

DEACONS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

I. Definition and Function of Deacons

The primary meaning of the Greek word “*diakonos*,” which appears throughout the New Testament, is “*servant*”. From a transliteration of the word *diakonos*, we arrive at a title of “*deacon*,” but the word is used elsewhere as servant or minister. See Matthew 20:26; 23:11; Mark 10:43; Colossians 1:23; Ephesians 3:7, etc. (For other references see Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, “*diakonos*,” pg. 183)

Deacons are literally those who serve Christ and His Body on earth. The particular function of deacons in the New Testament church is based on the description of the office given in Acts 6:1-7.

The office of Deacon (unlike the office of Elder) was instituted after the inception of the church at Pentecost. The office was created by the Elders of the church at Jerusalem who needed assistance in carrying out their ever-increasing responsibilities (Acts 6:2-4). The initial responsibilities of the Jerusalem deacons quite simply consisted of whatever assignments the Elders wished to delegate to them, including the daily distribution to the widows (Acts 6:1) and the serving of tables (Acts 6:2). The Elders properly reserved for themselves the responsibility of preaching (Acts 6:2), unified prayer (Acts 6:4), and teaching (Acts 6:4), thus maintaining their role as the primary leaders of the church. Yet, there apparently was given a flexibility to the deacons to develop their ministry to the church according to their various abilities (i.e. Stephen “*did great wonders and signs among the people.*” (Acts 6:8)

It is important enough to reiterate that the office of deacon was instituted by Elders and the specific function of the deacons in Jerusalem was clearly determined by the Elders as well. The deacons performed those tasks which were delegated to them by the Elders and as such, were responsible to the Elders who were the overseers of the church.

Like many other Bible words (apostle, for example) “*deacon*” has both an official and unofficial use. In its unofficial use it refers to:

- 1) Those who serve in the home. “*His mother saith unto the servants (deacons), whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*” (John 2:5).
- 2) Civic rulers. “*For he is the minister (deacon) of God unto them for good.*” (Romans 13:4).
- 3) Ministers of God’s word. “*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers (deacons) by whom ye believed.*” (I Corinthians 3:5).
- 4) Our Lord Jesus Christ. “*Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister (deacon) of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.*” (Romans 15:8).

These are just some examples of the unofficial use of the word. In the King James Version it is translated “*minister*” 20 times and “*servant*” 7 times. In addition to the general and unofficial use of the word, it is also used to designate a special and specific office in the local church. **Thus the creation of the office of deacon recognizes the fact that the duties of pastors are preeminently spiritual; the Elders assist in ruling, and serving details can be delegated to other qualified persons.**

While the men of Acts 6 are not given their official title as deacons, their duties are described by using the corresponding verb and substantive, “*diakonein*” and “*diakonia*.” The daily service to the widows was called a “*ministration*” (*diakonia*) and these 7 men were chosen to “*serve (diakonein) tables.*”

II. Qualifications for Deacons:

The qualifications of the very first deacons of the church were basic and pertained mostly to character. The 7 deacons appointed in Acts 6:1-6 were to be:

- 1) *Of honest report* - or of good reputation
- 2) *Full of the Holy Spirit* - Spirit-filled
- 3) *Full of wisdom* - capable to wise action
- 4) *Full of faith* - believing God
- 5) Some seemed to be men of outreach ministry - Stephen and Philip went on to greater ministry.

Paul further states the qualifications of deacons in I Timothy 3:8-13, as listed following.

It should be pointed out that the qualifications for the office of deacon are not significantly different than the requirements for eldership. In fact, the spiritual qualifications are essentially the same for both offices. The only marked difference is that Elders be “*apt teachers,*” in addition to being persons with outstanding Christian character. Thus, we may conclude that the difference between Elders and deacons is strictly functional. Elders are church leaders of outstanding Christian character who delegate certain responsibilities to men and women of equal spiritual character, i.e., the deacons.

An open letter from the Pastor to all prospective ministries and officers with whom he works including staff, Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

According to the structure of our church as found in our church constitution, which is patterned after the New Testament principle, the government of the church, with its power and authority, rests principally with its leadership. If you are chosen to serve the congregation in an official capacity, you will have tremendous responsibility and authority--especially Elders. For this reason, it is absolutely imperative that all persons who stand in a place of ministry and hold an office, be God's choice, and be in total agreement with the principles set forth in the Word regarding the Body of Christ. They must be men and women of calling, convictions, and dedication.

