

Deacon Ministry HANDBOOK

First Baptist Church, Allen, Texas

THE DEACON MINISTRY

The deacons serve alongside the Pastor in the pastoral ministries of the church.

Tasks

1. To proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers.
2. To care for the church's members and other persons in the community.
3. To lead the church in the achievement of its mission.

Characteristics of a Deacon

A deacon must be a male member of the church who possesses the following Scriptural characteristics, and who is ordained by this church or by a Baptist church of like faith and order. The following section provides an outline for describing the characteristics of a deacon.

1. **A Serving Man** – Already serving the body through faithful service to God through the church in corporate worship, Sunday School, prayer ministry and personal ministry, such as teaching, visiting, etc. (Matthew 20:20-28; John 13:1-17; Acts 6:1-8; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:7-11)
2. **A Sought Man** – Sought by the church, not a man seeking the honor of being called a deacon. A man recognized by the church for his spirit of servanthood. (Acts 6:3-5; Romans 12:3; Galatians 5:24-26)
3. **A Sincere Man** – One who casts no slur on others; does not stir up dissension among the brethren; keeps his promises and commitments; lives by faith and is faithful; is not a backbiter; is truthful in love; honest and of good reputation. (Psalm 15:1-3; Proverbs 6:16-19; Acts 6:3-5; Galatians 2:20, 5:14-15; Ephesians 4:25-27)
4. **A Sacrificial Man** – Willing to take the initiative to meet the needs of others; willing to participate in the caring ministry of deacons; a tither and a grace giver; a selfless man. (Malachi 3:10; John 13:12-17; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10; 1 Timothy 5:3)
5. **A Spiritual Man** – Full of the Holy Spirit; recognizing and exercising spiritual gifts; a man committed to prayer and the study of God's word. (Matthew 6:1-15; Acts 6:3-5; Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Corinthians 12:1-12; 2 Timothy 2:15)
6. **A Soul Winning Man** – Willing to be trained and to train others to lead souls to Christ. (Proverbs 11:30; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 14:16-23)
7. **A Sold-Out Man to His Family** – Faithful; sexually pure; the husband of one wife (not divorced); managing his children and household well; blameless; tested; nothing held against him; abstaining from alcohol and illegal drugs; exemplary family life to the flock. (Malachi 2:16; Ephesians 5:25-32, 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Hebrews 13:4-5)

Membership

The deacons consist of the present deacons as shown by the records of the church and of such additional deacons as the church may elect.

Term of office

Each deacon serves until his term of office is terminated. The term of office of a deacon shall terminate upon:

1. Death
2. Resignation
3. Termination of his membership in the church
4. Removal from his office by the church
5. Removal from his office by the deacons

The Deacon Council

Members of the Deacon Council are considered active deacons and serve three-year terms after which they are ineligible to serve again for one full year. After one year, inactive deacons become eligible for re-election to the Deacon Council. Deacon Council responsibilities include, but are not limited to, offertory prayers, serving the Lord's Supper and attendance at the monthly Deacon's Meeting.

Deacon Council Election Method

Annual vote

The election for the Deacon Council is held annually in February.

Eligibility

All men 25 years of age or above who have been church members for at least one year are eligible for nomination.

Length of service

Each deacon serves three years on the council. The council is organized so that one third of the men is elected each year and one third rotate off the council each year.

Selection Procedure

Letter: In January, church leaders (those serving in some ministry capacity in the church) receive a letter inviting them to identify those men they feel are qualified candidates to serve in the Deacon Ministry.

Notification: All church members are given the opportunity to make nominations through notification in the church newsletter, bulletin and church website.

Review: The nomination list is compiled and reviewed by the Deacon Executive Committee. The Deacon Executive Committee develops a church nomination ballot in accordance with the basic qualifications noted in our church deacon policies.

Ballots: Nomination ballots are provided as bulletin inserts on the second Sunday in February. Nomination ballots are also available in the Welcome Center and church offices for two weeks. Those candidates receiving the most church nominations are considered elected by the church.

Interviews: The Deacon Executive Committee contacts the candidates regarding their willingness to serve. They arrange an interview with each qualified candidate. The interviews are attended by the Chairman of Deacons and at least one other member of the Deacon Executive Committee as well as the Pastor. All qualified candidates are interviewed to determine their commitment and qualifications to serve as deacons as defined by the members of First Baptist Church, Allen.

