

Parkside Green, Deacon Orientation

Do we need deacons? Many churches, including ours, have functioned without officially recognized deacons. The case could be made that we should simply continue to have elders but not deacons. We believe, however, that the office of deacon is biblically supported (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8-13), and the church functions best with qualified deacons in place. In establishing the office of deacon at Parkside Green, we recognize that there is relatively little said in the Bible about this topic. So while we are striving to be faithful to Scripture's guidance, we acknowledge that sincere Christians have differing convictions on the subject.

What will deacons do? Since the word deacon means servant, deacons will serve. It is commonly believed that those chosen to serve widows in the early church were precursors to deacons or perhaps the first deacons (Acts 6:1-6). Following this pattern, deacons carry out responsibilities delegated to them by the elders, doing whatever helps the elders focus on shepherding and leading the church. In line with the example of caring for widows (Acts 6:1-6) and practices in the early church, a key function of deacons is to serve as ministers of mercy and meet practical needs. Furthermore, as an application of Acts 6, we will ask the deacons to help us to keep the peace and ensure impartiality for all members.

What is the relationship between elders and deacons? When the deacons tend to the church's practical needs, it frees up the elders to focus on prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-4). While elders rule or direct the church (1 Timothy 5:17), deacons assist in implementing those directions. Under the elders' leadership, deacons help facilitate and carry out church ministries. Elders exercise spiritual oversight (1 Timothy 3:1-2), while deacons' ministries focus on service. So, while elders meet as a deliberative body, deacons do not (there is no deacon board or standing committee structure for deacons). Elders delegate responsibilities to deacons and trust them to handle them faithfully. It is crucial that elders and deacons maintain ongoing communication and unity (Ephesians 4:1-6). As God's Spirit empowers both elders and deacons to fulfill their roles, the church is built up.

What are the qualifications for deacons? As with elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7), the main qualifications for deacons concern their moral character (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Deacons must be dignified or respectable, sincere or not double-tongued, not addicted to or indulging in much wine, not pursuing or greedy for dishonest gain. Deacons must hold to the mystery or deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. Before serving as deacons, they should be tested or examined to prove themselves blameless, with nothing against them. A deacon should be the faithful husband of one wife. Deacons must manage their children and their own households well.

How will deacons function within their team? Every three months a deacon facilitator will be assigned to function as the liaison between the deacons, elders, staff, and member in need. When a project becomes evident, an elder or staff person will contact the deacon facilitator and the deacon facilitator will communicate as appropriate to the rest of the deacons and see the project through until the matter comes to a close.