

ELECTING QUALIFIED DEACONS

A Model
By

Church-Minister Relations
Georgia Baptist Convention

ELECTING QUALIFIED DEACONS

Electing qualified deacons to serve the church is one of the most serious tasks undertaken by the church. Every precaution should be taken to assure that only men who meet the Biblical qualifications are elected to the office of deacon. Furthermore, a deacon in a Baptist church should know, understand and be committed to Baptist doctrine and polity. Election of deacons must be covered in prayer and directed by the leadership of the Holy Spirit. **The church must have a clear position on what constitutes a qualified deacon. Matters of Biblical qualifications must be settled (See Act 6: 1- 7 & I. Tim. 3: 8-13). It must also have a clear position on other requirements, such as the minimum age and required tenure of church membership for deacons.** The following is a model of a process of electing deacons.

The Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee.

The first step in electing qualified deacons is to put into place a Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee. **This committee shall be charged by the church to lead the church in finding God's will in electing deacons.** This committee consists of the following five people:

- The Pastor
- The Current Chairman of Deacons
- One other deacon, nominated by the current serving deacons
- Two church members at large. These two members should be recommended to the church and elected in a regular or called church conference. They may be recommended by the present nominating committee, or by the deacons, or by whatever means that the church may choose. Whatever the process of electing the two members at large, they should:
 1. Be respected by the church as Godly, wise and spiritually mature.
 2. Have a good understanding of and be committed to Baptist doctrine and polity.
 3. Be faithful to the churches ministries and involved in the life of the church.
 4. Know and have a good understanding of the personality of the church.

The Nominating Process

The congregation is to be given the opportunity to nominate men as deacons. Sufficient time should be allowed for the process to work in time for deacons to be elected and ordained, if need be, and take office at the appointed time. Congregational deacon nominations should be made on a Sunday morning.

Notifying Men

At least *four weeks* prior to the day of nomination all men, whose name may appear on the list from which nominations will be made, should be given the following notice:

- That their name will appear on the list of men for deacon nomination.
- That they should read the qualifications of a deacon in Acts 6:3 and I. Tim 3:8-11.
- That they should notify the church office or Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee if they do not want their name put on the list. This notice must be received in such time to allow the final list to be given to the church one week before Nomination Sunday.

Preparing the Congregation.

At least *three weeks* prior to the day the church makes nominations for deacons, the following should be publicized by announcements and newsletter:

- The specific Sunday on which nominations are to be made.
- The congregation will receive a list of men who are of the approved age and church membership tenure.
- The congregation will receive an *official nomination form* on which to make nominations
- That no nomination will be received unless made on the official form.
- That only one form will be allowed per person.
- That no proxy nominations may be made.
- The church's position on making absentee nominations.
- That everyone who makes a nomination read the qualifications of a deacon in Acts 6:3, and I. Tim. 3: 8-11.

- That a nomination should be made only after prayer for the Lord's will and guidance.
- That members should not influence others as to whom to nominate.

Pray in the worship time for the election of deacons.

Two weeks before the church makes nominations for deacons:

- Make the announcement of the previous week.
- Inform the church that the list of names will be available the next Sunday.
- Encourage individual prayer.

Pray in the worship time for the election of deacons.

One week before the church makes nominations for deacons:

- Make the list of names available.
- Remind the church that the next Sunday is Deacon Nomination Day.
- Encourage members to bring their list of names next Sunday.
- Encourage individual prayer.

Pray in the worship time for the election of deacons.