Invitation to join: Men who have been previously ordained as deacons, having been elected by the church and interviewed, are invited to join the active Deacon Council.

May ordination: Those men who are elected and interviewed, and have not been previously ordained, are asked to participate in an ordination service in May prior to beginning their service on the Deacon Council.

Ordination Ceremony: The ordination ceremony of laying on of hands is one of ancient beginning. In the Old Testament this practice is mentioned in connection with the Levites. The children of Israel “*put their hands on the Levites*” (Numbers 8:10). This ceremony in no way imparted any special power or authority. Rather, it stressed that these men were dedicated to God’s service. The practice of laying hands on those being set apart and blessed for special works of service continues in the New Testament and is found in the setting apart of the first deacons in Acts 6:1-8. Through ordination, our church says to these deacons we have selected, “*We have confidence in your spiritual qualities, and your devotion to God and to your church.*”

Ineligibility

After serving a three-year term on the council a man is ineligible to serve again for one full year.

Replacements

If a member of the council resigns, moves away, or dies, the Deacon Executive Committee will evaluate needs to determine whether the deacon should be replaced prior to the next election.

Deacon Executive Committee

Selection

The Deacon Executive Committee is selected from the current active Deacon Council.

Composition

The committee includes two at-large positions, a chairman, a vice-chairman and a secretary (January to January commitment). One more at-large position (June to June commitment) is elected in the June Deacon's Meeting. The June addition to the Executive Committee is to be chosen from among the new class of deacons beginning active service in June.

Term of office

1. The three at-large and secretary positions are one-year commitments.
2. The vice-chair is a two-year commitment. The first year the deacon is vice-chair (January to January); the second year the same deacon serves as the chairman (January to January).

Responsibilities

Commitment to the Executive Committee includes:

1. Attendance at Executive Committee meetings the first Wednesday following the first Sunday of each month.
2. Attendance at Deacon's Meeting the second Sunday of each month.
3. Helping coordinate and enlisting coordinators and workers for deacon-led activities.
4. Meeting with and caring for the Pastor; committing to pray for, encouraging and supporting, the Pastor and church activities that the Pastor leads out in throughout the year.
5. Supporting, encouraging and praying for the ministries led by the paid and unpaid ministers.
6. Being a sounding board and barometer measure for the Pastor in regard to the church body.

Deacons are Servants

By Pastor Chad Selph

The first deacons teach us some important lessons about what a deacon is to be and what they are to do. It is always worth noting that the word “*deacon*” is from a Greek word “*diakonos*” which means “*servant*.” A deacon then is one who serves the Lord and serves the church.

The role of deacon has been much debated. A study of the New Testament reveals almost nothing about what a deacon is supposed to do. Acts 6 tells us one example of a deacon ministry. The deacons did whatever was necessary to relieve the disciples so they could give themselves continually to “*prayer and the ministry of the word*.”

The deacon ministry has taken on different definitions over the years, and I expect it to continue with that pattern. I think God left the job description open, because deacons serve the church, and whatever the church needs is what they do.

I value the ministry of our deacons in this church. Let me share then, what I need from deacons and how that ministry currently functions.

Our deacons have been set apart for the servant leadership role of “*deacon*,” because they are already active in the ministry of the church and in spiritual leadership. When someone becomes a deacon, I don’t want them to take on a lot of new things because they are deacons. I want them to minister and serve well in their current roles and responsibilities. If they teach, then I want them to pour themselves into their classes. Whatever their gifts for ministry, I want them to apply those things with passion.

Our deacons are not responsible for a certain number of families within the church. Our Sunday School is the primary arm of our church for ministry. Deacons function to fill the gaps in ministry. Sometimes the church staff needs special help, and we know we can call on the deacons. Like the first deacons ministering to the widows in Jerusalem, they fill the gap or make sure it is being filled and then go on to the next challenge.

Some ongoing ministries in which our deacons participate include:

- Deacons are expected to attend a monthly meeting of deacons (usually held the second Sunday of the month).
- Deacons support, encourage, and champion the ministry of the church through their involvement, influence, and prayer.
- Deacons provide Bibles for all our First Graders in Sunday School each Fall.
- Deacons host a senior adult banquet each spring.
- Deacons prepare and serve the Lord’s Supper.
- Deacons pray at the offering time each Sunday.
- Deacons lead out in ministry to widows and senior adults.
- Deacons assist in VBS evangelism and follow-up.
- Deacons are leaders in key areas of our ministry.
- Deacons have a large “*other duties as assigned*” section to their job descriptions.

