



Deacon Handbook

The Deacon Ministry of
Glendale Christian Church

INTRODUCTION

This manual is dedicated to helping you as a deacon to serve faithfully and effectively. It is designed to acquaint you with the Biblical materials related to the office of deacon and the particulars of the deacon ministry of **Glendale Christian Church, Springfield, Missouri.**

The church has elected you to the honorable position of a deacon because your life has exhibited the characteristics of faithfulness and loyalty both to the Lord and His church. A deacon must remember, however, that Jesus said, "**The greatest among you shall be your servant.**" (Matthew 23:11).

Three passages in the New Testament are commonly cited concerning the office of deacon: Acts 6:1-7, Philippians 1:1, and 1 Timothy 3:8-12. The word for deacon in the New Testament originally described a servant who "stirred up dust while waiting on tables." As a deacon, your major attention will be given to serving God under the leadership of the elders and staff in the practical ministry of the church.

I. THE BIBLICAL/HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF A DEACON

Acts 6:1-7 is the passage often cited for the beginning of the office of deacon in the early Christian church. Though the seven who were elected were not specifically called "deacons" in the technical sense, they nonetheless functioned as deacons. The office of deacon probably grew out of the experience.

Without belaboring all of the details of the Acts 6 passage, let's look at the purpose for which these men were selected. One reason they were chosen was to solve a problem that arose among the church fellowship. **They were called upon to preserve the harmony of the church.** Another reason was to **free the apostles to give full attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word.** (verse four).

The **position** of deacon in Acts 6 is an elected one. A deacon should certainly feel led to serve in that position; however the initiation of that commitment rests in the hands of the local church. It is not a position to which one appoints oneself.

II. BIBLICAL / PRACTICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON

The **Biblical qualifications** for a deacon are found in Acts 6 and in I Timothy 3:8-13. They are divided into three categories:

A. SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS (ACTS 6:1-6)

1. Full of the Holy Spirit *
2. Full of wisdom *
3. Full of faith *

B. MORAL QUALIFICATIONS (I TIMOTHY 3:8-10, 12-13)

Worthy of respect*

Sincere *

Not indulging in much wine*

Not pursuing dishonest gain *

The husband of one wife *

Manages his children and household well *

C. QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE WIFE OF A DEACON (I TIMOTHY 3:11)

Worthy of respect *

Not malicious talker *

Temperate *

Trustworthy in everything *

* All scripture quotes are from the New International Version.

D. PRACTICAL DUTIES

The **practical duties** for the deacons of Glendale Christian Church, Springfield, are the following:

1. Loyal support of the elders and staff
2. Faithful attendance at the services of the church
3. Encouragement of and participation in the activities of the church - Sunday School, Music, Church Training, Outreach, Prayer, etc.
4. A consistent commitment to stewardship shall be attested by faithful tithing to the Church.
5. Personal evangelism among the lost and visitation of the sick, shut-ins and indifferent of the membership
6. Regular attendance at the meetings of the elders and deacons
7. Assistance with new member assimilation

III. SELECTION OF A DEACON

GENERAL: The following provisions shall serve as guidelines for nominations and election: (see by-laws for complete election details)

On the third weekend in September a nomination form is given to the congregation. Members may then suggest names of those whom they feel is best qualified to serve as a deacon. Nomination forms will include a list of the above qualifications to aid the member in prayerful consideration. All forms must be in the hand of the elders by the second Sunday in October.

Each approved candidate for deacon will be contacted by the elders to ascertain if he desires to serve. At this time, the candidate shall be given a "Deacon Questionnaire Form" (appendix A) which must be completed and returned to the elders within one week. The elders will then carefully investigate and consider the Scriptural qualifications, by-law eligibility and possibilities for conflict of interest of each suggested candidate.

The final list of nominees will be determined by the elders and presented to the congregation one Sunday before the election. If no objections are raised, the elders will prepare a printed ballot for secret ballot election on the second weekend of November following each worship service. Nominees must receive at least a 66 2/3% majority to be elected.

IV. SERVICE OF A DEACON

Deacons shall be elected for a term of two years. Should a deacon be unable to complete his elected term for any reason, the elders shall be authorized to choose a man to fulfill the term. Only men eligible at the previous election may be considered.

The elders shall appoint each year, or as needed, the deacon to a ministry or specific assignment. The length of the appointment will be for a term of one year or until the assignment is completed, whichever comes first.

Any deacon who fails to attend regularly scheduled business meetings and ministry meetings, or who demonstrates consistent non-interest or non-participation over a period of four (4) months may be asked to leave his position as a deacon.

V. RELATIONSHIPS OF A DEACON

Certainly the deacon's primary relationship is to his Lord. Without that vertical relationship being what it ought to be, the horizontal relationships will be distorted. A deacon should be more concerned about his walk with God than anything. Next in importance is the deacon's knowledge and understanding of his role in relation to his family, elders, church staff, church committees, and the church membership at large.

A. Family

The New Testament mentions a deacon's responsibility in relation to his wife and children; therefore, the church feels that a deacon should give his family first priority in his devotion, care and ministry.

B. Relation to the Elders and Staff

1. A deacon should serve under the leadership and spiritual direction of the elders and staff and be loyal to them in prayer support, encouragement and fellowship.
2. **Glendale Christian Church** looks to the elders and staff for giving overall leadership and administration to the church and its ministry. The church therefore expects the deacons to respect them and to welcome the unique opportunity to learn from and serve with them. As a deacon functions in the practical ministry of the church, they are freed to give attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

C. Relation to Ministry Teams

Deacons give counsel to, but do not have control of, all ministry actions. Nowhere in the New Testament is there even a hint that deacons are to function as a board of directors or as administrators of the church's business affairs. Deacons are servants first and last. Ministry teams report to the elders concerning actions or recommendations for information and feedback.