Nomination Day

On this particular Sunday, during the morning worship time, each church member is given a Nomination Form printed on colored paper. The forms should have as many lines as there are vacancies to be filled to allow members to nominate as many men. Also on the form, *and clearly identified*, are names of deacons currently serving and ineligible to be nominated. A list of names should be available to those who failed to bring theirs. The nominating process should proceed with the members being advised as follows:

- The members should be led in reading the qualifications of deacons from Acts 6 and I. Tim 3:8-11.
- They should also be advised of any special requirements that the church places on deacons

- They should be advised to nominate only men they know and believe meet the qualifications of a deacon.
- They should be advised that they may nominate as many men as there are vacancies.
- They should be advised that they may nominate less than the number to fill the vacancies, but not more.
- They should be advised that if they nominate more than the vacancies their Nomination Form will be invalidated.
- The congregation should be advised that only members of the church can make nominations

The individual members should make their nominations and fold the form.

Responsibility of the Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee

After the members have marked and folded their forms the forms are to be collected. The forms are given immediately to the Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee.

The Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee Covenant

The Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee will enter into covenant that they will work together in the following manner.

- They will diligently seek the Lord's will concerning deacons for the church.
- Their deliberations will be confidential.
- They will operate in a spirit of openness and honesty.
- They will be united in their recommendations.

Procedure of the Work

- The committee will perform a tally the nominees on the forms.
- A list in descending order beginning with the person receiving the highest number of nominations will be constructed.
- In developing its recommendations, the Committee will prayerfully and seriously consider the order of the list, but will not be limited to its order.

- The Committee will find enough qualified men to fill the vacancies on the deacon body.
- The Committee will recommend these men to the church for election to the deacon body.

The Process of the Work

- After the descending list of nominees has been created, each member of the Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee will receive a copy of the list.
- Taking the order of the list seriously and prayerfully, but not being limited to the order, each member will individually develop a list of men equal to the number of vacancies to be filled.
- Each member will present his or her list of names at the next committee meeting.
- From the individual lists a combined list is made and this becomes the list with which they continue their work.
- Open, honest and confidential discussion concerning men on the list should be made. All aspects of qualification should be discussed. Committee members are encouraged to express what they sense from the Holy Spirit concerning anyone on the list.
- The committee is to follow this process until they agree upon enough men to fill the vacancies plus several alternates.
- All men upon whom they have agreed, even those who have previously served as deacons, (not alternates) should be contacted and asked if he is:
 1. Willing to serve if elected.
 2. Willing to fill out a deacon qualification questionnaire
 3. Willing, with his wife, to meet with representatives of the committee and discuss the qualifications of a deacon
- This process is to be followed until the Lord leads the committee to sufficient and qualified men to fill the vacancies on the deacon body.
- When the precise number of men is found to fill the vacancies, the committee recommends these men to the church for election to the deacon body.

Biblical and Philosophic Basis for This Method

Most interpreters believe that Acts 6 is the record of the appointing of the first deacons. There we find some clues as to how the first deacons were chosen, but not a precise process. We do know that the apostles addressed the church as follows, “Then the twelve called the multitude of disciples unto them, and said, ‘It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business (task, affair, need).’ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude 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 Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.” (Acts 6:2-5 KJV).

From this passage we know that the deacons were chosen from among the church members. We also know that the church was involved in the process of selecting the first deacons, but just how it was done we do not know. We know that there was by this time more than three thousand members in the church. (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14) With that number in the church, it is doubtful that every member had a “hands on” part in the process. In fact, when notice of the problem came to the apostles it probably did not come by the entire church coming before the apostles, but by representatives of the congregation. Then the apostles called the church together and prescribed a solution. The solution was, “find within the church seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to take care of this need.” Just how they accomplished that task we do not know. We do not know if the seven named in Scripture were the only ones brought before the apostles for approval.

It seems probable that within the church there were leader/representatives. These leader/representatives knew the church. They were trusted. They could feel the pulse of the church. They were in touch with the church and could hear the church. It is also more than likely that the seven named in Acts 6:5 were men of such spiritual stature and Christian character that they rose to the top of the congregation, they stood out. They were not hard to find! By whatever means, these seven were the approved choice of the congregation. It was not so much that different members of the congregation had their favorites and voted for them, it was these men were the natural choice of a church in touch with the Lord.