Our deacons are essential in our overall church organization. They are nominated by the church. The Deacon Council (those serving as active deacons in the church) elects a Deacon Executive Committee each year made up of three deacon officers and usually three at-large members. The Deacon Executive Committee serves as the Pastor's supervisor and primary administrative/decision-making support. This team functions as elders do in some churches. It provides our church with effective accountability and checks and balances.

The larger Deacon Council is instrumental in major decisions even though it is not an administrative body. I would not take a major ministry change or policy to the church without first going to the deacons - not because they require it, but because it is a huge help to me in discernment and feel for the church family as a whole. I value their spiritual counsel.

One thing that comes with being a deacon is visibility. Deacons are publicly identified as church leaders, partly to help combat male passivity. Often men see commitment to Christ and the church as something for women and children and may sit back and chose to remain on the sidelines at church. Instead, the challenge to our congregation is to keep men in visible places of leadership in the church in order to engage them for Christ, commit them to church, and take spiritual responsibility at home. Our deacons are a key part of this strategy.

Lord's Supper Serving Instructions

Traditional Format

In advance

Spend time preparing your heart before the Lord for the serving and taking of the Lord's Supper.

Recommended dress

- Morning Service: coat and tie
- Evening Service: business casual

Arrival

The serving team should arrive in the Bride's Room no later than 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the assigned worship hour and review assignments and instructions for any last minute updates.

Worship service

Deacons typically sit with their families until the Pastor calls for them to come forward sometime during the service. When requested by the Pastor, deacons make their way to the front of the Worship Center to their assigned position.

Serving the elements

1. Two deacons, usually the deacon chairman and vice chairman, distribute the trays. Deacons then serve their assigned rows. After serving an element, deacons go to the back of the Worship Center and watch for other servers running out of element.
2. Bread trays hold 60 pieces and rims hold 40 cups. When a deacon has less than 20 bread pieces left over, serving the juice will require help.
3. After serving the first element, all serving trays are returned to the Bride's Room except for one, which must have enough of the element remaining for all the deacons and Pastor.
4. After everyone is ready, deacons line up in two lines and return down the center aisle to the front to be served by the Pastor.
5. After the Pastor serves the deacons the element, he will ask the deacons to be seated on the front rows while the element is explained to the congregation. This helps with visibility for the congregation.
6. The process is then repeated for the final element.

Invitation

At the end of the service, during the invitation, deacons move to the pews on the outer edges to allow room for those making decisions.

Cleanup

Deacons help with cleanup after the service. Specific volunteers will clean the trays. All deacons are needed to retrieve cups. Resetting for the Lord's Supper between the morning services requires 6-10 volunteers.

Serving Table Format

The format for the Lord's Supper sometimes involves church members moving from their seats and going to serving tables at various locations in the building. Preparation in advance, recommended dress, arrival, worship service, invitation and cleanup are the same as the traditional format. However, in the serving table format, deacons stand at the tables and are available to pray with members as needed. After the congregation has been served, deacons may then take the Lord's Supper. Deacons are also encouraged to take the Lord's Supper with their families as they arrive at their table.

Deacon Offertory Prayer Procedure

Recommended dress

Appropriate attire is usually coat and tie, although business casual is acceptable.

Where to sit

Sit wherever you wish during the worship hours on the day you are designated to pray the offertory prayer.

When to step out

Wait until the invitation song begins and step out from your seat into the aisle. This encourages others in the service to make spiritual commitments during the invitation.

Where to stand

Make your way to one of the center front pews in clear view of the Pastor and remain standing through the invitation.

Go to pulpit

As soon as the invitation song ends, begin making your way to the pulpit. The Pastor will say a brief introduction to the offering. You will need to be at the pulpit when the time comes to begin the prayer.

Prayer

Pray as the Lord leads you with a focus on God's blessing on our tithes and any special offerings (missions, etc.) that we may be receiving.

CORE VALUES OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ALLEN

On October 7, 2001 Pastor Chad Selph shared a morning message titled, *Memorial Stones*, based upon Joshua 4. The sermon detailed twelve core values that have been established as guiding principles for First Baptist Church of Allen. These items involve both doctrinal issues and philosophy of ministry.

