Formed by the Word of God...
Engaging in the worship of God...
Pursuing the mission of God...

Deacon Ministry
Qualifications and Expectations
This packet has been put together and approved by the active deacon body of Highland Park First Baptist Church (HPFBC). The material in this packet is consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of HPFBC, “Article II, Section 3. Deacons,” and is in no way intended to negate the authority of that document. However, many of the specifics of deacon ministry procedures and practices are spelled out in greater detail here. Here you will find a section outlining the qualifications of a person eligible to serve as an active deacon at HPFBC based on 1 Timothy 3:8-13, as explained in our Deacon Ministry Covenant. The qualifications section is followed by the expectations for service and a summary of several of our Deacon Ministries. The final item contained in this packet is a copy of the Deacon Ministry Covenant, which all new and current deacons will be asked to sign in order to serve on the active deacon body. The deacons ask that you read and pray over the contents of this packet before accepting a nomination to serve on the deacon body.

For His Glory,

The Deacon Body
Qualifications of a Deacon

The biblical qualifications of a deacon are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, the meaning of which is explained below in the Deacon Ministry Covenant and the commentary that accompanies each of the terms of the covenant. The commentary is preceded by asterisks and indicated by italicized print. Please note that a copy of the covenant without commentary is included at the end of this packet, which must be signed by everyone serving as an active deacon at HPFBC.

I recognize that the Scriptures hold deacons to a high standard of accountability with respect to character and conduct. Therefore, I will consciously strive to live my life according to the principles of this covenant, which is intended to express the meaning of 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and the application of its principles to HPFBC specifically.

1. “Worthy of respect” – I will strive to be a man worthy of respect and emulation. This means that I will submit to the word of God concerning my character and conduct in all things and strive to submit to the standards of Scripture for deacons as understood by this church. Because my fellow deacons and the pastoral leaders of the church are also described as men worthy of respect, I will not attempt to be divisive to the deacon body or undermining to the leadership of my pastors. I will handle any disagreement that exists with grace and always according to the instructions of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17.

** Paul tells Timothy that deacons are to be men “worthy of respect.” All of the other qualifications listed here are further explanations of the character of a man who is “worthy of respect.” In this section of the covenant, a word is included about the treatment of pastors and other deacons because the way a man handles conflict is a significant factor in determining the respectability of his character. A hot-tempered man who is prone to incite division and undermine leadership is not worthy of emulation. On the other hand, a man who can handle disagreements with charity and grace is a man to be emulated.

2. “Not hypocritical” – I will strive to demonstrate consistency of character, conviction, conduct, and speech. In particular, my speech will be reflective of my convictions so that what I say is what I genuinely mean.

** The wording Paul uses here literally means not “double worded.” Deacons are to be the kind of people whose speech and conduct are the same in all contexts.

3. “Not drinking a lot of wine” – I understand that being intoxicated by foreign substances is unbecoming for any Christian, particularly one who is a deacon in the church. In order to be above reproach in this matter, I will abstain entirely from alcoholic beverages and other intoxicating substances while serving as a deacon.

** Because deacons are men worthy of emulation, they are to refrain from the consumption of alcohol for the sake of brothers and sisters in Christ who might be caused to stumble on account of the actions of deacons. In that spirit, this statement in the Deacon Covenant is calling on the Deacons at HPFBC to make this commitment, not out of legalism, but out of love for those whom they serve.

4. “Not greedy for money” – Greed is an inordinate desire for worldly satisfaction and the denial of the hope of our glorious resurrection. The Lord has made it clear in his word that he desires his people to find great joy in generosity. Therefore, I will be faithful to give of my tithes and offerings regularly for the work of the Lord through the church where I serve as a deacon.

** Paul’s concern here is that deacons, as men “worthy of respect,” not be swept away into the alluring evil of greed because, as he says elsewhere, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith” (1 Timothy 6:10). One of the main ways Scripture calls upon us to avoid the sin of greed is to be generous with our money. In Scripture, God commands his people to give to the work of his kingdom “not reluctantly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). Furthermore, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Thus, the
A deacon who is not “greedy for money” will demonstrate generosity by being faithful in the giving of tithes and offerings for carrying out the work of the kingdom through the ministries of the church.

5. “Holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” – I believe that God has revealed himself truthfully and sufficiently in Scripture, and I believe that the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is a faithful presentation of biblical truth. Without hesitation, I agree with its articles of Christian doctrine.