That is how it should be today. Deacon selection, while it is critical, should not be difficult. Men of sterling Christian character and manifested spiritual stature should rise to the top of the congregation and thus make it easy for the church to choose them as deacons.

Why the Above Detailed Process is Workable

- It provides the church the opportunity to make nominations and thus be heard.
- It allows the Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee to work as trusted leader/representatives of the church
- It provides a forum in which the qualifications of the nominees can be discussed, examined and prayed over in a spiritual atmosphere of confidentiality, openness, respect and love.
- It provides a system where all men nominated can be considered and which does not assume that the highest number of nominations indicated the Lord's will. A word of explanation is appropriate at this point.
 1. Only Biblical and spiritual qualifications should be the reason a man is nominated as a deacon. However, many other factors can be and usually are involved in the nomination process. Such factors as friendships, personal agendas, family, prejudices, and many others can enter into the process. We are less than wise if we think that everyone making a nomination does so under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Lord places upon the church the responsibility of knowing His will. It is the Lord's will that only men who meet the Biblical and spiritual qualifications be elected as deacons, not simply those who receive the highest number of nominations.
 2. It should be remembered that when nominations are made, they are made as *nominations* not votes.
 3. In many cases a person may receive the most nominations yet, not have a majority of total nominations made.
 4. To require that the person receiving the highest number of nominations be elected as a deacon may cause the church to elect someone not

qualified.

5. If the men who receive the most nominations are also the most qualified a Spirit led Deacon Qualifying and Recommending Committee can be trusted to recommend them for election.

- It provides a system where qualifications are more important than personal preferences.
- It provides a system where no men are embarrassed by “not being elected.”
- It provides a system where trusted leader/representatives can come before the church and with confidence say, “We have sought the Lord’s will, we have considered all nominees, we have examined the qualifications of the men set before you and with peace and assurance recommend these men as deacons of our church.”

A Sample Nomination Form

Deacon Nomination Form

_____ Baptist Church

Month Day Year

I nominated the following men as deacons of _____ Baptist Church

Please Print

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

7. _____ 8. _____

The men listed below are now serving as deacons. **Do not nominate them.**

(List those currently serving as deacons)

Sample Deacon Qualification Questionnaire

1. When did you receive Jesus Christ into you life as your personal Lord and Savior? _____
2. Briefly describe what happened when you received Jesus into your life.

3. Have you been baptized by immersion? Yes _____ No _____
4. Do you believe the Bible is the inspired and infallible written Word of God? Yes _____ No _____
5. Do you believe Jesus was born of a virgin? Yes _____ No _____
6. Do you believe Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross for your sins and the sins of the world? Yes _____ No _____
7. Do you believe Jesus arose from the dead? Yes _____ No _____
8. Do you believe Jesus ascended bodily into heaven and will come back to the earth at the end of the age? Yes _____ No _____
9. Do you believe personal faith in and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way a person can be saved? Yes _____ No _____
10. Do you believe in the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, yet one God? Yes _____ No _____
11. Do you believe: Jesus Christ established the church? Yes _____ No _____
Jesus is the Head of the Church? Yes _____ No _____
Jesus is coming back for the church at the end of the age? Yes _____ No _____
12. Do you believe membership and involvement in the local church is essential for Christian growth and service? Yes _____ No _____

13. Do you believe that one truly saved by Jesus is eternally secure and can never lose his/her salvation? Yes _____ No _____
14. Do you believe baptism by immersion is the true New Testament mode of baptism? Yes _____ No _____
15. Do you believe in and are you committed to the Scriptural commands given to the church for evangelism, missions? Yes _____ No _____
16. Do you attend the following as a regular practice?
Sunday Morning Worship Yes _____ No _____
Sunday Evening Worship Yes _____ No _____
Sunday School Yes _____ No _____
Mid-Week Service Yes _____ No _____
17. Are you in good fellowship and harmony with your church? Yes _____ No _____
18. Do you tithe? Yes _____ No _____
19. Will you and your wife commit yourselves to and strive to fulfill the qualifications of a deacon as found in Acts 6:3 and I Tim. 3:8-13?
Yes _____ No _____
20. After reading the Biblical and church qualifications of deacons, do you know of any reason you should not serve as a deacon? No _____
Yes _____ Explain _____

