



ONE HOPE **CHURCH**

DEACON GUIDELINES

Intro

A biblical form of church government calls for godly elders to shepherd the flock (1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28-32). These servant-leaders devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4) which John Owen identifies as “their principal work and duty; from which those who understand it aright can spare but little of their time and strength.” Therefore, elders need deacons to help them shoulder the load of shepherding.

Foundation

The word deacon, from the Greek *diakonos*, means “servant” 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 official title. Paul opens his letter to the Philippians addressing the saints with the overseers and deacons (Philippians 1:1).

In 1 Timothy 3:8 and 12, Paul lists several requirements for deacons, separating them from elders in that they do not necessarily need to be able to teach. The possible fourth occurrence is found in Romans 16:1 when Paul refers to Phoebe as a *diakonos* of the church at Cenchreae. Some translators use the more general term “servant,” while others prefer the more official “deacon.”

What the Scriptures make clear is that the church’s servant-leaders (the Apostles according to Acts 6:4, and subsequent church leaders according to 1 Timothy 3) need deacons to help with the work and—because qualifications are required—to hold an office.

Function

Gene Getz believes, “these servants should assist elders in all aspects of their managing and shepherding functions: teaching, modeling, praying, etc.” Alexander Strauch prefers to narrow the scope, claiming “Such unlimited spheres of service completely blur the distinctive purpose and duties of the New Testament diaconate and can only frustrate deacons.”

Deacons must have a broad understanding of the role of the elders they are assisting to effectively help them shepherd the flock.

Elders/overseers keep watch over souls (Hebrews 13:17), manage the church of God (1 Timothy 3:4-5), teach the Word (1 Timothy 3:2), preach the gospel (2 Timothy 4:1-2), rule the body (1 Timothy 5:17), protect from wolves (Acts 20:28-29), pray for healing (James 5:14), contend for the faith (Jude 3), rebuke false doctrine (Titus 1:9), equip the saints (Ephesians 4:12) and set an example to the believers (1 Peter 5:3)—for which they are held to account by God (Hebrews 13:17).

While these functions are primarily the responsibility of the elder, the deacon’s close connection to the elder makes the deacon’s role complementary. The deacon is not merely a helper but a servant-officer.

Purpose

A deacon is a man or woman who is a Partner within the church appointed and set apart by the elders to assist the elders and pastors in the shepherding, caring for, equipping and meeting the needs of the body of One Hope Church. As a result, the elders will be free to be dedicated to prayer, oversight and the ministry of the Word.

Process

Deacon candidates will be tested (1 Timothy 3:10) and appointed by the elders to serve the church. The deacon will serve a specified term in which the deacon performs duties designated by elders. The deacons will operate under the oversight of the elders.

Practice

Deacons will assist elders contextually according to the specific physical and spiritual needs of the church. Deacon responsibilities include but are not limited to:

Assists Pastor/Elders in meeting the needs of the Church

1. **Life Event Needs**
 - Births: meals, congrats note, gift
 - Weddings: congrats note, gift
 - Deaths: Meals, support, visitations
2. **Visitation Needs**
 - Hospital Visits
 - Home visits for sick or injured
 - Visits for prayer or intercession
3. **Financial Needs**
 - Be aware of needs within the church
 - Coordinate any financial needs with Elders/Pastors
 - Understand our Church's Benevolence Program
4. **Follow-up Needs**
 - Follow up with disengaged partners
 - Follow up with infrequent attenders
 - Follow up with New Guests/Partners

Prayer

1. Regularly pray for the needs of the church.
2. Be available to pray for individuals as needed
3. Coordinate with Prayer Team Leads to assist in praying for the church.

While the deacons at One Hope Church will serve the body by assisting the elders, all Partners of the church are encouraged and expected to serve the body in accordance with their abilities and gifting as taught in the Scriptures and explained in One Hope Church Partnership Covenant.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between a deacon and an elder at One Hope Church?

Deacons are distinguished from the elders in that they are not the governing body of One Hope Church nor are they charged with the duty of authoritative teaching or setting direction. The deacons' ministry is under the oversight and authority of the elders. Additionally, there is one unified body of elders, all of which are male.

2. Are there any aspects of shepherding, care or equipping that the deacons will not carry out and will leave to the elders?

Yes, the deacons will not carry out the authoritative teaching or the final step of formal church discipline. The deacons will not set the direction of the shepherding, care and equipping of the church. Although their input is invaluable and necessary, it will ultimately fall on the elders and pastors to decide the direction for shepherding, care and equipping of the church.

3. Is the office of deacon considered a stepping stone to the office of elder?

No, there are distinct qualifications for deacons that do not include the "ability to teach" or being a male. Although a male deacon may eventually be appointed to the elder body, the office of deacon should not be considered a stepping stone to the office of elder.

4. Do the deacons focus only on ministry within the church?

We are inclined to believe that the office of deacon is focused on serving within the church. In Acts 6, the office was created to solve a problem that arose within the church.

5. Will women deacons be called deaconesses?

No. Although we see no problem using the term "deaconess," all men and women appointed to this office at One Hope Church will be called "deacons." If the need arises to clarify that a deacon is a woman we will use the phrase "female deacon."

6. Are there any aspects of ministry from which female deacons are limited?

Yes, there are certain ministry activities that the Scriptures would reserve only for men. Female deacons are not an exception to these scriptural teachings.

7. Does divorce and remarriage disqualify a person from the office of deacon?

Since the qualifications for elders and deacons regarding marriage are identical, One Hope Church practices the same policy for each office. In short, we do not believe that divorce and remarriage automatically disqualifies an individual from serving in either office.

The qualification given for both elders and deacons regarding their marriages is that the candidate be "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2, 12, Titus 1:6). Directly rendered, the Greek phrase reads "a one-woman man." The text is teaching that if one is married, the elder or deacon must be absolutely committed to their

spouse. These texts speak to the subject of fidelity in marriage, not marital status. This phrase addresses the issues of polygamy or fidelity in marriage, not divorce.

This does not mean divorce is minor or of no consequence when considering someone for the office of elder or deacon. Because marriage was designed to portray God's goodness and fidelity, marital discord, division and divorce obscures and corrupts the image of God painted within the world.

When appointing an elder or deacon, a past divorce in that person's life should always be taken into account and investigated thoroughly. A divorce in one's past could leave one reproachable in some way and thus disqualified for the office of elder or deacon; however, this is not always the case. If a person who is being considered for the office of elder or deacon has been divorced, the elders will investigate the candidate's past divorce and determine whether the person is qualified to serve in the office for which they are being considered.