The scriptures admonish us to judge ourselves so as to not be judged. We must all give account to God for our actions as well as our ministry. Therefore, it behooves each one, from Pastor to Elder to Deacon to Deaconess, to carefully, prayerfully and candidly look at his call, commitment and commission to serve. *"One thing is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."* (I Corinthians 4:2)

You will be known in the congregation by the office you hold. Your candidacy may be presented before the congregation for their witness as to your call and ministry.

Therefore, you are asked to prayerfully and seriously examine your heart, your life, your motives and your relationship with God and the church--as well as the world. Please evaluate yourself so that we together might ascertain God's will for this assembly in relationship to your ministry and office; being assured that those who are entrusted with responsibility are themselves very trustworthy.

Periodically, (recommended annually) each office of the church, including Pastor, will be asked to re-evaluate his commitment and relationship to this assembly and the call of God. It is expected that once a person is qualified to serve the Body of Christ he will continually seek to remain in a spirit of openness, love and unity.

This evaluation is to be prayerfully considered by the pastors and Elders in their effort to help provide continuous direction for the assembly. Please consider willingly, objectively and honestly your life in relationship to each of these areas. We stand before God first and foremost, and before men as the anointed of the Lord.

The following 10 areas of our life and call are very revealing, but if we are to work together as one in the Body of Christ, we must be open one with another, share our hurts and our failures, as well as our blessings and absolute necessity. Any area that you feel needs more explanation or development, please come to us openly for consultation, that we “may grow up into the perfect man to the measure of the stature of Christ.”

Thank you for your cooperation and willingness to serve, even if it means submitting your life as an open book to your brethren in Christ. *“And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience, void of offence toward God and toward men.” (Acts 24:16)*

Please feel free to respond to me openly, even in writing if you desire, in regard to your evaluation of these 10 major areas. Then, please make your pledge of commitment and let us, as one voice, serve God acceptably, for the benefit and edification of His Body.

May we have a long-lasting and beautiful relationship in serving God together.

In the Spirit of unity,

Pastor Brad Montsion

10 Areas of Self Evaluation

(Please do not try to answer each question on paper, but honestly answer before the Lord as you measure yourself in each area.)

I will examine myself in relationship to:

1. My Scriptural Qualifications:

- a. Please check the explanation for each of the 18 qualifications noting your strong and weak areas.
- b. Determine to strengthen the weak areas to be to the glory of God.
- c. Consult with the Pastor if any significant deficiency is noted which might impair your effective service.

2. My Call of God to This Ministry:

- a. Do you feel “motivated” by the Holy Spirit for this ministry?
- b. Have you grown in experience and conviction to serve in this place at this time?
- c. What assurance do you sense in prayer that God is leading in this way?
- d. Can you openly accept the idea of being identified to the people as an office holder in this capacity?
- e. Do you feel you stand before God as His minister?

3. My Spiritual Experience:

I have followed the Lord in each experience as He has led. Think back in your life to review His dealings and how long it has been since:

Salvation? _____ Baptism in Spirit? _____

Water Baptism? _____

Beginning ministry and growth development? _____

4. My Commitment to this Local Body of Christ at Fountaingate Christian Assembly:

- a. I have been coming to Fountaingate Christian Assembly for _____ years?
- b. I am wholeheartedly in union with the church and its Pastor, and can support the ministry here completely without reservation.
- c. I feel led of God that this is my body, where I fit, I belong and I serve.
- d. I will faithfully attend and support the church.

5. My Association with my Family:

- a. I have taken a stand for godliness, and everybody knows where I stand in my Christian convictions.
- b. *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*
- c. My example is such as to be respected.
- d. I endeavor to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in my actions and relationships.
- e. I love my wife (husband) and children and try to show it.
- f. As far as I know, our family is in scriptural order.