** The word “mystery” is consistently used by the authors of the New Testament to refer to truth that was previously hidden but has now been made known by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. The phrase “mystery of the faith” refers to the entire content of God’s finished revelation of himself through Christ as contained in Scripture. The main concern here is that deacons be men of firm belief in the truth of Scripture, not unbelievers and not easily led astray into false beliefs (see Ephesians 4:13-14). HPFBC has adopted the Baptist Faith and Message as our statement of belief because we believe it faithfully and adequately represents the key doctrines of the Christian faith revealed in Scripture.

6. “Must first be tested” – I recognize that it is the responsibility of the deacons and pastors of HPFBC to consider each nominated deacon candidate with respect to the qualifications of Scripture and sound doctrine. I joyfully yield to such examination and will faithfully participate in the examination of other potential deacon candidates unless hindered to do so.

** Men who are being considered for the office of deacon in the church must be examined in light of the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. This covenant presents the interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:8-13 by which each deacon candidate will be evaluated by the deacons and pastors at HPFBC. Each candidate approved by this testing and voted on by the church will be required to sign the deacon covenant. In this way, the deacons, pastors, and church are assured that each deacon is aware of the standard of qualifications for deacons and is committed to continue pursuing a lifestyle consistent with those qualifications once appointed as a deacon.

7. “Husbands of only one wife” – I will strive to live out my life as a husband with integrity. I will be committed to my wife until death parts us. The pleasures of intimacy will be reserved for her alone, and I will abstain from all sexual activity outside of the context of my marriage. Because sexual lust is a kind of adultery, I will abstain entirely from pornography of any kind.

** Paul uses the phrase “husband of only one wife” to describe a man who is committed to the biblical presentation of a godly marriage and the specific role of the man in that marriage. The phrase certainly forbids polygamy, adultery, pornography, and all homosexual acts. The phrase must also take into account the past marital status of a man, especially if he has been previously divorced. While the clear teaching of Scripture is that “God hates divorce” and forbids it for his people, Scriptural exceptions to this imply that the deacons and pastors will have to exercise wisdom and prayerful caution when considering the issue of the past marital history of a deacon candidate.

8. “Good managers of their own children and households” – I understand that it is my responsibility to lead my own children and wife in matters of truth, life, and godliness. I will strive to be faithful as a husband and father to model and teach the truths of the gospel in my home.

** Throughout Scripture, the task of leading a household spiritually falls to husbands/fathers. As men worthy of respect, deacons must be men who model this kind of leadership well. A deacon who is not the spiritual leader of his own home is not the kind of model of biblical manhood that should be set before the people of the church as an example. On the other hand, a man who does lead his family in spiritual things is a great example for others to follow.

9. “Serve well as deacons” – I understand that a deacon is a servant in the church, assigned with specific ministry responsibilities. To serve well as a deacon at HPFBC, I will carefully read the “Deacon Expectations” packet, and I will strive to carry out my responsibilities accordingly.
The Bible does not specifically spell out the exact responsibilities of deacons. Rather, they are appointed as servants who work alongside of the pastoral leaders (“overseers” in 1 Timothy 3:1-7), assisting them in the responsibility of shepherding the flock of God among which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers (Acts 20:28). HPFBC has developed a packet describing the responsibilities and expectations of deacon ministry, which is reviewed and published by the deacons every year prior to the appointment of new deacons. To “serve well” as a deacon at HPFBC includes understanding one’s role as described in that packet and striving to carry it out with diligence.

I recognize that the commitments listed above reflect the teaching of Scripture concerning the character quality and responsibility of deacons. If at any time I stumble with respect to these commitments, I will repent of my sin and embrace the forgiveness of God according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am willing to submit joyfully to the accountability of the church and my fellow deacons in maintaining the principles of this covenant. If, after all attempts at reconciliation have failed, my character or conduct are deemed incompatible with the principles of this covenant, I recognize that I will be relieved of my responsibilities as a deacon. Furthermore, if at any time I am in disagreement with the principles of this covenant, I will relinquish my responsibilities as an active deacon with charity and grace.

In addition to these biblical qualifications, according to the Bylaws of HPFBC, for a deacon candidate to be considered, he must have been a member of HPFBC and enrolled in a Sunday School class for at least one year.

**Expectations of a Deacon**

Deacons are expected to support all areas of the church, which include regularly attending and participating in worship services [Sunday morning and evening worship, Wednesday night activities, church Bible study groups, etc.]. Deacons will also be required to consistently attend and participate in each monthly deacons’ meeting. During each monthly meeting we will hold each other accountable as we strive to complete our roles of service as deacons. Accountability is vital so that we can track our success in fulfilling our ministry objectives during each monthly meeting. Each deacon must be willing to adapt as ministry priorities change by fulfilling multiple roles of service as requested by the church staff. Deacons will play an important support role to aid our pastor, associate pastor and worship pastor in other ministry needs when called upon. If a deacon willfully abstains from attending four (4) consecutive monthly deacons’ meetings, then he shall automatically become inactive and his position will be considered vacant.

