TRAINING DEACON CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY

AT FIRST CHINESE BAPTIST CHURCH

OF WALNUT, CALIFORNIA

_____

A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

_____

by

Hanley Liu

December 2017

APPROVAL SHEET

TRAINING DEACON CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY

AT FIRST CHINESE BAPTIST CHURCH

OF WALNUT, CALIFORNIA

Hanley Liu

Read and Approved by:

_____
Robert K. Cheong (Faculty Supervisor)

_____
Robert L. Plummer

Date_____

I dedicate this project to my beloved bride and best friend, Meryl—a gift from God and a

constant reminder of Christ's love for his bride—the church.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYB   Anchor Yale Bible

BECNT   Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

ICC   International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and
           New Testaments

NAC   New American Commentary

NICNT   New International Commentary on the New Testament

NIGTC   New International Greek Testament Commentary

NIVAC   New International Version Application Commentary

PNTC   Pillar New Testament Commentary

TNTC   Tyndale New Testament Commentary

WBC   Word Biblical Commentary

ZECNT   Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

PREFACE

God has given me the blessed joy of serving on the pastoral team at First Chinese Baptist Church of Walnut, California (FCBCW). Love for the members and leaders of FCBCW motivated this project on deacon training. Faithful and godly deacons are essential for the health of the local church. God has gifted FCBCW with faithful deacons—many of them have helped to shape my faith in Christ. I am eternally grateful for their constant example of servant leadership. My hope is that the implementation of this project will continue the legacy of these faithful men for generations to come.

With a great sense of awe, I thank God for the opportunity to study at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—an institution with an unwavering commitment to proclaim the gospel and glory of Christ. I am indebted to Robert Cheong, my doctoral supervisor, for his guidance, direction, and investment in my growth as a Christ-follower and pastor. In addition, I am grateful for the professors and support staff in the Applied Theology and Professional Doctoral offices, who have invested in my learning for the past three years; in particular, Coleman Ford helped me sharpen and shape the scope of my initial proposal. As I graduate from Southern Seminary, I leave more equipped and enlivened to serve Christ!

Hanley Liu

Walnut, California

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Just as churches need godly men to fulfill the office of elder, the same is true for the office of deacon. As the early church began to expand, the apostles found themselves overwhelmed by the demands of preaching God's Word. They could not oversee the physical care of the saints in an efficient manner. The solution was the appointment of seven godly men—who were spiritually qualified—to care for the physical needs of the widows (Acts 6:1-6). Eventually, the role occupied by the godly seven became the office of deacon (1 Tim 3:8-13). Spiritually qualified deacons are essential for the health of every local church in every generation. Throughout the past thirty years, God has gifted First Chinese Baptist Church in Walnut, California (FCBCW) with godly deacons; but the growth of the congregation, along with the age of the current deacons revealed the need to train the next generation of deacons at FCBCW.

Context

This ministry project took place in the context of First Chinese Baptist Church (FCBCW) in Walnut, California. Five contributing factors related to the ministry context at FCBCW proved relevant for this project. First, FCBCW is one church composed of three congregations distinguished by language and culture including English, Mandarin Chinese, and Cantonese Chinese congregations. Despite offering worship services in three languages, English is the official operational language used among church leaders and within the infrastructure of the church. Therefore, this ministry project was conducted and implemented in the English language.

Second, FCBCW is congregational in polity. Within the leadership dynamics at FCBCW, the ordained pastors function as the elders of the church and the deacons support the pastors when it comes to major financial decisions, building plans, the calling of staff, and major changes to church policy. Though the majority of the deacons have taught Sunday school at some point, being able to teach was never a requirement for fulfilling their office. Deacons are ordained for life, but are re-elected annually as an affirmation of their qualification for the office. While deacons at FCBCW are not elders, prior to this project, many in the congregation equated the function of a deacon to that of a lay elder. For this reason, in 2011, the pastors and deacons went on a weekend retreat to examine the New Testament teaching regarding elders and deacons. Upon the conclusion of the retreat, the deacons did not see themselves as lay elders, yet they did not feel that FCBCW was ready to establish non-staff elders. While the function of elders and deacons was defined at the leadership level, further clarification was needed for the church at large.

Third, a lack of leadership development existed at the deacon level. At FCBCW, the office of deacon is reserved for men who meet the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Prior to this project, the deacon body was faithful and exemplary, but aging and shorthanded. Six active deacons served a church of eleven hundred people. With the average age of the deacon body being fifty-eight years old, the need to equip future generations of deacons became evident.

Fourth, contributing to the lack of leadership development is the large generational gap that exists within all three of the adult congregations. Two dominant age groups constitute the demography of FCBCW: those in the fifties and those in the twenties. This age gap is most prominent within the English congregation, which encompasses the young adults—who are predominantly English speaking. With the future of the church at stake, intergenerational discipleship needs to occur between the current deacons and younger deacon candidates.

Fifth, each language congregation has a core team of six to eight lead servants, who are carrying out the function of the diaconate, but are not recognized as deacons. Known by title as "church officers," these male and female lead servants are responsible for coordinating the weekly ministries of music, ushering, hospitality, outreach, education, small groups and other services. Church officers are recommended by the pastors and affirmed by congregational vote on an annual basis. Naturally, some of the male officers were identified as deacon candidates, but many in the church remain opposed to establishing female deacons. Even a number of the female officers themselves remain unreceptive to being called a deacon or deaconess and reject the notion of being ordained. While the hope to include female deacons is still beyond the scope of this project, the process of training qualified male officers—as deacons—has begun.