6. My Reputation in the World:

- a. Our neighbors and business associates know of my Christian stand and commitment.
- b. I am above reproach and completely honest in all my business dealings.
- c. I am financially responsible and not excessively in debt.
- d. My word can be depended on.
- e. As far as I know, there is no area of accusation of my life and business dealing which could bring reproach on the cause of Christ.

7. My Victory in My Personal Life and Habits:

- a. I have renounced all sinful and worldly habits, having been cleansed of past defilements.
- b. I am free from immorality and uncleanness, having presented my body to the Lord and His service.
- c. I stand for holiness and attempt to live a life that is above reproach.

8. My Life of Prayer, the Word and Worship:

Recognizing the importance and need of these, I covenant to continually develop:

- a. My prayer life, interceding for the church, the people and the ministry.
- b. My personal Bible study and knowledge of the Word, having personal devotions as often as possible.
- c. My participation and leadership in corporate praise and worship.

As a leader, I will try to set an example in these matters.

9. My Relationship with other Members of the Body:

- a. I harbor no ill-will or hard feeling toward any other members of the Body of Christ.
- b. This includes past problems, grudges and unforgiveness, as well as my present associations. There is nothing between me and another member of the Body, so that I feel I can openly pray for and counsel with any member of the Body.
- c. My heart is clean and open before God and His people.

10. Love...”the greatest of these is love”:

I can honestly say I have a love for the Pastor, the staff, the Body and all the ministries in the church, and I long to reach the world with the message of Jesus Christ. I will pray for and always remain in openness and love for my fellow-laborers in the church, and everything I do shall be motivated by my love for God.

List of Qualifications of Deacons

A. Relationship to Character and Spiritual Matters.

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|-----|
| 1) | Good reputation as a Christian | Acts | 6:3 |
| 2) | Spiritual - full of the Holy Spirit | | 6:3 |
| 3) | Sound spiritual judgment - full of wisdom | | 6:3 |
| 4) | Full of faith | | 6:5 |

B. Relationship to the Church

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|-----|
| 1) | Acceptable to the church | Acts | 6:5 |
| 2) | Acceptable to the Elders | | 6:6 |
| 3) | Set apart by prayer and laying on of hands | | 6:6 |

C. Relationship to their Personal Life

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------|-------|-----|
| 1) | Serious | I Tim | 3:8 |
| 2) | Not double-tongued | | 3:8 |
| 3) | Not given to drink | | 3:8 |
| 4) | Not greedy for gain | | 3:8 |

D. Relationship to the Ministry

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|-------|------|
| 1) | Loyal to Word and conscience | I Tim | 3:9 |
| 2) | Proven men | | 3:10 |
| 3) | Blameless | | 3:10 |
| 4) | Faithful in all things | | 3:11 |

E. Relationship to the Family

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------|------|
| 1) | Responsibilities of the wife | I Tim | 3:11 |
| 2) | Husband of one wife | | 3:12 |
| 3) | Must manage children and household well | | 3:12 |

Explanation of the Qualifications of Deacons:

I. Relationship to Character and Spiritual Matters:

1. **Good Reputation (of honest report)** (Acts 6:3)
“Men of good and attested character and repute” - Amp.
2. **Spirituality (full of the Holy Spirit)** - (Acts 6:3)
Maintaining a spirit-filled life for service, thus exhibiting the power and the fruit of the spirit in his daily activity and service.
3. **Sound Spiritual Judgment (full of wisdom)** - (Acts 6:3)
Capable of wise decisions and actions; not merely practical skill of professional experience, but wisdom from above, teaching how to respond in all situations.
4. **Full of Faith** (Acts 6:5)
Spiritual men who believe God, trusting Him as their source and depending on Him for their success. Able to pray with people and believe God for miracles. Two of these men, Stephen and Philip, went on to affect whole cities for God, exercising great faith in ministry.

