

# Crossbridge Baptist Church - Deacon Standard and Process

## Deacon Nomination and Election

The Office of Deacon is one of only two church offices specified within scripture. The Office of Deacon is served by both the Husband and his wife collectively - "for they are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). The Office of Deacon is an extension of the Pastoral Ministry. The Office is one characterized by sacrificial service to the church body, emulating the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Office is not to be sought after as a position of prestige or power, but in the humility characterized by a slave of Christ. The Deacon Examination process is not intended to be an interrogation, but rather an opportunity for candidates to fully evaluate where they are in their Christian maturity. Poor execution of the Office of Deacon carries with it great condemnation from God, as well as grave consequences relating to the integrity and stability of the church. Therefore, the examination process is of the utmost importance for the sake of both the candidates and the church.

A Deacon of Crossbridge Baptist Church shall be verified to meet the biblical qualification as outlined in the Deacon Qualifications subsection below by the Pastor and the Deacons; and shall be affirmed by the church body. The number of Deacons will not be fixed but will vary based on the needs of the church.

The qualifications for Deacon service will be published and nominations will be accepted from the congregation. Nominees will be contacted by members of the Deacon Board to determine if a desire to serve exists. All nominees who express a desire to serve then move to the status of candidate. All candidates must submit a Deacon Examination form which explains why they believe they meet the qualifications. Submission signifies their desire to be considered for the Office of Deacon.

Deacon candidates will be examined by an Examination Team which shall include the Pastor, the Deacon Chairman, and up to five members of the Deacon Board to verify that they meet all qualifications and will serve the Office well. The Deacon Board is composed of all currently active Deacons. The Examination Team members from the Deacon Board shall be elected by the Deacon Board and approved by the Pastor. The Deacon Chairman is responsible for the collection of nominations, assignment of Deacons to contact Nominees, and the scheduling and organization of the examination meetings.

The Deacon Examination Team will interview the candidates, along with their wives in a series of meetings. Candidates receiving unanimous endorsement by the Examination Team will then be presented to the entire Deacon Board for final interview and approval. At least a 90% vote of confidence by the Deacon Board and Pastor approval is required for a Candidate and his wife to be presented to the church for affirmation.

Deacon Affirmation will be conducted as part of a regularly scheduled or called Church Family Conference. A 3/4 majority vote (>74%) of confidence is required to affirm the Candidates into the Deaconate.

Unfortunately, the qualifications for Deacon varies from church to church and has also changed over time for Crossbridge. Inconsistent understanding and commitment to the Deaconate creates an opportunity for the enemy within the Deaconate and congregation. For this reason, any Deacon who has served as a Deacon at Crossbridge before September 1, 2019 and any Deacon who was ordained by a different church shall undergo the same examination process described above to ensure they understand and are willing to commit to the qualifications of this document prior to being allowed to serve on the Deacon Board. If any newly elected Deacon has not been ordained, an ordination service will be planned by the Pastor and Deacon Chairman as soon as possible after affirmation by the congregation, but in all cases within 2 months.

## Deacon Qualifications

A candidate for deacon of Crossbridge Baptist Church shall be a married male and an active member of the church for at least one year. The candidate should be an active member of the church, attending Sunday worship services, Sunday School, mid-week studies and activities, and special meetings and programs as planned and promoted by the church. The candidate shall support the overall vision and program of worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry. The candidate shall be aligned doctrinally to the beliefs of the church. In addition, the candidate shall demonstrate in his daily life the spiritual and behavioral qualifications required in Scripture as interpreted and outlined below.