21. Do you understand that a deacon is a minister (servant) and not a manager of the church's affairs? Yes _____ No _____
22. Will you commit yourself to be a growing, maturing Christian? Yes _____ No _____
23. Will you, if elected, make every effort to attend every meeting of the deacon body? Yes _____ No _____

24. Will you strive to preserve the unity and peace of the church? Yes____ No____
25. Will you commit to work with and support your pastor? Yes_____ No_____
26. Will you commit yourself to be trained in ministry skills? Yes____ No____
27. If you find that you can no longer fulfill or affirm the qualifications of a deacon, will you voluntarily resign or accept removal upon action of the church? Yes_____ No_____
28. If you find that you can no longer work with or support your pastor, will you, in accordance with Biblical principles, make every effort to resolve this situation? Yes_____ No_____
29. If you find that you are not in agreement with or out of harmony with your church will you pledge to:
Not be divisive Yes_____ No_____
- Seek to resolve the situation according to Biblical principles Yes____ No____
- Voluntarily resign as a deacon if the situation cannot be resolved Yes__ No__
30. After you and your wife have prayerfully and carefully considered this matter, will you allow yourself to be recommended to the church to serve as a deacon and will you serve if elected? Yes____ No_____

A SAMPLE DEACON COVENANT

A COVENANT OF THE DEACONS

_____ Baptist Church
_____, Georgia

We the deacons of the _____ Baptist Church, enter into this Covenant to encourage one another and to state clearly to the church and to the questioning world the high Scriptural ideals of a deacon.

1. I hereby covenant that I believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God, and will take it as my sole guide for my conduct.
2. I hereby covenant that I will strive to meet the qualifications of a deacon as set forth in Acts 6:3 and I Tim 3:8-13.
3. I hereby covenant that I will refrain from the use of alcoholic beverage and will not in any way contribute to the sale or distribution of it.
4. I hereby covenant to be honest and just in all my business dealings and in my personal relationships.
5. I hereby covenant that my tongue shall not be used for cursing, lying, telling unclean stories or jokes; it will not be used as a tale bearer or to gossip or to slander the character of my brethren or any other person
6. I hereby covenant to practice the Scriptural admonition of giving a tenth of my income into the treasury of my church as a minimum of my financial stewardship.
7. I hereby covenant to accept and discharge the responsibilities assigned me by my church in a manner that pleases the Lord and helps my church.
8. I hereby covenant to be faithful in attendance to the Sunday worship services, Sunday School and the mid-week services of my church.

9. I hereby covenant to endeavor to keep the Lord's Day holy.
10. I hereby covenant to refrain engaging in any activity that is impure and that would be unapproved of by my Lord and sully my character or reputation.
11. I hereby covenant that I will attend all the regular and called meetings of the deacons unless providentially hindered, and in such case, I will notify the church office so every deacon may be accounted for in the meetings.
12. I hereby covenant to be faithful husband and father and to lead my family in to grow in the Christian life.
13. I hereby covenant to be a faithful witness to my Lord and endeavor to lead my family, friends, acquaintances and others to saving faith in Jesus.
14. I hereby covenant that three unexcused absences from the deacons meetings shall automatically place me in inactive status, without official action from the deacons or the church.
15. I hereby covenant that the habitual violation of any of the obligations of this covenant shall disqualify me as an active deacon of the _____ Baptist Church.

In the spirit of love and with the desire to be more effective in my service as a deacon, I sign this covenant.

_____ Date