II. Relationship to the Church:

1. **Acceptable to the Church** (Acts 6:5)
“The saying pleased the whole multitude.” Deacons must be men who are known and established in the way, in whom the assembly can have confidence.
2. **Acceptable to the Elders** *“whom they set before the apostles”* - (Acts 6:6)
The apostles, who are ministry gifts and are serving as elders in the local Jerusalem church at this time, must concur in the choice of the people for the apostles (elders) were to appoint the deacons “over the business”, v. 3. They must be able to have confidence in the appointees for unity, and growth can be best served by agreement between the leaders and people on these important matters.
3. **Set Apart by Prayer and Laying on of Hands** (Acts 6:6)
“They laid their hands on them,” and they prayed. By this act of “laying on of hands” the apostles acknowledged the call to this ministry, identified in partnership with the men chosen and indicated an impartation of leadership authority. By this public service, the congregation shares in the dedication of this individual to the ministry.

III. Relationship to Personal Life:

1. **Serious, Grave, Dignified** (I Timothy 3:8; “*sober-minded*” v. 11)
Both in inner and outer life the deacon must be serious-minded, sober and worthy of respect in the office. As a Christian, they should exhibit the “*joy of the Lord,*” but as a Christian and a deacon they must not exhibit a shallow superficiality. They should act and be worthy of the trust committed to them.
2. **Not Double-Tongued** (I Timothy 3:8)
“*Not shifty and double talkers, but sincere in what they say*” (Amp)
“*Not talebearers!*” (Moffat) He “*does not talk out of both sides of his mouth.*”
A sincere and genuine life which will be exhibited by his conversation. Totally loyal, not critical or talebearing — consistent in his speech.
3. **Not Given to Wine** (I Timothy 3:8)
He must not drink strong drink, and like Elders, set an example in moderation and temperance in all things; especially those things in our time and society that are connected with worldly lifestyle and involvement.
4. **Not Greedy for Gain** “*desirous of filthy lucre*” (I Timothy 3:8)
Being a deacon is not for the purpose of enhancing business opportunities. Money is not to be the motivation for service or the basis for decisions. The love of the Lord and His people is the main reason for his calling and the deacon serves, even at expense to himself at times. He reflects the teaching of Jesus regarding personal gain.

IV. Relationship to the Ministry:

1. **Loyal to the Word and Conscience** “*Holding the mystery of the faith in pure conscience*” (I Timothy 3:9)
While not required to be “*apt to teach*”, deacons must be loyal to the Word of God. In handling their service to the Body, they must always do so in relation to the word and a pure conscience.
2. **Proven Men** “*Let these also first be proved*” (I Timothy 3:10)
As an Elder is not to be a novice, so the deacon must be well-known by life and example, not a newcomer, newly converted or a beginner, but someone the people have confidence in and they are “*known by their doing*”. They should be looked upon as having a respected ministry, and then they are appointed to such an office.
3. **Blameless** (I Timothy 3:10)
Free from accusation of wrongdoing, above reproach so no fault can be found.

4. **Faithful in all Things:** (I Timothy 3:11)
Together with their wives they should be faithful--consistent in life and action--dependable, able to be counted on, always the same, never varying in their commitment to God, the church, family and this ministry.

V. Relationship to their Family:

1. **Responsibilities of the Wife** (I Timothy 3:11)
“The wives must be worthy of respect and serious, not gossipers, but temperate and self-controlled, (thoroughly) trustworthy in all things.” (Amp). *“Their wives must be serious, too; they must not be slanderers, they must be temperate, and absolutely trustworthy”* (Moffat). A man’s wife will enhance or hinder a man’s ministry and therefore these qualifications include requirements for his wife’s wholehearted agreement and cooperation with this ministry. These wives should especially watch their tongue (“not slanderers, gossipers”) since they have more access to information about church people because of the husband’s involvement with the needs of people, by virtue of his office. The wives must help to protect the privacy of people, be extremely loyal and not use this office to spread tales. Any such action is a violation of trust and not worthy of the confidence placed in this family who is chosen to serve.
2. **Husband of One Wife** (I Timothy 3:12)
This requirement is the same as that pertaining to Elders. Chaste in their dealings with the opposite sex, above reproach in marriage matters, “a one-woman man.”
3. **Must manage Children and Household Well** (I Timothy 3:12)
The home, its principles and practices should set an example of a godly Christian home, being well-established, above reproach and orderly. The adolescent children should reflect the parents standards, since the position and practices of this home are well-defined according to scriptural principles. The family of a deacon should be respected and above reproach in the community as well as the church.