Rationale

Based on contextual factors described above, the rationale for training future deacons at FCBCW became evident. First, because many in the church were confused about the role of deacons, with some viewing them as lay elders, it was essential to clarify the biblical qualifications and practice of the office. Training new deacons created a platform for teaching on the biblical offices of elders and deacons. More importantly, the public and private examination of deacon candidates helped to highlight the importance of the biblical qualifications for the diaconate provided in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Consequently, the training of new deacons reinforced the importance of godly character for all spiritual leaders in the church.

Second, because the existing deacons possessed a better understanding of the diaconate, they were receptive to training the next generation of deacons to reflect the supportive, non-ruling role exemplified by the first appointed deacons in Acts 6:1-6.

Third, because the deacon body was aging and shorthanded, the need for training future deacons became vital. Six aging deacons for a church of eleven hundred

people would be insufficient to sustain future church growth and leadership. In addition, the deacons hold the highest office of lay leadership at FCBCW. By equipping younger deacons, this project took a step towards training the future leaders of the church.

Fourth, because most of the deacon candidates are younger than the current deacons, training new deacons bridged the gap between multiple generations of servant leaders. The older deacons are serving as mentors to the younger deacons, and intergenerational discipleship is now occurring at the highest level of lay leadership, thus serving as an example for the rest of the church.

Fifth, because the deacon candidates were chosen from among the male church officers, this project took a step towards ordaining qualified lead servants who were already functioning as deacons.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train deacon candidates for ministry at First Chinese Baptist Church of Walnut, California.

Goals

The training of the deacon candidates at FCBCW was guided by four goals based upon the biblical qualifications and practice of deacons as mentioned in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. These goals included the following:

1. The first goal was to assess a group of deacon candidates regarding their current knowledge of the qualifications and practice of deacon ministry.

2. The second goal was to develop a curriculum to train the deacon candidates.

3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the deacon candidates by using the developed curriculum.

4. The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan for training and incorporating future deacons, as well as improving the structures of the candidacy process at FCBCW.

The completion of each goal was dependent on a defined means of measurement and a benchmark of success. The research methodology and instruments used to measure the

success of each goal are detailed below.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included a pre-series survey, a post-series survey, and two evaluation rubrics.[1] Four goals determined the effectiveness of the project.

The first goal was to assess a group of deacon candidates regarding their current knowledge of the qualifications and practice of deacon ministry. This goal was measured by administering a Biblical Deacon Qualification and Role Survey (BDQRS) to the candidates.[2] Included in the survey were questions to measure each candidate's understanding of the biblical definition, qualifications, and practice of deacons. This goal was considered successfully met when all of the candidates completed and returned their surveys for pre-series analysis. These analyzed surveys provided a clearer picture of the current understanding possessed by the deacon candidates.

The second goal was to develop curriculum in order to train the deacon candidates. A five-week curriculum was designed to increase the understanding of the biblical definition, qualifications, and practice of deacons. An examination of Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 served as the basis for the curriculum. Though the curriculum was written in English, the content is adaptable for training Mandarin and Cantonese deacon candidates. To measure this goal, an expert panel composed of FCBCW's seven pastors and six current deacons utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[3] This goal was considered

---

[1]All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

[2]See appendix 1.

[3]See appendix 3.

successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent, the curriculum would have been revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the deacon candidates by using the developed curriculum. This goal was measured by administering the BDQRS survey a second time—as a post series survey, which was used to measure the change in content knowledge.[4] This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post survey scores. A t-test for dependent samples compares the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between pre and post-survey results.[5] The t-test is used to ensure that the variations in score are not due to chance, but that actual learning has occurred.[6]

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan for training and incorporating future deacons, as well as, improving the structures of the candidacy process at FCBCW. The plan included dividing the deacon candidates into cohorts to be mentored by one of the current deacons, assigning ministry task to observe the candidates in the practice of the diaconate, and having the current deacons evaluate the readiness of the candidates for deacon ordination. To measure this goal, a panel composed of FCBCW's seven pastors and the six current deacons utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, training elements, and action steps.[7] This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the

---

[4]See appendix 1.

[5]Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 189-91.

[6]Ibid.

[7]See appendix 6.

sufficiency level. If the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent, the plan would have been revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

Definitions and Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Deacons. The term "deacon" is derived from the Greek word διάκονος meaning "servant" or "minister," and designates an officer in a local church.[8] For the purpose of this project, "deacons" refers to a group of male officers in the church; "deacon candidates" are male deacons in training.

Deaconess. Deaconess refers to the female office of the diaconate. In Romans 16:1, Paul commends Phoebe as a "deacon" or "servant" of the church in Cenchreae.[9] It is uncertain whether Phoebe held an office, or if Paul was using "deacon" in a generic sense to commend her acts of service.[10] Though sufficient warrant for female deacons could be presented, this project trained male deacons due to the sensitivities explained in the context section above.

Congregationalism. Congregationalism denotes the exercise of church governance, which affirms the autonomy of local churches wherein the highest human authority is vested in the congregation, not the leadership.[11] Under the form of congregationalism, FCBC Walnut is led by pastors, served by deacons, and governed by the members.