1. THE BIBLE IS OUR AUTHORITY FOR FAITH AND PRACTICE.

In every area of our personal lives and in our church life we must seek to learn, study, obey, and apply its teachings. We must subject all matters to Scripture. It is truth without any mixture of error. The Bible is God's authoritative word for guidance, instruction, inspiration, and correction in all areas of the practice of our faith. (Psalm 119:105-106; 2 Timothy 3:16).

2. JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY OF RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He said, "*No man comes to the Father but through Me.*" Jesus is not just "*an*" option. He is the only possibility for this world to find forgiveness of sin and relationship to God. He is the Savior. By God's grace through faith in Christ our eternity is secured. (John 14:6).

3. WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF PRAYER.

We must undergird everything we do in prayer. Prayer must be the first, last, and constant activity in every area of our church and in every decision we make. Prayer must be as much our life as it is our power. The Lord declares, "*Not by might, not by power but by My Spirit says the Lord.*" (Zechariah 4:6; Philippians 4:6).

4. WORSHIP IS CENTRAL TO GLORIFYING GOD AND BECOMING LIKE CHRIST.

Worship is absolutely necessary to be a fully developing follower of Christ. Worship is expressing our love, reverence and devotion to God. Worship puts the spotlight of our thoughts, desires and affections on God and takes the spotlight off of us. We worship with other believers according to the Bible. We also worship alone before God in our own time of speaking and listening for the Lord. Worship is a life-changing experience with the presence of God.

5. THE SUNDAY SCHOOL IS THE CENTRAL ORGANIZATION OF OUR CHURCH FOR GROWTH.

The Sunday School is the Bible teaching, people reaching, caring arm of the church. It is the central organization of our church for growth...both spiritually and

numerically. It is our primary tool for new member assimilation. It develops new and mature Christians alike. It is priority! You will never find your place in our church ministry until you find a place in the Sunday School.

6. FULL DEVOTION TO CHRIST IS NORMAL FOR EVERY BELIEVER.

Somehow our Christian world has come to believe that shallow commitment and limited devotion and haphazard obedience are the things that please God and also what God expects. We don't accept that here. We are speaking of relationship to God and such relationship calls for the total commitment of the total person for life! "*Normal Christianity*" is complete, absolute, sold-out commitment to Jesus Christ...nothing held in reserve.

7. WE HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP.

Membership is a commitment to a local church family. Apart from such a commitment your discipleship will be ineffective at best. We expect members of this church to attend, to serve, and to give. We believe in excellence when it comes to serving Jesus through the church and we are unwilling to settle for leftovers. Every member should have a ministry...a place of service. There are no spectators on God's team.

8. WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD.

The Bible declares this truth. As a church we must reach beyond what we think we can do and experience what only God can do. "*The chief way you and I are disloyal to God is when we make small what He intended to make large.*" We must be dreamers of godly dreams...for with God all things are possible and without faith it is impossible to please God (Matthew 19:26).

9. THE CHURCH SHOULD BE CULTURALLY RELEVANT WITHOUT BIBLICAL COMPROMISE.

Our world is changing. The church must be open to adjusting to our changing world. Our unchanging message is not to be compromised but our methods of delivering the message must constantly be open to evaluation and change. We want to be as effective as possible in communicating God's great truth but remembering that God's truth doesn't change.

10. WE ARE TO STRENGTHEN AND ENCOURAGE FAMILIES.

God created the family as a place of nurturing, teaching, and growing. We must seek to strengthen and care for all our families regardless of age or makeup. We are a multi-generational church. We are a family church whether yours is a family of ten or a family of one. (Ephesians 5:21-6:4).

11. WE ARE COMMITTED TO GROWTH.

There are certain barriers to the growth of an individual or a church. John Maxwell calls these barriers "*lids.*" If we are to grow we must identify the lids that would hinder our growth. These lids may be structural, organizational or in leadership patterns. We want

to ever seek to identify and lift the lids that would keep us from accomplishing all God would call us to. We are willing to change in order to grow.

12. WE ARE A GREAT COMMISSION CHURCH.

We will seek to reach and win the lost to saving faith in Jesus Christ. We will be intentional in our efforts to reach out in Jesus name believing there is no other way to be saved apart from Jesus. Jesus died for every person and desires that they be saved. In all our activities, programs, relationships, and ministries we will be intentional in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the lost. (Matthew 28:19-20). We will have a burden for our families and our community but I will not shrink away from Jesus' call to be responsible for the world. We will be faithful and ever seeking to expand our ministry through prayer, giving, and participation in missions around the world. (Mark 16:15).