III. Conclusion: Blessings of a deacon's ministry

I Tim 3:13

“For those who have filled the deacon's office wisely and well, are already gaining for themselves an honorable standing (on the day of judgment), and are acquiring great freedom of speech in proclaiming the faith which rest on Jesus Christ” (Weymouth). Both Stephen and Philip's later testimony fulfill these 2 aspects: (1) Blessings in future life before the Lord and (2) Great liberty and victory in proclaiming Christ now.

IV. Choosing of Deacons

Unlike New Testament elders, the first deacons of the Jerusalem church were selected by the congregation (Acts 6:3), and then appointed by the elders to serve in various delegated tasks.

The Elders of the church may, if they so choose, ask the congregation to submit names of those who are serving the church according to this scriptural role to assist them in the work of the church as Deacons or Deaconesses. These people are appointed to their office and work with the Pastor and Elders, as they are needed and are deemed qualified. The pattern of Acts 6:2-6 provides the example for choosing Deacons:

- 1) The Elders ask the congregation to look out for men meeting qualifications of verse 3 for a ministry of serving.
- 2). Qualified men are then appointed by the Elders as the need arises.
- 3). Elders then pray over them with laying on of hands to set them apart for this ministry.
- 4). They then serve the people, relieving some of the burden from the Elders, and God blesses their ministry.
- 5). Two of these serving men went on to greater evangelistic ministry.

These are the general steps to be followed in the appointment of Deacons to ministry. Those chosen will be presented to the congregation to be set apart in a service by prayer for the work to which they are called. These persons should be active in some form of service in the body, and as much as possible fit the qualifications of Acts 6 as well as I Timothy 3.

The primary success of any group of people working together is that they interact in a trusting relationship. A trusting relationship must prevail (1) among the elders (2) among the deacons (3) among the elders and deacons (4) among the elders, deacons and the congregation.

The choosing of deacons is like the choosing of elders, in that it is a recognition of a ministry already functioning within a person's life and call. It is then confirmed by the leadership, through the leading of the Holy Spirit. Every member of the Body of Christ should find their place of ministry and serve in the capacity and motivation God has given. They serve "according to the proportion of faith" to which they believe God to use them. It is obvious to the Body that this person meets the qualifications and is performing a function, and we set them apart "for the ministry to which they have been called." (Acts 13:2) Therefore, we do not appoint elders, deacons and deaconesses and then try to have them fulfill a job description and **"BE"** a deacon. They are chosen because they "ARE" a deacon in the sight of God, serving the Lord acceptably, just as others in the body are serving in their ministry and now, sensing the hand of God for this particular ministry, we set them apart and "appoint them over this business" (Acts 6:3).

V. Duties of Deacons/Deaconesses

The elders have the care and oversight of the Body. The Pastor is the spokesman for the elders and naturally asserts leadership which any group needs. However, he mutually submits to the other elders as they meet together to determine God's will for the body. All things should be done in unanimity, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In determining the needs of the Body at a given time, the elders assign deacons to various areas of service for ministry they will fulfill. These would include the leadership of such areas as Care/Counseling, Cell Groups, Christian Education, Clerical/Financial, Men's Ministry, Missions, Music Ministry, Social Events, Sound Board, Women's Ministry, Youth Ministry, or the general care and upkeep of the building, etc. Deacons and other ministries also conduct the self-evaluation as the Pastor and Elders deem useful.

VI. Other Positions in the Church

There is no mandate or provision in the New Testament for positions such as associates (except as teaching Elders), financial, secretaries, Christian education director, custodians, etc. This does not preclude, however, our establishing such positions, provided that we do not violate any New Testament principles. Therefore, a church staff may include several positions which are not expressly mentioned in the New Testament, but which are needs in our growing 21st century church. May we always be sensitive to the principles laid down in scripture, but adapt to the time, location and people in accordance with the teaching of the Word.

Deaconess

Role of Women in Serving as a Deaconess

In the New Testament church when seven individuals were chosen to minister to widows and serve tables, all of the ones named were men (Acts 6:1-60). Nevertheless, the New Testament does record the presence of women workers in the churches. Paul wrote to Philippi, *“Help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel”* (Philippians 4:3).