---

[8]Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, eds., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), s.v. "deacon."

[9]Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, eds., *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), s.v. "deaconess."

[10]C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans 9-16,* ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 781; Thomas Schreiner, *Romans,* BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 787. Support for female deacons renders γυναῖκας in 1 Tim 3:11 as "women" and not "wives." For more on this, see Bruce Ware, "Putting It Altogether: A Theology of Church Leadership," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond,* ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2014), 301-3.

[11]John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005), 143.

Two delimitations were set for this project. First, this project was limited to fifteen weeks, which included pre-assessment, curriculum development, curriculum instruction, post-assessment, and developing a strategic plan. The entire deacon candidacy process, which included mentorship and the practice of deacon ministry, extends beyond the fifteen-week limit of this project. Second, this project was conducted in English but designed around biblical foundations that could be translated into Chinese. The effectiveness of this project for the Mandarin and Cantonese congregations will depend on future deacon candidates as they apply the biblical practice of deacon ministry to their respective cultures.

Conclusion

Deacons are a critical component of spiritually healthy churches. As the early church continued to grow, a clear organizational structure began to take shape. Two offices were developed in the New Testament: pastors and deacons. The need to train new deacons for FCBCW was imperative, not only because of the practical need, but to uphold the biblical office.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS
FOR DEACONS

Deacons who exemplify godly character are essential for the health of every local church. The New Testament uses the noun "deacon," which means "servant," to refer to an office of the church in two passages (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13). Reflective of their title, deacons hold the service-oriented office of the church. But within some Baptist or congregational churches, the deacon body operates as a board of directors or a committee of executives. With the influence of business-world ideals, the leadership role of pastors and the serving role of deacons are sometimes blurred, resulting in a confusion of Baptist church polity.[1] Recovering the New Testament office of deacon begins by examining the biblical and theological basis for deacon ministry—which is the aim of this chapter.

The thesis of this chapter is that Scripture prescribes the prototypical model and a clear list of qualifications for deacons, providing a foundation towards a robust deacon ministry for Baptist church polity. Two main passages inform and support our understanding of New Testament deacons: Acts 6:1-6 prescribes the prototypical model for deacon ministry; and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 provides a clear list of qualifications for deacons that distinguish them as exemplary leaders, but not overseers. In addition, Philippians 1:1 supports the notion that deacons hold a distinct office of spiritual leadership.

---

[1]John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005), 196. Clarifying the confusion that pervades the role of deacons within Baptist life is the aim of chap. 3 of this project.

Acts 6 Presents the Prototypical Model for Deacons

The prototypical model for deacon ministry came as the solution to a problem that arose in the early church. An overview of the situation in Acts 6:1-6 will provide the background for the service-oriented role that would later become the office of deacon.

Overview of Acts 6:1-6

The problem in Acts 6:1-2. As the Jerusalem church expanded in numerical growth, a complaint arose from the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews (Acts 6:1). By the term "Hellenist," Luke was referring to Greek-speaking Diaspora Jews living in or around Jerusalem—who attended synagogues where they worshiped in Greek.[2] Stephen is an example of a Diaspora Greek-speaking Jew who had converted to Christ.[3] By the term "Hebrews," Luke was referring to Aramaic-speaking Jews—who attended synagogues where they worshiped in Hebrew.[4] With this understanding, the problem surfacing in Acts 6:1-6 involved two groups within the church that were separated by language and culture.

A complaint arose because the Hellenist widows were "being neglected" in the daily distribution of food, implying in contrast that the Hebrew widows were being cared for (Acts 6:1). Luke highlights the seriousness of the problem with the use of the imperfect tense—"being neglected"—conveying that the neglect had been ongoing for some time.[5] Amplifying the complaint was the sensitive fact that widows were economically and socially vulnerable to begin with.[6]

---

[2]Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing company, 1997), 242.

[3]Ibid.

[4]F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts,* rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 120.

[5]Eckhard Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 330.

[6]David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 234.

The immediate problem—of neglected widows—created a secondary issue that left the Twelve torn between their calling to preach God's Word and the need to oversee the proper distribution of food. A growing congregation needed the ministry of preaching and teaching, and the Twelve could not afford to neglect their calling, in order to "wait on tables." As a result, the apostles summoned the congregation and proposed a resolution (Acts 6:2).

The resolution in Acts 6:3-6. The resolution involved the selection of seven spiritually qualified men to oversee the daily distribution of food for the Hellenist widows—so that the apostles could focus on their calling (Acts 6:3-4). "To wait on tables" entailed more than food service. In one sense, the term "table" could be used as a metaphor for a meal.[7] A table is basic to where food is spread out for service or consumption.[8] Alternatively, "table" could refer to a table used for distributing money.[9] Overseeing the distribution of food would require financial management, which called for a team of trustworthy servants. The qualifications for this important task included being "of good repute" and being "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). More will be said regarding their qualifications later in this chapter. Once put into order, the seven would free up the Twelve to focus on prayer and the ministry God's Word (Acts 6:4). Pleased with the proposed solution, the congregation selected the seven men who met the requirements and presented them to the apostles—who in turn approved and commissioned the seven to care for the needy widows (Acts 6:5-6).

---

[7]John B. Polhill, *Acts,* NAC, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 180.

