



Deacon Handbook

Southmont Baptist Church
Denton, Texas

Adopted: April 22, 2009



Introduction

The institution of deacons has followed historically from the practice of the New Testament church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6). The word “deacon” is simply the transliteration into English of the Greek word diakonos, meaning “a servant, attendant, minister.” The first seven deacons were chosen by “the whole group” to see that no member was overlooked in the administering of goods.

Southmont Baptist Church follows the New Testament model. Its deacons are servants; they are chosen by the congregation, and they intend that no member should be overlooked in the ministries of the church. This manual is intended as a guide to the work of the deacons of Southmont Baptist church.

Purpose

The deacons of Southmont Baptist Church exist to serve the cause of Christ, the congregation, and the pastor where any need within the deacon body’s capacities is discerned. They are deemed to be peacemakers within the church and strive to maintain harmony, community and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ within the congregation.

Qualifications for Deacons

The first election of deacons is recorded in Acts 6:1-6 where the apostles called the congregation and charged them to select seven men who were known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. Hence, these qualities are to be expected in all deacons. Other more specific qualifications are found in I Timothy 3:8-13 and listed here:

1. Must be dignified, worthy of respect.
2. Must be sincere.
3. Not indulging much wine.
4. Not pursuing dishonest gain.
5. Must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.
6. Must be proven; if nothing is against them, they may serve.
7. Must be the husband of one wife.
8. Must manage one's children and household well.

Marriage is not a requirement, but if a deacon is married, both husband and wife are expected to be members of Southmont Baptist Church.

Deacons' spouses must be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, temperate, trustworthy in everything.

Procedure for Election and Ordination of Deacons

1. The Deacon Body will consist of all ordained deacons as duly elected by the congregation of Southmont Baptist Church.
2. Approximately one deacon per thirty church members will be chosen to serve with the Deacon Body. This number is arbitrary and non-binding. It is intended as a practical guide, rather than as a statute.
3. When the Deacon Body perceives a need for new deacons to be elected, the Chair of Deacons will inform the congregation that a need for the appropriate number of persons exists.
 - i. Church members will be provided a list of current deacons and the qualifications for deacons, as stipulated above.
 - ii. The congregation will be asked to nominate persons whom they deem eligible.
 - iii. The needful number may be any number specified by the Deacon Body.
4. Nominations will be accepted by the Deacon Body.
5. The Deacon Body will screen the nominees for eligibility beginning with those having the highest number of nominations. When a number of candidates equal to the number of new deacons required have been approved, the screening process will stop, and the names will be presented to the congregation. Sixty percent of those voting in a quorum of the congregation must approve the slate for its acceptance. No new nominations may be made from the floor at this election.
6. No person is a deacon of Southmont Baptist Church until the congregation have chosen him by due election. Those who are elected will serve without term for so long as they are members of Southmont Baptist Church.
7. Those who have been elected may begin to serve immediately upon election.
8. Those who are elected but have never been ordained as deacons will be candidates for timely ordination.
9. Ordination is a symbolic act. It involves the “laying on of hands,” as men who have previously been ordained use this gesture to impart encouragement and spiritual strength to those who are being newly ordained. The practice follows from Acts 6:6, “and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.”

By-laws for the Deacons of Southmont Baptist Church

1. Definitions --

i. The “Deacon Body” consists of those deacons who have been chosen and approved by the congregation of Southmont Baptist Church. They are not a policy making body, but rather servant-leaders organized to serve the congregation and the cause of Christ.

ii. “Deacons” are members of the Deacon Body.

iii. Ministry Action Teams are groups of deacons acting together for a specific ministry of service. They may be self-selecting, elected by the Deacon Body, or appointed by the Chair, according to the method most efficacious for the purpose at hand. The number of such teams is not fixed and they may phase in or out as need requires.

2. Selection of Deacons -- The process for selecting deacons is described above in this manual. It requires that all who serve on the Deacon Body must be elected by the congregation of Southmont Baptist Church. If someone has been ordained previously by another church, a one-year waiting period is required for eligibility to serve as a deacon at Southmont. The process of selection must include nomination, screening, orientation, confirmation by the church, and ordination (either by Southmont Baptist Church or a prior ordination by a sister Baptist church). The orientation process will be provided for selected nominees prior to their election, and will include the signing of the following covenant: “I, _____, do commit myself to the service of the Kingdom of Christ, the congregation, and the pastor of Southmont Baptist Church as God directs. I will do my best to conform my behavior to the high principles of the Christian servant, and I will strive to be faithful in service to those who have chosen me for this task.”

3. Organization -- Deacon officers are Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. The offices will be filled by the Deacon Body at a regular November meeting. Prior to this meeting, the current chair will appoint a Nominating Committee which must be approved by the Deacon Body. The current Chair and the Pastor will serve as ex-officio members. The Nominating Committee will place no more than two names before the Deacon Body for each office.

4. Terms of Office--Each officer will serve a two year term, and elections will be held bi-annually.

5. Meetings -- Deacons’ meetings will be held at least six times yearly unless the Chair announces otherwise. Other meetings as called by the Chair are authorized. Minutes shall be kept of all meetings by the Secretary and, cumulatively, passed to the succeeding Secretary.

6. Rules of Order -- The rule of order may be as informal as the group desires, although any deacon may at any time invoke Roberts' Rules of Order in transacting any business within the Deacon Body. These rules of order may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of a quorum attending.

7. A quorum for transacting business by the deacons shall be one third of the Deacon Body.

8. Amendment -- Amendments to these by-laws may be made in the following way:

i. Any deacon may propose a change to the by-laws at any meeting of the deacons. The proposed amendment may be explained but not debated at this time.

ii. At the next authorized meeting of the deacons, the proposed amendment will be given a second reading. Debate is now invited. After due consideration, the proposal (as amended in debate) may be voted on. Assuming the presence of a quorum, two thirds of those present and voting is required to approve the amendment.

iii. The congregation of Southmont Baptist church will be asked to consider and vote upon the change to these by-laws at any authorized business meeting. A simple majority of the congregation present and voting (assuming the presence of a quorum) is required to approve the proposed amendment.