D. Relationship to the Church Membership at Large

The deacons are to be active in ministry to the church family, and to promote peace, harmony and a spirit of cooperation and unity among the membership. The primary relationship of the deacons to the church is as follows:

1. **Deacons are to be problem solvers and preservers of church harmony.**

Robert Naylor, former President of Southwestern Baptist Seminary, in his book, **The Baptist Deacon**, wrote concerning the deacon's responsibility to preserve harmony in the church: "When a man becomes a deacon, he loses the privilege, if such exists, of participating in a church row. A member of the ranks may claim that often-abused privilege, 'speaking his mind'. When a man becomes a deacon--selected and called by the Holy Spirit, chosen by the church, dedicated by personal choice--he forfeits the right to promote in any fashion, a division in the life of the church. The one inescapable duty of the deacon in the New Testament was the protection of the church fellowship. When things arise that are divisive, it is time for a deacon who believes the Book to stand up and say: "We cannot do it this way in this church. We must have harmony and peace if we are to follow Christ." That could make the difference between a great, fruitful church and an ineffective, dried-up one."

Every deacon carries two imaginary buckets: one of water and one of gasoline. He determines in many situations whether he will help put out the fires of disharmony or if he will fuel the problem.

2. **Deacons are to be active in ministry** that will enable the elders and staff to feed the flock faithfully and to be able to spend the necessary time in prayer for God's direction and inspiration in leading the church.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES OF A DEACON

In accordance with the meaning of the word of the New Testament, deacons are to recognize their roles as ministering servants of the church. They are to be members of this church whose character and qualifications shall be as specified in I Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-6, and Titus 1:6-9.

Responsibility: The deacon body shall serve under the leadership of the elders and staff assist the minister in performing duties in order to free him for the ministry of the Word. The deacons will support and work with the minister as follows:

- A. To lead the church in the achievement of its mission;
- B. To minister the gospel to believers and unbelievers;
- C. To care for the church's members and others in the community;
- D. To have a consistent commitment to stewardship shall be attested by faithful tithing to the Church.
- E. To demonstrate Christ-like consecration, loyalty, prayer support and faithfulness to the local church program;
- F. To visit the sick, needy and indifferent of the church;
- G. To encourage and strengthen new converts and the spiritually weak;
- H. To attend deacons' meetings regularly;
- I. To be available with his wife at worship services for assisting the elders and staff in receiving new members.
- J. Deacons will have specific assignments and be expected to:
 - 1. Involve as many other people as possible in the area of their responsibility
 - 2. Report regularly to the elders
 - 3. Carry out their responsibilities effectively

VII. WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM DEACONS

- A. A time when you let the Father talk to you daily from His word.
- B. A time when you talk to Him daily through prayer about your ministry, the people in your ministry, this church, and the servant model leadership role of you and your family.
- C. A demonstrated love for this church.
- D. A commitment to reach the community as we meet various needs.
- E. A giving of your time, talents, gifts and money as God has blessed you.
- F. The assembly of a leadership team of people including men and women to serve as the decision makers of your ministry.
- G. To assign each member of your leadership team to an individual task in your ministry.
- H. To gather your ministry once a month to evaluate what is happening and complete the Ministr Communication Form to be presented at the monthly elders and deacons meeting.
- I. To use the staff contact assigned to your ministry as a resource person and communication tool to express your needs to the church office, ministers and elders.
- J. To contact the chairman of the elders if you would like to be on the agenda for the monthly elders' meeting.
- K. To contact each person who expresses an interest in working in your ministry.
- L. To involve every person you can in your ministry. This includes present membership as well as new members God will send us.
- M. To utilize training programs and retreats designed to help your ministry.
- N. To help the elders with an under-shepherding program.
- O. To formulate annual goals for your team. To listen to and get input from everyone in your ministry. Example: The education leadership team needs to get input from all teachers.
- P. To formulate a budget with input from everyone in your ministry.
- Q. To stay within your budget.
- R. To help with church functions as needed.
- S. To be a warm, spirit-filled person who reaches out to visitors and fellow members in this congregation with love and care.

VIII. WHAT IS PROVIDED FOR DEACONS

- A. A specific ministry in which to serve to utilize your gifts for the glory of God.
- B. People to serve with you on your leadership team.
- C. New people for you to involve in your ministry.
- D. Ministry Communication Forms for you to use in your meeting to provide a monthly updates of your ministry.
- E. Staff contacts to serve as resource people for you.
- F. Newsletter articles, Bulletin communications and other publicity help for your ministry as you notify the church office.
- G. Office help for your ministry as you coordinate a work assignment through your staff contact.
- H. The counsel of elders as needed through individual counseling or a meeting with all the elders as scheduled.
- I. Church office secretary to schedule all your events on the church calendar. She also schedules rooms as you need them for various meetings and functions.
- J. Training to better equip you to serve in your ministry.
- K. Men's retreats.
- M. Freedom and trust to allow responsible people like yourself to develop your ministry.
- N. Exciting, uplifting worship assemblies.
- O. Quality Bible classes.
- P. Groups in which to be involved.

IX. CONCLUSION

The office of a deacon demands a high level of commitment, a mature knowledge of the faith and dedication to fellowship and service. I Timothy 3:13 summarizes it best, "**For those who have served well as Deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.**" May your service as deacon be one of the richest and most rewarding of your walk with the Lord.