[8]Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts,* Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 83.

[9]Polhill, *Acts,* 180.

The seven. Though many Jews of that period bore Greek names, the majority of the seven, if not all of them were Hellenistic Diaspora Jews.[10] Most likely, they were recognized as leaders among the Hellenists in the Jerusalem church.[11] It was strategic for the seven to be Hellenists and not Hebrews. Belonging to the offended group, the seven Hellenists would have been especially sensitive to the needs and cultural perceptions of the offended widows, and less vulnerable to criticism, than if they were Hebrews.[12] In addition, their reputation for being "full of the Spirit," entailed that they could be trusted to treat both the Hellenists and Hebrews fairly.[13]

Of the seven, Luke provides the most information concerning Stephen and Philip. Described in Acts 6:5 as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," Stephen appears in Acts 6:8-7:60 as a masterful defender of the faith and the first Christian martyr. Philip is mentioned later in Acts 8 as an evangelist. Nothing more is said about the remaining five within Luke's narrative. The expanded ministries of Stephen and Philip reveal that at least two of the seven functioned beyond their initial service-oriented ministries. Still, within the immediate scope of Acts 6:1-6, the seven met the practical needs of the widows so that preaching could continue through the apostles.

Acts 6:7 entails that the resolution was effective as the Word of God continued to increase, and the church continued to grow. An overview of Acts 6:1-6 undergirds the argument of the next section. The following section will show that though the office of deacon did not formally exist in Acts 6, the official service-oriented ministries of the seven provide a prototypical model for what would later become the office of deacon.

---

[10]Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*: *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 350.

[11]Bruce, *Acts,* 121.

[12]Craig S. Keener, *Acts 3:1-14:28: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 2:1279.

[13]Ibid.

The Prototype for Deacons

  Acts 6:1-6 presents the prototypical model and basis for the office of deacon. While the noun "deacon" (διάκονος) does not occur in Acts 6, the related verb "to serve" (διακονέω) is found in Acts 6:2.[14] Conceding that the noun "deacon" and the office of deacon did not formally exist in Acts 6, four reasons support the argument for viewing the seven as prototypical deacons.

  First, the seven were selected on the criterion of reputable godliness, which reflects the qualifications prescribed for deacons. Second, just as the seven were needed to free up the apostles to focus on preaching and teaching, deacons fulfill the function of freeing up overseers and relieving them of various ministries. Third, the service-oriented responsibilities delegated to the seven are reflective of responsibilities later fulfilled by deacons.[15] Fourth, the formal act of commissioning the seven and setting them apart for service-oriented ministries is probably what led to the creation of deacons as an office.[16] For these reasons, Acts 6:1-6 prescribes the prototypical model for what would later become the office of deacon. Additionally, Irenaeus and Cyprian are among other early church leaders who applied Acts 6:1-6 to the diaconate.[17]

  Some will contend that the later ministries of Stephen and Philip do not reflect the function of a deacon.[18] Throughout Acts, nothing more is said about their administrative duties. As mentioned earlier, Stephen becomes a preacher and public

---

[14]Benjamin L. Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacon* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2008), 238-39; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 227.

[15]Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus,* NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 132.

[16]Darrell L. Bock, *Acts,* BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 262; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible,* Hermenia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2009), 159.

[17]Keener, *Acts 3:1-14:28,* 1272.

[18]Polhill, *Acts,* 182-83; D. Edmond Hiebert, "Behind the Word 'Deacon': A New Testament Study," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140, no. 558 (April 1983): 151-62; C. E. B. Cranfield, "Diakonia in the New Testament," in *The Bible and Christian Life: A Collection of Essays,* ed. C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 84n2.

defender of the faith, and Philip is shown to be an evangelist. Reconciling this tension begins by realizing that no matter how gifted Stephen and Philip were or would become, in Acts 6:1-6, they were chosen to oversee the relief efforts for the widows.[19] Furthermore, the fact that Stephen and Philip were chosen among the seven, reveals that they were not among those who were burdened with the ministry of the Word, at least not in Acts 6:1-6.[20] Finally, nothing in Scripture prevents a deacon—or a prototypical deacon—from being a competent preacher or an effective evangelist.[21]

To summarize, though deacons did not formally exist at the time, the ministry of the seven in Acts 6 present the prototypical model for deacon ministry. In addition, the expanded ministries of Stephen and Philip does not negate the service-oriented responsibilities they held as part of the seven in Acts 6:1-6.

The Prototypical Deacon Requirements
and Responsibilities

Acts 6:2-4 prescribes the prototypical requirements and responsibilities for deacons today. The apostles put forth two requirements for the responsibilities delegated to the seven. The requirements were to be "of good repute" and "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Similar to the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3, the main issue in Acts 6 is character, not special talents or abilities.[22]

The first requirement was to be "of good repute," which refers to having a good reputation within the community.[23] Luke uses the same verb "to be of good repute" to describe Cornelius, who was "well spoken of" by the entire Jewish nation (Acts

---

[19]Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon: The Church's Minister of Mercy* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1992), 50.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles,* 250.

[23]Ibid.

10:22); then of Timothy, who was "well spoken of" by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2); and Ananias, who was "well spoken of" by all the Jews in Damascus (Acts 22:12). For the seven, it was important that they be "well spoken of" and respected by both the Hellenists and the Hebrews.