In the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, *“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may...help her in whatever she may require of you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well”* (Romans 16:1-2).

The mention of Phoebe in Romans 16:1 as a **“deaconess”** suggests that women were permitted to perform the duties of a **“diakonos”** in the early church. Such is also intimated in I Timothy 3:11 where **“gunaikas”** or **“wives”** (KJV) is translated more accurately **“women”** (RSV).

I. Qualities of Women Serving as Deaconesses

Thus, the qualifications for deaconesses’ are essentially the same as those for deacons. Noted emphasis is placed on the fact that if they are married women, they are to complement their husbands ministry, especially singling out that they should be:

- 1) Grave, serious, not frivolous.
- 2) Not slanderers, watch the tongue and be careful not to gossip, backbite, find fault or accuse.
- 3) Join their husbands in being sober-minded, setting an example.
- 4) Faithful in all things.

The same qualifications are true for deaconesses’ who are not married, if chosen to serve. It is conceivable that a non-married woman or a widow be appointed as a deaconess. Paul mentioned that the unmarried with the gift of celibacy, such as those mentioned, can serve God *“without distraction”* that a family would bring (I Corinthians 7:32-35).

Thus, all of these women can serve God acceptably in this role. Wives, as a deaconess, will complement the husband’s ministry as a deacon, making the family a solid unit which can serve God in the Body of Christ together. The wife must not hinder, bring reproach or cause division, but faithfully support and serve. The same should be true for the wives of Elders. The same is true for unmarried women who may be appointed as a deaconess, if it is determined that it is their place of ministry.

II. The Scriptural Basis for Women Serving as Deaconess

The ministry of women is found throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, there were prophetesses such as Deborah and Miriam, even leading the army and speaking the word of the Lord. Others in the New Testament had no official titled roles, but served the people of God, such as:

- * The church at Philippi began with women (Acts 16:14,15).
- * *“Help those women which labored with me in the gospel”* (Philippians 4:3).
- * Dorcas, *“was full of good works and alms deeds”*... making *“coats and garments,”* whom Peter *“raised from the dead”* (Acts 9:36-40).
- * The early church in Jerusalem seemingly met in Mary’s home, John Mark’s mother (Acts 12:12), and she served the church in this way.
- * Priscilla served along with her husband Aquilla, as mentioned several times in Acts.
- * II John is written to the chosen lady and her children *“whom I love in the truth.”* She had evidently been showing hospitality, even to the wrong type of traveling ministries. She was exhorted not to continue this, but to receive worthy ministers, as the Elder Gaius in III John was also exhorted to do.
- * The deaconess was recognized in the councils of Nicenes 325 and Chalcedon 451, but rejected in later councils, to be revived in more recent times.

Whether by title or function, women have always served the Lord and should be included in the work of the Kingdom. *“For there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28).

III. The Work of Women as Deaconesses

The duties of a deaconess would be similar to that of deacon, that is, to serve where needed and appointed. Perhaps additional duties would include receiving people in the home (II and III John give instructions for hospitality) as Lydia did for Paul at Philippi; providing for physical needs and caring for the poor and needy with clothes as Dorcas did in Acts 9; opening your home to the church and its functions as Mary did (Acts 12). *“Visiting the sick and caring for widows and orphans in need, as well as teaching the younger women to be sober-minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Titus 3:2). Prayer and intercession for the church should also be included for this office as well as the others.

IV. The Appointment of Deaconesses

Since the scripture includes a ministry for women, and since the qualifications for wives are included in the qualifications for elders and deacons, the suggestion is that they also share in the ministry and its responsibilities, “as being heirs together of the grace of life” (I Peter 3:7). Together they perform a service (“*diakonos*”) to the Body of Christ and function as a family unit in ministry and example.

For this reason, we consider the spouses of both elders and deacons/deaconesses as those who would complement their ministry. Additional deaconesses, whether single, widowed or married, may be appointed in the same manner in which deacons are chosen.

The Protection: Church Authority and Government

God has ordained this pattern as described in the above points to establish church authority and government so that the church will have order and direction. God Himself planned the organization of the church and established the government of the church (Luke 11:49; I Corinthians 12:28). The officers are set in the church under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and ministry gifts are given by Christ (Ephesians 4:11), that the will of God for His people may be known and carried out.

