

Tell me about ... baptist church

Deacons

Who are Deacons?

Deacons form the leadership of the church along with the Minister.

They are appointed for a three year term by the church members through an election process.

What are Deacons' responsibilities?

There are three roles that are combined into the office of deacon here at Rushmere Baptist Church. They are:

1. A responsibility to give *spiritual leadership* to the church.
2. A responsibility to participate in the *administration* of the church.
3. A responsibility to act as a *charity trustee*.



Let us look at these three roles in turn.

1. *Spiritual Leadership:* The church needs leaders! Leadership is a spiritual gift which anyone in a position of responsibility in the church needs to have. However, the kind of leadership that Jesus commands for others and modelled himself is that of servant leadership. He said that he came not to be served but to serve (see Mark 10. 42-45).

Spiritual leadership aims to envision the church to fulfil its mission in the world. This it seeks to do through servant leadership - persuading, not coercing!

2. Administration: There are a number of things that the deacons discuss and decide upon. Such an item might be the details of the insurance of the church premises. There are other times when the deacons consider things in more detail and then recommend an action to the church meeting. For example, there is the annual church budget which the deacons discuss thoroughly prior to it being presented to the church meeting. The members at the meeting may alter anything if they see fit. Leaders are not infallible!



3. Charity Trustee As the church is a 'charity', it must have an executive group, whose members are designated as the trustees of the 'charity'. A trustee has the responsibility to ensure that the church acts in accordance with its own rules, that its finances are correctly run, that its buildings are properly maintained and that it always acts within the law (e.g. in matters of Health & Safety and in Employment law).

What do Deacons do?

In order to carry out these responsibilities, Minister and deacons meet once or twice a month to discuss and pray together. They also try to

St Paul on deacons (I Timothy 3. 13):-

“Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.”

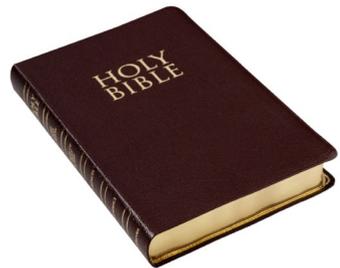
have an 'away day' at least once a year to worship and focus on our work as a church.

Deacons also serve communion, as an illustration of their role as servant leaders of the church. They pray with the Minister (or visiting preacher) before each Sunday service. Inevitably there are also other tasks and responsibilities that come along as a result of being a deacon. This particularly happens when the church is without a Minister.



What does the Bible say?

Deacons are traditionally traced back to Acts chapter six when seven men were chosen to administer the daily distribution of food to the poor. Although it was essentially a practical task, the apostles asked the church to choose those "who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom." (Acts 6. 3) St. Paul gives a list of qualifications necessary for deacons (I Timothy 3. 8-13). They need to be those who are worthy of respect, who are strong in the faith and who take their family responsibilities seriously.



How are Deacons elected?

In September each year nomination forms are available to church members to enable them to nominate a member whom they believe would fulfil the Scriptural criteria for deacons. They must find another member who is willing to second their nomination. Forms must be returned to the Church Secretary by the end of the month. The secretary writes to those nominated informing them of their

Those who accept nomination are notified to the membership in advance of the November church meeting, when a ballot is held.

It is important that at all stages, the process is surrounded with prayer.

Extract from Rushmere Baptist Church Rules

The Church shall elect a diaconate comprising no more than eight members, subject to the following:

- All or at least a majority of deacons shall at all times consist of persons who have been baptised, that is to say immersed upon confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- Each deacon shall have been a member of the Church for at least a year, and shall be at least 18 years of age, at the commencement of the first year of office;
- Each deacon shall serve for three calendar years, and shall thereafter, if willing, be eligible for re-election;
- To be elected a nominee shall in a secret ballot receive the votes of at least two thirds of the members personally present, entitled to vote, and voting at the Meeting;
- Any member with good reason for absence from the Church Meeting at which the election takes place may ask the Church Secretary for a postal vote which shall be returned in advance of the meeting;
- Husband and wife shall not both be members of the diaconate.

A Final Question

If you are a church member, do you pray about whom you might nominate for the diaconate and for whom you should vote?

Look up the Scriptures overleaf and ask God to lead your thoughts.

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Declaring **God's Way** - Sharing **His Love**