The second requirement was to be "full of the Spirit and wisdom." Some commentators appear to distinguish "full of the Spirit" and "wisdom" as two separate qualities.[24] Both nouns should be taken together as genitives of content followed by a future tense verb.[25] "Full of the Spirit and wisdom" entails one quality describing Spirit-inspired wisdom. Some hold that by "wisdom," Luke was referring to a natural gift, but it is better to see wisdom in connection with the particular manifestation of the Spirit's presence in the lives of the seven.[26] In this context, to be filled with the Spirit meant their lives were directed by God's Spirit in such a way that demonstrated spiritual sensitivity and the ability to make good judgments—serving as a sign of spiritual maturity.[27] In this sense, Spirit-inspired wisdom would enable the seven to make the best decisions for their given responsibilities.

Regarding the responsibilities of the seven, their character requirements imply that they were more than mere food distributors. Because the seven would administrate the financial allotment given to purchase food, being "of good repute" was essential so that their integrity would not be easily put into question.[28] Along with having trustworthy character, wisdom would entail the knowledge of how to manage funds.[29] Assuring that

---

[24]Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 120-21.

[25]Martin M. Culy and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 109.

[26]Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles,* 233.

[27]Bock, *Acts,* 260.

[28]Bruce, *Acts,* 120-21.

[29]Keener, *Acts 3:1-14:28,* 1276-77.

an appropriate amount of food was purchased, prepared, and distributed on a daily basis implies the following responsibilities: administration, delegation, giving instructions, and financial management. Spirit-inspired wisdom would be necessary to care for the disgruntled widows, which implies the initial ministry of conflict resolution, in light of an ongoing commitment to the ministry of mercy.

The requirements and responsibilities of the seven provide a model for the qualifications and role of a deacon. Acts 6:1-6 is the first direct mention of a group in the early church whose official function was to care for others. Though not identified by any title, the formal appointment of this group, along with their responsibilities are reflective of deacons.[30] Continuing the practice of the seven, deacons today may administrate over the ministries of mercy for the poor, needy, sick, and various services of the church under the leadership of the overseers.[31] Therefore, Acts 6:1-6 does not formally establish the office of deacon, but the prototypical requirements and responsibilities of the later office are clearly implied.

The Prototypical Model for Selecting Deacons

Important to Baptist church polity is the role of the congregation in Acts 6:1-6. The process of selection, presentation, and public confirmation, reveal an early model of congregationalism. A complaint arose from among the Hellenists members and their concern was heard. As a result, the apostles summoned the members of the congregation to present a resolution. Upon affirming the proposed plan, the congregation nominated the seven and presented them to the apostles for confirmation. Where after, the apostles publically confirmed the seven through the laying on of hands and prayer. It should be

---

[30]Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 135.

[31]George W. Knight III, "Two Offices (Elders/Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching/Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders): A New Testament Study," *Presbyterion* 11, no. 1 (1985): 5.

briefly noted that the formal process of ordaining individuals for ministry is a later practice of the church.[32] Even if the formality of ordination did not exist in Acts 6:1-6, the prototypical model for nominating and designating qualified individuals for an important role is clearly presented.

Three distinct groups emerge from the process described above: the Twelve who focused on the Word and prayer; the seven who were designated to care for the widows; and the congregation who nominated the seven. Of the various forms of church polity that exists today, congregationalism best reflects the organizational structure emerging from Acts 6:1-6.[33] The congregation was not only heard, they were given a real part in the decision-making process, while maintaining the leadership role and vested authority of the apostles.[34] Therefore, Acts 6:1-6 presents a healthy prototypical model for selecting deacons within congregational polity.

First Timothy 3 Lists the Qualifications for Deacons

First Timothy 3:8-13 provides the qualifications for the office of deacon that distinguish them as exemplary leaders, but not overseers. With a list of qualifications, Paul conveys the importance of godly character for deacons. Because Paul refers to deacons as officers of the church, they are to be exemplary servant-leaders, but not in the same sense as an overseer (1 Tim 3:8-13; Phil 1:1).

First Timothy 3:8-13 Provides
Qualifications for Deacons

First Timothy 3:8-13 lists the qualifications for the office of deacon. In 1 Timothy 3:8, Paul uses the adverb "likewise" to distinguish deacons from overseers and

---

[32]Bock, *Acts,* 262.

[33]Schnabel, *Acts,* 339.

[34]Ibid.

to compare the two offices.[35] By providing a list that follows immediately after the qualifications for overseers, Paul was distinguishing the diaconate as an exemplary office of servant-leadership; but one that functioned under the guidance and direction of the overseers. Most of the moral qualifications for deacons parallel those given for overseers. Ultimately, the importance of godliness summarizes the qualifications for both offices, with the distinctions having to do with gifts and calling, not character.[36] Paul lists seven qualities for deacons with four corresponding qualities addressed to deaconesses. Whether γυναῖκας in 1 Timothy 3:11 should be rendered as "wives" or "women" will be addressed in this section.

