

Church Policy on Deacon Elections and Ministries
First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas

These policies and guidelines shall replace the previous policies adopted in July 1989 and subsequently revised in August 2000 and May 2004

Introduction:

In accordance with the office of the deacon and for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ and the welfare of the First Baptist Church of Olney, Texas, we propose this revised deacon policy and guidelines for the consideration of the church body.

I. What is a Deacon?

General Definition: The word deacon, from the Greek “διάκονος” means “waiter” or “minister.” The term is used 29 times in the New Testament. Of those 29 occurrences, the reader concludes from the context that three or four refer to an office in the church. The deacons are to help with, and share in, the work of the pastor(s). They are called by the congregation to serve the physical and spiritual needs of the body of Christ. The deacon body is not a deliberative, authoritative, decision-making body. However, from time to time the deacons may make recommendations to the congregation. The congregation may also refer matters to the deacons for consideration or action.

II. Who may Serve as a Deacon?

The First Baptist Church of Olney recognizes that God’s Holy Word sufficiently sets forth the qualifications for deacons in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. We should not add to, or take away from, God’s Word once He has spoken. To do so is an affront to God and carries grave consequences (Revelation 22:18-19, Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:6).

III. Deacon Administration

- a. The church shall call as many deacons as necessary to serve the practical needs of the church.
- b. Deacons shall be designated as deacons “in service” or deacons “in reserve.”
- c. Deacons “in service” may call upon deacons in reserve to assist in the ministry.
- d. Deacons “in reserve” are expected to set a good example in all matters pertaining to church membership and Christian witness.
- e. Deacons may resign from the office of deacon. The church may revoke the ordination of any deacon if doing so is in the best interest of the church, the deacon, and the cause of Christ.
- f. The number of deacons “in service” at any given time shall be fifteen (15). This number may be increased or decreased by the congregation as deemed necessary to effectively care for the church.
- g. The deacons “in service” shall organize themselves by electing a chairman, a vice-chairman, a secretary, and any other officers as deemed necessary.

IV. Deacon Rotation

- a. Deacons shall be elected by the congregation for terms of three years beginning on October 1 after election. After serving a full term of three years, a deacon “in service” shall become a deacon “in reserve” for at least one year before becoming eligible for re-election to “in service” status. A deacon “in reserve” is still responsible for serving families placed under his care.

- b. If a deacon “in service” is unable to complete his service for any reason, the church may elect one of the deacons “in reserve” to fill the unexpired term. This election may take place during a regular or specially called business meeting. The congregation shall nominate eligible candidates to fill the unexpired term. If the congregation nominates more than one candidate, the election shall be conducted by secret ballot.

V. Deacon Meetings

Deacons may meet as often as necessary to fulfill their service to the church.

VI. Nomination and Election of Deacons

- a. “In service” deacons shall be nominated by the congregation by using a secret ballot. The congregation shall be furnished with a list of men who are active deacons and those who will be rotating to “in reserve” status and are therefore ineligible for re-election. The list will be furnished in the bulletin, the newsletter, or in such a manner as to give reasonable notice to the congregation.
- b. The nomination of new “in service” deacons shall take place during the regular morning worship service on the second Sunday of September, or as soon thereafter as possible.
- c. The congregation shall nominate from among themselves the number of deacons needed. Non-church members are not eligible to serve as deacons. Non-church members are not eligible to vote for deacons.
- d. Church members who are physically unable to attend the service where nominations are received may cast a vote beforehand. An active deacon shall deliver that vote to the screening committee to be counted.
- e. Any tie votes between nominees will result in both candidates serving as deacons.
- f. During a worship service, the deacons who are rotating to “in reserve” status shall distribute and collect the ballots. These deacons will then count the ballots. The number nominations received by any individual in the nomination process shall be considered confidential.
- g. The deacons rotating to “in reserve” status and the recognized pastors of the congregation shall function as a screening committee. The screening committee shall interview the nominees receiving the most votes. The committee should review with the nominee the scriptural qualifications for deacon and provide a copy to the candidate of the biblical considerations contained in this document. The committee should inquire as to whether the man is willing to serve. The committee should lovingly advise and spiritually counsel the man regarding whether he is ready to serve.
- h. The committee shall notify the congregation of the candidates receiving the most nominating votes who are willing to serve. At the next business meeting, the Screening Committee shall recommend candidates to the congregation to serve as deacons. The congregation shall vote to confirm or reject the recommendation. Should any dispute arise between a candidate and the screening committee regarding the recommendation, it shall be resolved by the full deacon body and pastors. However, any decision may ultimately be appealed to the congregation if the candidate is not satisfied with the decision of the deacons and pastors.
- i. When a previously un-ordained man is elected to become a deacon, an ordination council shall be convened. Men who are deacons-elect may attend meetings and may assist with ministry prior to their ordination.

VII. Scriptural Qualifications

In the manifold wisdom of God, He has provided the following qualifications that transcend all temporal, geographic, and cultural boundaries:

Acts 6:1-6 (ESV)

¹Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.³Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (ESV)

⁸Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹²Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Churches throughout history have had to consider how to apply the qualification passages in their own context. The congregation realizes that many of these qualities represent areas where growth and progressive sanctification is necessary. The men serving as deacons will fall short of these qualifications but should always be striving to grow, repent, and demonstrate commitment to what is true and right. The church does not expect any deacon to be perfect, but desires that the screening committee and the candidate bear in mind the considerations presented below. These considerations are a helpful tool to be used by the screening committee and the nominee to discern God's will. If there are areas where improvement is needed in the deacon or deacon-elect's life, he should show a willingness to serve and a desire to repent of any sin and trust God's Word? Bear in mind that all these considerations are aspirational.