What follows is a brief description of each of the specific deacon ministries. Each deacon is expected to participate in one or more of these ministries, as assigned by the deacon body.

**Widow and Widower Care Ministry**

James 1:27 – “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

The objective of this outreach is first to communicate with the widows/widowers of our congregation on a regular basis. Within this communication we seek to find out ways we may be of service to them. The plan for reaching our objective is a “One, One, & One” plan:

Each month every widow/widower within our congregation will receive 3 methods of contact:

1. One Card (this can be as simple as a “Thinking of You” card.)
2. One phone call.
3. One visit (pray with them.)

The deacons will enlist members of our congregation to assist with making these contacts and get updates from them on contacts they have made as well as needs they may have discovered.
Deacons will record monthly progress and report during the monthly deacons meeting. The list of Widows/Widowers is to be updated upon notification of status of a member who has suffered loss.

When possible attain emergency contact information: Name and phone number of someone they would like contacted in case of an emergency.

**Hospitalization Ministry**

Every month a deacon will be chosen to be in charge of making sure that hospital visitation and other pastoral care visits are made. This deacon will be considered “on-call” status for one month and then the responsibility will rotate through the deacon body.

While a deacon is on-call he will be expected to be available for members of the church to call in case of an emergency and to make sure that the appropriate people are notified of the situation. He will be expected to be in communication with the pastoral staff of the church to make decisions regarding the necessity of visitation based on the situation. If the deacon is unavailable to make a visit he is responsible to make sure that there is someone who can go and make that visit, whether with another deacon or with a staff member.

All active deacons at some point will carry this responsibility during their service time on a rotating basis as directed by the deacon chairman. The on-call deacon will be expected to give a report at the end of his rotation detailing any ongoing needs of which the deacon body should be made aware.

**Homebound Ministry**

A person who is homebound is someone who cannot get to church independently or that requires assistance to travel to church.

How can we serve this person? We serve these people by using our “One, One, & One” plan.

1. One card with a personal note – possibly send a current bulletin.
2. One call to follow-up on their health and well-being.
3. One in home visit to chat with them in person and pray for them.

A list is usually formed and split among a few deacons who want to be involved in this ministry. The deacons are encouraged to invite church members to take part in helping them to minister to our homebound members by using the “One, One & One” plan. Our deacon body and our church members can also help to hold each other accountable by reporting on these homebound members in our deacon meetings monthly.

We want our homebound members to feel like they are still connected and still involved in what is going on in their church. It is important that our homebound members know that we care and love them even though we realize they cannot be there personally.

**Visitation Ministry**

Deacons who are assigned to the visitation ministry team will visit those church members and church visitors deemed by the pastoral staff to be in need of a visit. Deacons will go on the visits accompanied by another deacon or a member of the pastoral staff. Deacons will consult with the pastoral staff for a list of prospective visits and scheduling.
Benevolence Ministry

The deacon body will work in co-operation with the church staff to address any benevolence needs to determine if the church can be of any financial assistance to meet the need. The deacon body will agree upon any financial requests before any money is given.

Bereavement Ministry

The purpose of this ministry is to bring comfort to an individual or family in the event of the passing of a loved one. This may be done in several ways.

When notified by the pastor or church office, the deacon will assist the family by providing physical or spiritual needs. Deacons should be prepared to work hand in hand with the pastor and church staff. Examples could be providing meals or snack trays during visitation and funeral. The deacon may also be asked to attend to the family’s home during the funeral to secure it and receive any visitors or gifts of condolences.

The deacon may be called on to provide transportation for a family member. The deacon should also be on hand during the preparation and serving of the funeral meal if the family requests a meal from the church. There is already a committee of ladies who have been providing this service for quite some time. Our job is to assist them in any way we can.

The deacon may be called on to pray with the family members at any moment. When delivering the snack tray to the funeral home the deacon should be prepared to visit with the family and offer our services and prayers.

The deacon should pay close attention to the family members to make sure they are eating and staying healthy and safe. It is very easy to fall into a depressed state and you may be the one who keeps them from falling into depression.

This deacon ministry will report to the active deacon committee at the monthly meeting.
Highland Park First Baptist Church
Deacon Ministry Covenant

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