Dignified (1 Tim 3:8). Paul begins with the positive trait of the deacon's respectability. The word translated as "dignified" occurs only four times in the New Testament referring to something that is honorable, respectable, esteemed, or worthy (Phil 4:8; 1 Tim 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2).[37] Parallel to the criterion for overseers to be "respectable" (1 Timothy 3:2), and similar to the requirement for the seven to be "of good repute" (Acts 6:3), deacons must be worthy of respect and well esteemed within the Christian community. Following the requirement to be "dignified," are three prohibitions that require self-control in the areas regarding speech, wine, and financial desire.[38]

Not double-tongued (1 Tim 3:8). The first prohibition addresses the integrity of one's speech. The phrase "not double-tongued," which occurs only here in the New

---

[35]George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing; Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1992), 168.

[36]Merkle, *40 Questions,* 233.

[37]Ibid., 234.

[38]William D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 199.

Testament, carries the idea of duplicity and deceitfulness.[39] Sincerity of speech is necessary for the unity of the church as a whole, making this quality imperative for those who aspire to hold an office.

Not addicted to wine (1 Tim 3:8). The second prohibition addresses the abusive consumption of alcohol. Similar to overseers (1 Tim 3:3), Paul prohibits deacons from the excessive consumption of wine, especially as it leads to drunkenness.[40] Addiction to alcohol is detrimental to the reputation and relationships of any servant of the church. Alcoholism would also impact the harmony of a deacon's family, which correlates to the requirement of managing one's household well (1 Tim 3:12).

Not greedy for dishonest gain (1 Tim 3:8). The third prohibition addresses the issue of financial integrity and motive. The phrase "greedy for dishonest gain" carries a wide range of implications that addressed a serious problem in Ephesus—where Paul's opponents were teaching and ministering for the sake of financial gain (1 Tim 6:5).[41] "Greedy for dishonest gain" can refer to a lack of integrity in handling financial transactions, or in the case of the false teachers, unhealthy financial motives for ministry. Grammatically, "dishonest gain" can be translated as "shameful gain" to include the idea of shame—this correlates with a recurring theme in the Pastoral Epistles of maintaining a reputation that does not bring shame upon the gospel.[42] Similar to the requirement for overseers in 1 Timothy 3:3, deacons must not be characterized or motivated by greed. Both financial integrity and pure motives are necessary for the work of a deacon—whose

---

[39]Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus,* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 262-63.

[40]I. Howard Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 489.

[41]Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles,* 489-90. See also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* 199.

[42]Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus,* 133.

responsibilities may include managing the finances of the church or administrating church funds to the needy.[43]

Holding the mystery of faith with a clear conscience (1 Tim 3:9). Contrary to those who have made a shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim 1:19), or whose consciences are seared (1 Tim 4:2), deacons must hold to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience (1 Tim 3:9). "Mystery" refers to the content of the faith as it pertains to the gospel of salvation in Christ. In his letters, Paul referred to the mystery of faith as the unfolding of God's plan, including God's sovereign work through Israel's history, culminating in the gospel of Jesus Christ being revealed to both Jews and Gentiles for salvation (Rom 11:12; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:1, 7; Eph 1:9; 3:4; Col 1:26; 2:2; 4:3).[44]

Since "mystery" refers to the content of the gospel, the genitive—"of faith"— should be taken appositionally (mystery, which is faith).[45] Thus, "faith" here in 1 Timothy 3:9 refers to the content of faith. By attaching the prepositional phrase, "with a clear conscience," Paul is describing a complete faith that moves beyond mere knowledge.[46] Throughout the Pastoral Epistles, Paul describes both the foundational realities of the gospel and how those realities are to be lived out within the Christian life. Deacons are to possess the content of the Christian faith with a "clear conscience," which connects right belief with right behavior.[47]

Tested first and proven blameless (1 Tim 3:10). Before serving as deacons, the candidates must "be tested" first. Used in the present tense, "be tested" implies testing

---

[43]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* 199.

[44]Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus,* 133; Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 263-64.

[45]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* 200.

[46]Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 264.

[47]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* 201.

over a period of time.[48] Paul does not state the duration or length of the test. It seems that the examination in view is not so much a trial period, as it is the church's observation of one's faith and character over time; so that when the need for deacons arise, these qualified individuals present themselves as obvious candidates.[49] The grounds for examination are the qualifications provided in this passage (1 Tim 3:8-13).[50] Similar to the requirement for overseers in 1 Timothy 3:2, deacon candidates must be proven "blameless." The term "blameless" is synonymous with "above reproach," and carries the sense of upholding faith and godliness, in such a way that no reasonable charge can be brought against the candidate.[51]

Qualifications for female deacons (1 Tim 3:11). In 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul addresses a group of female servants as γυναῖκας, taken from the root word γυνή, it can be rendered as "wives" or "women."[52] It is debated whether Paul was referring to the "wives" of deacons or "women" in reference to female deacons. When Paul wrote to Timothy, the term "deaconess," referring to the feminine form of "deacon," was not yet generated into usage.[53] The view taken in this project is that in 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul was addressing female deacons or deaconesses.

Concerning the view that γυναῖκας should be rendered as "wives," one point of argument should be mentioned. The strongest argument in favor of "wives" is the sudden and abrupt placement of qualifications for women (female deacons) in the course of

---

[48]Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2, Timothy, Titus,* NAC, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 117.

[49]Hiebert, "Behind the Word 'Deacon'," 154.

[50]Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 265.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Merkle, *40 Questions,* 249.

