceptance of their applications). Again, the church may also choose to pay for all five courses at once, which significantly reduces the price.

Special Preaching Option

Cost \$249 per participant

For those elders desiring certification for more regular preaching by their overseeing bodies, a sixth course, SH13 Introduction to Preaching, can be taken.

REGISTRATION

Go to the RPTS website (www.rpts.edu), select the "Apply" link, and fill out the simple "Auditor Application" form. ***If anyone entering the RPTS Ruling Elders Program in a group package desires to enroll in the courses for credit toward a Masters of Theological Studies (MTS) or Masters of Divinity (MDiv) degree, special tuition reduction will be granted.*** For more information or if you have questions, contact Ed Blackwood, Director of Admissions (ebblackwood@rpts.edu or 412-731-6000).