Acts 6:1-6 Considerations:

1. Does the prospective deacon have a reputation for being full of the Spirit and wisdom?
2. Does he treasure Christ as precious?
3. Does the man love the Word of God and the people of God?
4. Does he seek holiness in all areas of his life?
5. Does he give scrupulous attention to his daily personal witness?
6. Is he a man of proven character controlled by the Spirit and not the flesh?
7. Does the prospective deacon live by God's precepts and apply them to life's situations?
8. Is the person concerned that the ministry of the Word and Prayer in the church is not neglected?
9. Does this man have the heart of a servant?
10. Does the prospective deacon evidence the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)?
11. Does he demonstrate Spirit-inspired wisdom?

1 Timothy 3:8 Considerations

⁸ *Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.*

1. Does the potential deacon have a reputation for keeping his word?
2. Does the potential deacon speak consistently to different parties?
3. Does the deacon speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)?
4. Does he use filthy language?
5. Does the potential deacon drink alcohol?
 - a. If so, has he been observed demonstrating self-control in his use of alcohol?
 - b. Does he exhibit weakness or sinfulness in this area?
 - c. Is he capable of saying no when offered alcohol?
 - d. Does he use his freedom in this area in a way that avoids causing others to stumble?
 - e. Would you be comfortable holding him out as a model for how to responsibly use or abstain from alcohol?
6. Does the potential deacon exhibit godly generosity and self-denial or greed in his personal finances?
7. Does the potential deacon encourage others in generosity, or does he foster selfishness and financial self-concern in other people?
8. Does he demonstrate care and self-sacrifice when interacting with others in need?
9. Is he honest in his financial dealings?
10. If he gambles, does he do so responsibly and legally?
11. What is the potential deacon's attitude toward wealth?

1 Timothy 3:9 Considerations

⁹ *They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.*

1. Does the prospective deacon give a credible profession of personal saving faith in the Lord Jesus?
2. Does he understand the gospel?
3. Is his witness strong and stable or is he prone to being volatile and inconsistent?
4. Is he able to forgive others when they have wronged him?
5. Does he bring the truth of the gospel and the Scripture to bear on his life and ministry?
6. Does he hold the deep truths of the faith without reservation?
7. Does he have major doubts or disagreements with the statement of faith or practices in the church?
8. Is the prospective deacon someone who perseveres in faith?

1 Timothy 3:10 Considerations

¹⁰ *And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.*

1. Is the prospective deacon a mature and growing Christian?
2. Is the prospective deacon a new convert?
3. Has he been a member of the First Baptist Church of Olney for a sufficient time to ascertain his character and commitment to Christ? Is he a recent convert who needs more time to mature in the faith before being given leadership responsibility (1 Tim 3:6)?
4. Is he overconfident in the face of spiritual temptations and dangers?
5. Is the man overly sensitive to criticism?
6. Does he submit to authority when he disagrees on an issue?
7. Is he a man given to pride?
8. Does the prospective deacon show competence in service?
9. Is there anything that disqualifies him from serving?

1 Timothy 3:11 Considerations:

¹¹ *Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.*

1. Does the prospective deacon have a godly wife?
2. Does the prospective deacon's wife speak truthfully and build others up?
3. Is the prospective deacon's wife serious in her commitment to Christ?
4. Does the prospective deacon's wife live a life that is marked by faithfulness?

1 Timothy 3:12 Considerations:

¹² *Let deacons each be the husband of one wife¹, managing their children and their own households well.*

1. Does the man evidence fidelity to his wife?
2. Is he faithful emotionally and physically?
3. Does he arrange his interactions with other females in a way that allows for full accountability and transparency?
4. Is he growing in holiness in resisting pornography and in making entertainment choices?
5. Does the prospective deacon embrace the Bible's teaching on gender roles from a servant leadership perspective? (Ephesians 5)
6. Do the candidate and his wife support the church body with their time, service, and sacrificial financial gifts?
7. Is the prospective deacon attentive to his family?
8. Does he take an active role in the discipleship of his family?
9. Does he care for his children?
10. Do the children living in his home submit to his leadership?
11. Would the man's wife and children consider him to be qualified to serve as a deacon?
12. Is he a good steward of the income and resources the Lord has given him?

These questions and considerations were adapted from Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Crossway, 2018).

¹ Notwithstanding the right of any member to hold a different interpretation of this passage, based upon a decision made in a business meeting which took place on August 16, 2000, the official position of FBCO is that this passage speaks to a man's fidelity to his wife and does not necessarily disqualify or exclude men who have been divorced from holding the office of deacon. In the case of a divorced deacon candidate, his qualification for the office should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The facts and circumstances of the divorce, fault, and subsequent repentance, and other relevant matters should be considered. Likewise, just because a man has never been divorced, he does not meet the qualification of this passage if he is unfaithful to his wife.