[53]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* 202.

listing qualifications for deacons.[54] It would seem strange for Paul to address deacons, then suddenly interrupt himself to introduce a new office for deaconesses, then return to provide qualifications for a deacon's family thereafter, making 1 Timothy 3:12 seem like an afterthought.[55] For those who support the rendering of "wives," it seems more natural for Paul to address the "wives" of deacons, before transitioning into the marriage and family requirements that follow in the next verse.

Four arguments support the view that Paul was referring to "women" deacons. First, similar to 1 Timothy 3:8, the use of "likewise" followed by a list of qualifications suggests that Paul is introducing a new office.[56] Second, if Paul wanted to indicate the wives of deacons, he could have added the possessive pronoun "their"—in the sense of "their wives."[57] Because the Greek text does not include the possessive pronoun "their," it is best to translate γυναῖκας as "women." Third, the list of qualifications for overseers does not mention an overseer's wife. Being that an overseer holds a higher office of leadership in the church, it seems odd to include qualifications for the wife of a deacon, but not of an overseer.[58] Fourth, in Romans 16:1, Paul commends Phoebe as a "deacon of the church in Cenchreae," most likely referring to her office as a deacon. Though it is possible to understand "deacon" as a general reference to Phoebe's service, the form in which Paul refers to her as "deacon of the church," makes it more natural to take "deacon" as referring to her office.[59] These four reasons support the interpretation of "women" in 1 Timothy 3:11 as referring to deaconesses.

---

[54]Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 265-66n28.

[55]Merkle, *40 Questions,* 254-55.

[56]Merkle, *40 Questions,* 250.

[57]Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 266n28.

[58]Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles,* 493.

[59]Cranfield, "Diakonia in the New Testament," 72-73.

In 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul prescribes four corresponding qualifications for deaconesses. First, corresponding to male deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8, Paul uses the same word, "dignified," to convey that deaconesses need to be worthy of respect. Second, similar to deacons who are not to be "double-tongued" (1 Tim 3:8), deaconesses are not to be "slanderers." The prohibition "not a slanderer" addresses the issue of malicious speech and conversation. Slander was a problem in Ephesus with women going house-to-house and spreading gossip (1 Tim 5:13).[60] Third, corresponding with "not addicted to much wine" (1 Tim 3:8), deaconesses are to be "sober-minded." Sober-minded could refer to self-control concerning alcoholic consumption, or self-control and clear thinking in general.[61] Fourth, corresponding to requirement for deacons to "hold to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience" (1 Tim 3:9), deaconesses are to be "faithful in all things"—which pertains to faithfulness in every arena of life.[62] Faithfulness, as understood in the context of this passage, includes both sound doctrine and godly living.

Faithful in marriage and family life (1 Tim 3:12). Paul's final qualification addresses the important topic of a deacon's marriage and family life. Similar to an overseer (1 Tim 3:2), a deacon—if married—must be faithful in marriage, and known to be "a husband of one wife." A deacon must be faithful to his wife in a monogamous relationship, thus prohibiting the sins of infidelity, polygamy, promiscuity, homosexuality, and any other action that dishonors God or violates the covenant of marriage.[63] A married man who has proven faithful in the covenant of marriage is more likely to inspire trust within the covenant community of the church.[64] Paul is not saying

---

[60]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* 204.

[61]Knight, *Pastoral Epistles,* 172.

[62]Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 229.

[63]Merkle, *40 Questions,* 128.

[64]Ibid.

that deacons cannot be single (1 Cor 7:32-35). Neither is he prohibiting remarriage after the death of one's spouse (1 Cor 7:39). Most likely, Paul was describing the most common scenario of a married man with a family.[65]

Likewise, similar to overseers (1 Tim 3:4), deacons—who are fathers—must be known as models of "managing their children and their own household well." Deacons must be responsible in the home, raising their children and overseeing their household. The point of this requirement is not to raise perfect or problem-free children. Parenting comes with its complexities and challenges, requiring fathers to be more than financial providers. As the spiritual leaders of the home, fathers must be actively involved in training, guiding, disciplining, and helping their children work through the problems of life.[66] Similar to men who are single, Paul is not prohibiting men without children from serving as deacons.

Concluding encouragement (1 Tim 3:13). Paul concludes the section on the qualifications by emphasizing two rewards for serving well as deacons. "To serve well as deacons" entails carrying out the function of the diaconate with excellence.[67] Considering that false teachers were bringing reproach upon the church—it seems best to understand both rewards within an earthly, not heavenly sphere.[68] The first reward, "a good standing," puts the faithful deacon in contrast to the false teachers, who were ruining the reputation of the church. Deacons who serve well bring honor to the Christian community by exemplifying a respectable witness. The second reward, "great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus," can refer to the deepening of one's confidence and relationship

---

[65]Knight, *Pastoral Epistles,* 157.

[66]Strauch, *New Testament Deacon,* 142-43.

[67]Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 267.

[68]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* 205-6.

with Christ, or the boldness to express one's faith in public.[69] The sense of this second

reward is that a godly life and a faithful ministry lead to a healthy expression of

confidence in the Christian faith.

In summary, Paul provides seven qualifications for deacons, four

corresponding qualifications for deaconesses, and a closing exhortation, highlighting the

importance of godliness for those who are appointed to the office of deacon.

