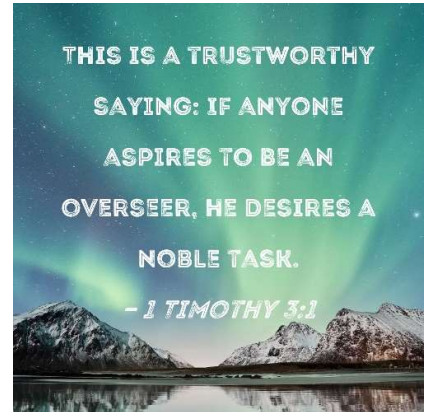




ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH
FEBRUARY 12TH, 2025
PRAYERS AND REFLECTION BASED ON
1 TIMOTHY 3:1-9



Qualifications of Bishops

3 The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. **2** Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, **3** not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. **4** He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way, **5** for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? **6** He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

Qualifications of Deacons

8 Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; **9** they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

PRAYER: Lord to each of us You give different skills and different roles within Your church. I pray Lord, that I can honour Your trust in me to do and go wherever it is You ask me to be and do with a faithful and clear conscience. In this special time, I have set this side aside to be with You, I glorify Your holy name, and Your good works in the world You created out of nothing. I pray that my Spirit flies as high as the most treasured and regal eagle and as low as the sweet morning dew on the ground as the dawn breaks, as our journey together continues with the highs and lows of this shared day until the sun sets and my day is done. In the name of the Holy Spirit and the risen Christ Jesus. Amen

PRAYER POINTS OF THANKS AND PRAISE

- Thank you for those who are willing to share leadership
- Thank you for those who put their lives on the line in times of emergency
- Thank you for the sacrifices made by those who witness the needs of others outweighing their own
- Thank you for the prophets and for storytellers who give us insight to the ancient world.
- I give you praise for the moments of quiet so I can hear Your voice.
- I give you praise for the music, joy, friendships old and new
- I give you praise for the ability to read, comprehend, converse, and praise others

- I give you praise for encouraging activities, hobbies, schools, universities as students begin a new year.

PRAYER POINTS FOR PRAYER OF CONFESSION

- Depending on myself too much for the answers to my questions concerning my faith
- Not being inclusive of others, not trusting them or You to be on my side
- Forgetting that You are present in each activity I undertake through the day
- Not having confidence in Your covenant made with me

REFLECTION

Our reading from 1 Timothy today offers us a convincing outline of the necessary spiritual, behavioural and honourable requirements to be appointed for a high level of church leadership. We don't have authoritarian Bishops in the Uniting Church in Australia as we aren't a hierarchical church in the same sense as other denominations. However, we do have a President of the Assembly who speaks on behalf of the whole of the UCA, a Moderator for each state/territory and Presbytery Chairperson whose responsibility is for the Presbytery and Congregations have a Church Council. After an extensive process, Church leaders are elected by the body of each of the Councils they operate in. The Ordained Minister or Deacon serves in their discerned and affirmed capacity in any of the Councils of the Church.

As we find in 1 Timothy, 'If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.' This verse alone sets a tone of seriousness and importance regarding leadership within the church community. The role of the minister/deacon in the case of the UCA isn't one of authority, but one of service and servanthood, a calling to shepherd Christ's flock who have been entrusted into their care.

Paul isn't ambiguous in what we can expect from those whom we elect to lead us – he reflects the moral and ethical standards that we ought to expect from them. They must have integrity, honesty and be credible in word and deed. This isn't just for their own benefit as these qualities also serve to uphold the sanctity of the church and for God's mission to be upheld. Faithful, and trustworthy leaders demonstrate a way of life that is in an alignment with Christ's call of service, witness and worship as an encouragement for others to follow.

Paul isn't mealy mouthed in the necessities of leadership as he highlights the importance of having a clear mind, being self-controlled without trying to have total control over others – a modern term for this could be 'to stay in your own lane' don't try to do the work that others have committed themselves to do- assist when asked, but concentrate on your own task, and to be respectable and respectful of others and what they're doing. Each of these attributes sheds light on the nature of leadership in the church at each level of our interconciliatory councils. Leadership requires a sound and prayerfully measured response to challenges rather than unhelpful rushing to provide an answer to a problem. These are qualities which are crucial in navigating the complexities of faith and

community life. When we try to solve a challenge on our own without the inclusion of prayer, a question we could ask is where do we find God in our challenge and importantly in our answer?

Paul doesn't stop with the community expectations upon the capacity whilst engaged in leadership in the church, Paul also comments on how their behaviours extend into the family home as well – how leaders behave at home amongst those whom they love and cherish is often an indication of how leaders behave in the public arena.

Paul does say though, to be careful in giving leadership roles to new believers mainly because he wants to highlight the importance of spiritual maturity. Leadership in the church isn't purely about knowledge; it involves wisdom gained through experience and a deep understanding of faith and its cost. Being grounded in our faith helps one to be self-aware, not falling into a position where pride in one's own achievements is greater than being humble at heart and the received grace from the cross being passed on to others.

For Deacons in the church the expectations are the same – we are also called to have integrity as we serve God's beloved children in Christ's church. All of which is rooted in living out our faith in an authentic way. The nature of service in the church focuses on showing that every role in the body of Christ is essential and worthy of esteem.

As we reflect on these expectations, we are urged to encourage leaders to embody the qualities Paul outlines for us. We are called to nurture an environment where faith can grow and discipleship flourishes. It's not only about filling roles; it's about nurturing authentic relationships and supporting each other in our faith journey.

It's always important for us not to neglect to pray for our leaders – whether we agree with them or not – we have leaders in place because that's where God has called them to be. We seek to embody these qualities in our own lives whether we are called into leadership roles or not. It's a reminder that all of us are ambassadors of Christ, and within that calling lies a responsibility to reflect Christ's character to those around us. Church leadership ought to always be about serving others, and pointing others towards Christ, reflecting Christ's love and grace in every action.

Amen

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Christ, whom we lovingly serve we pray for the leadership of all the homes, the workplaces, the congregations and denominations around the world. We pray for their leadership to uphold the expectations outlined by Paul in 1 Timothy, even if it means to be at times the lone voice.

We pray for patience and understanding as people are being prepared to be raised up for leadership who need time and experience to grow their spiritual relationship with You and with their new faith community.

We pray for hearts and minds to be freed from the imprisonment of thinking they have to have all the answers. Lord help those who feel that way to pray to be released and enjoy Your freedom.

We pray for the energy to serve You with joy in our hearts knowing that as You as our Godhead all will be well even if we can't see it – yet.

In Your name and service

Amen.

I hope you enjoy this version of the **Lord's Prayer** today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajMqhFz3Flk>