With scripturally established church authority and government, a safeguard for the truth is founded and the purpose of ministry gifts may be accomplished as explained in Ephesians 4:11-16. In this way the saints are perfected, unity is achieved, the Body is edified by ministry, we are no more children tossed by every wind of doctrine, but we speak the truth in love and grow up into Christ. This is God’s plan and order for the church.

Church authority and government properly established serves:

- 1) **To guard against wrong teaching** and bring believers together in doctrine (Acts 15; Ephesians 4:12,13)
Note: The early church disagreed doctrinally as some taught keeping the law while some lived by grace, but in Acts 15 the Holy Spirit solved this problem through church authority and government as the elders and people moved together in fellowship.
- 2) **To deal with sin** (I Corinthians 5; I Corinthians 3:16,17; II Corinthians 6:14-18)
Godly leadership will keep the church out of the world and the world out of the church.
- 3) **To deal with issues.** Qualified elders should be able to settle disputes and problems of every type if adherents will obey the Word (Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15-20; I Corinthians 6; Colossians 3:12-15).

- 4) To deal with divisions (party spirit) (Acts 20:28-32; I Corinthians 1:10-13). When wolves enter in to destroy the flock God has appointed elders to take the oversight and protect the flock as a true shepherd. The scriptures teach the elders how to deal with heretics (Titus 3:10; compare Galatians 4:19-32, see v.20; I Corinthians 1:10-11; I Corinthians 3:3,4; 11:18,19) A heretic is a man who causes divisions, factions or schisms.

Throughout church history, since the early days of Rome, new factions or denominations have come into being following a revival or truth. This ought not to be. God does not bless splits or divisions. When these divisions become overly sectarian, they slowly die. The candlestick is removed (Revelation 2:5). Forms continue but there is very little blessing.

Every revival and truth should belong to the whole church. Do not build fences around it. The believer's duty is to build according to the scriptural pattern recorded in the New Testament. Some have tried to build thus, and then have said they are the only ones with the correct doctrine and practice and you must come under their authority to enter fellowship. We need to recognize every true believer as a brother. The church, regardless of a present denominational standing, should love one another and fellowship together. The Holy Spirit will produce fellowship and unity around Christ and a oneness in the Word. God's purpose is fellowship, and the devil seeks to cause division. Do not help out the devil and be a heretic (read Ephesians 4:3)

Note: Acts 19:8,9 provides the scriptural basis for withdrawing from an established body, i.e., when they are no longer following the New Testament in practice and teaching, but becoming hardened and refuse the Bible truth, speaking evil of the truth. Never start a new denomination; only establish a New Testament local church.

- 5). To be the ground and pillar of truth (I Timothy 3:15)
- 6). To be the place of His presence (Matthew 18:20), a habitation of God by the Spirit.
- 7). A training school or field of preparation to evangelize and establish believers in the faith (Acts 19:9; II Timothy 2:1,2).

Compare New Testament methods with the present. **The pattern for New Testament church structure will accomplish the goals left us by Christ.** Let the church arise with elders to oversee and supervise; deacons to serve; every member consecrated to the service of God and finding their place with God-given ministry which is motivated by the Spirit. With full recognition of the headship of Christ and the voice of the Spirit, taking the whole Word of God as our basis for action and rule of order, the church of Jesus Christ shall march forward and the gates of hell shall **NOT** prevail against it!

The active membership of this congregation are encouraged to make nominations for those serving as a deacon or deaconess (Ministry Leader). A form similar to this may be used for balloting. Sufficient time should be allowed for prayerful consideration between the presentation and the calling of a ministry.

**FOUNTAINGATE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY
DEACON/DEACONESS (DIRECTOR) NOMINATION**

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

_____ After prayer and careful consideration,
I nominate: _____
to serve as a *Deacon or deaconess in this church.

*The Deacon/deaconess candidate must be a member of this church,
and be willing to stand for election, following an interview with a
member of the eldership of this church.

_____ I have reservations about _____
serving as an deacon/deaconess for the following reasons:

_____ I am not well enough acquainted to participate in this nomination.

Your Name

Date