1. Honest (good) report (Acts 6:3) - a good reputation among those in the church as well as those outside the church;
2. Full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3) - maturity of character in spiritual outlook and personal dedication;
3. Full of wisdom (Acts 6:3) - wisdom born in a relationship with the Holy Spirit;
4. Full of faith (Acts 6:5) - demonstrating, like Stephen, a living faith in a sovereign God, regardless of consequences;
5. Sincere (1 Timothy 3:8) - possessing Christian purpose, having great reverence for spiritual matters; one whose word is respected;
6. Truthfulness in speech (1 Timothy 3:8) - not "double-tongued," does not insinuate, manipulate, exaggerate, fabricate or gossip;
7. Not given to much wine (1 Timothy 3:8; 1 Corinthians 8:9) - temperate in living, abstaining from sale or use of intoxicating drink as beverage;
8. Not greedy or pursuing dishonest gain (1 Timothy 3:9) - a right attitude toward material possessions, not exploiting others for gain or profit;
9. A cheerful giver (Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 9:5-7) - shall demonstrate a free spirit of giving what God has entrusted to him by not only practicing foundational "storehouse" tithing, but also by freely giving above and beyond the tithe as needs arise or the spirit of generosity moves;
10. A holder of the faith (1 Timothy 3:9) - giving strength to the church fellowship and possessing spiritual integrity beyond reproach;
11. Tested and proved (1 Timothy 3:10) - demonstrating spiritual qualifications before being elected to serve as a deacon. A candidate must have been observed for a minimum of one year prior to consideration by the board;
12. Blameless (1 Timothy 3:10) - one against whom no charge of wrongdoing can be brought with justification;
13. Husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:12; 1 Corinthians 7:39) - one who is and has been committed to the sanctity of the marriage covenant and the picture it portrays of Christ and His bride. Neither the husband nor the wife may have a history of divorce. Re-marriage following the death of a spouse also meets this qualification;
14. Ruling children and own house well (1 Timothy 3:11-12) - one that conscientiously cares for their family, faithfully devoted to his wife, providing leadership for his children and household with the discipline, compassion, and tenderness of Christ. The wife, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not a malicious talker, but temperate and trustworthy in everything;
15. Bold in the faith (1 Timothy 3:13) - having served well in the church, demonstrating great assurance of their faith in Jesus Christ.

## Deacon Qualification Explanations

Some Deacon qualification interpretations are controversial and/or not self-evident without substantial Scriptural study. For this reason, the following explanations of interpretation are provided to ensure a consistent understanding of the basis of these qualifications is carried forward with Crossbridge Baptist Church.

7. The interpretation of "not given to much wine" in the deacon standard is the traditional understanding of this passage. Recent trends within the American church have moved to allow the consumption of alcohol, provided there is not an observation of drunkenness. This interpretation is not consistent with either the evidences of scripture, the character of the office, nor the prudence of the offices influence. "Wine" as described in scripture was at most 3% alcohol by volume and then diluted 4:1 with water, making it impossible to become intoxicated. It's purpose was to purify water for drinking. The tendency to desire the effects of the alcohol in the wine is the subject of the phrase; not a reference to the volume consumed, but a desire to create a stronger concentration to achieve an effect. All forms of alcohol present today therefore violate this qualification. Additionally, the effects of alcohol are devastating society. Most researchers believe that tendencies toward alcoholism are inherent and activated on the first drink. Therefore, acceptance of the consumption of any alcohol would be inconsistent with the character of the office, which is ultimately a representation of Christ.
  
13. The interpretation of "husband of one wife" in the deacon standard is the traditional understanding of this passage. Recent trends within the American church have moved to allow divorced men and even women to serve as deacons. The scriptures clearly states that woman are not to usurp headship authority (1 Timothy 2:12). Therefore, women cannot serve as deacons, but will serve with their husbands as "one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). The scriptures clearly state that the act of divorce is hated by God (Malachi 2:16), creates a perpetual state of adultery, and goes against God's intent for marriage (Matthew 19:3-12). Old Testament Law, which illustrates the character of God, commands that the overseers/priesthood maintain a pure marriage covenant (Leviticus 21:13-14). The old testament elements are restated not only in the teachings of Jesus, but also in Paul teachings (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). The Office of Deacon is more about the picture of who the office represents, than it is the man who fills it. Therefore, divorce is inconsistent with the office, regardless of the fact that it is forgiven. Disqualification by divorce is a consequence of sin, not a life long condemnation. This interpretation in no way is intended to imply an absence of forgiveness by God for divorce, but simply a clarification on what God has set in place as the requirements for those who represent Him in this Office.

## **Deacon Ordination**

Deacons at Crossbridge are Ordained as Ministers of the Gospel. God Ordains; men recognize God's Ordination on an individual. This is a special time for those being called and will be a celebration with the church, family, and friends.

The Pastor and Deacon Chair will plan an ordination ceremony whenever the need arises for newly appointed Deacons. The ordination will include the ordained men of the church, as well as ordained guests requested by the new Deacon, Pastor, and Deacon Chair. All the Ordained in attendance will lay on hands and pray over the newly appointed Deacon and his wife together.

Please note, by Georgia State Law, anyone Ordained (regardless of office or title) is allowed to perform wedding ceremonies. However, no Deacon of Crossbridge is allowed to perform a wedding without first going through specific training with the Pastor in this area due to the serious implications associated with representing God the Father in this matter.