**Paul Distinguishes Deacons as
a Type of Leader**

A question naturally arises as to whether or not deacons should be described as

leaders? Deacons are not leaders in the sense of being responsible for the general

oversight of the church.[70] Leadership of the church is clearly the responsibility of the

overseers as implied by their title in 1 Timothy 3:5.[71] Two reasons support the notion that

deacons are to be exemplary servant-leaders that serve under the direction of the

overseers. First, Paul's instructions to Timothy are set against the backdrop of a

leadership crisis at Ephesus, to which Paul responds with a list of qualifications for

overseers and deacons. In this regard, deacons are to model a manner of godliness that is

becoming of spiritual leaders. Second, all believers are to serve the body of Christ, but

Paul demarcates the diaconate as an exemplary office of the church (1 Tim 3:8-13; Phil

1:1). Given their title, deacons are to be exemplary spiritual leaders over the service-

oriented ministries of the church.[72]

---

[69]Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 268; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles,* 206.

[70]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 195.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Merkle, *40 Question,* 240.

First Timothy addresses a leadership crisis. The qualifications provided for deacons are understood within the context of a leadership crisis.[73] In Ephesus, Timothy was to charge certain persons, some who desired to be teachers of the law, not to teach false doctrine (1 Tim 1:3, 7). Also problematic were certain women who desired to teach and exercise authority over men (1 Tim 2:8-11)—some who may have been among the idle house-to-house gossipers (1 Tim 5:13). Charges appear to have been brought against the elders, possibly in regard to questionable character (1 Tim 5:19). Timothy may have found himself in situations that called for the rebuke of an elder, to which Paul cautions him against rebuking an older man harshly (1 Tim 5:1). It is against the backdrop of these leadership challenges, that Paul emphasizes the importance of character qualifications for leaders in the church.[74] The qualifications imply that deacons, like the overseers, are to exemplify a life of godliness that is distinguishable.

Paul designates deacons as an office. First Timothy 3:8 introduces the title "deacons" with the comparative adverb "likewise" followed by a list of qualifications—all of this indicates that a separate office is being presented.[75] In this context, the term "deacons," used in distinction from "overseers," is the technical designation for those who hold the service-oriented office of the church.[76] By providing character qualifications, many that parallel those required of overseers, Paul is distinguishing the deacons as an office of servant-leadership.

Philippians 1:1 supports the notion that deacons held a distinct office of leadership in the early church. In his greeting to the Philippians, Paul addresses the officers of the church, distinguishing overseers and deacons from the rest of the saints at

---

[73]Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy,* 235.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Knight, *Pastoral Epistles,* 166-67.

[76]Ibid.

Philippi. Since all believers are called to serve God, by distinguishing the officers from rest of the congregation, Paul is showing that the overseers and deacons are persons with an official position. The interpretation of Philippians 1:1 taken in this project is that "overseers" and "deacons" are two nouns that address two groups of officers.[77]

Some argue that in Philippians 1:1, Paul is referring to the "overseers and deacons" as one group of "overseers who serve."[78] In this view, the phrase ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις is understood in a functional rather an official sense; thus interpreting διακόνοις as an activity rather than an office.[79] Grammatically, it is unlikely that the καὶ in Philippians 1:1 is epexegetic forming a henidiadys (overseers who serve).[80] Contextually, unless the Philippian church actually recognized the two offices of vested authority, addressing them seems futile. More plausible, is that Paul had particular members of the congregation in view that were actually known by these titles. Given the conflict addressed in Philippians 4:2-3, it is likely that Euodia and Syntyche were among the group of leaders addressed in Paul's greeting.[81]

Given that Paul addresses deacons as an office, it is reasonable to conclude that deacons are to be servant-leaders of the church, yet their role must be distinguished from that of the overseers.

Deacons Are Not Overseers

Godliness and spiritual maturity sum up the requirements for both overseers and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13); but three specific distinctions clarify that deacons do not

---

[77]Knight, "Two Offices," 4.

[78]Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians,* WBC, vol. 43 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 7.

[79]Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 48.

[80]Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians,* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 66n43.

[81]Fee, *Philippians,* 69.

function as overseers. First, deacons need to "hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" (1 Tim 3:9), but being "able to teach" is not a requirement. Though deacons can teach, holding an official position of teaching is not the primary function of a deacon; the official role of teaching falls under the office of overseer.[82] Since teaching is intrinsically connected to leadership, deacons do not lead the church; the overseers do. Second, similar to overseers, deacons are instructed to "manage their households well" (1 Tim 3:12); but unlike the overseers, Paul does not compare managing the home of a deacon to "caring for the church of God" (1 Tim 3:5).[83] One can infer that the reason Paul omits this statement is that deacons do not exercise oversight of the church; the function of oversight belongs to the overseers.[84] Third, because the office of overseer is limited to men, the inclusion of qualifications for female deacons further elucidates the line between deacons and overseers (1 Tim 3:11). From these three distinctions, we conclude that deacons are not to function as overseers. Thus, the line between the two offices should not be blurred.

Conclusion

Scripture prescribes the prototypical model and a clear list of qualifications for deacons, providing a foundation towards a robust deacon ministry for Baptist church polity. Both Acts 6:1-6 (prototypical model for deacons) and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 emphasize the importance of character qualifications; and both passages imply that though their specific roles were not clearly delineated in the New Testament, deacons served the needs of the congregation in a variety of exemplary, yet supportive roles that were distinct from the overseers. Implied from the prototypical model in Acts 6, a few

---

[82]Merkle, *40 Questions,* 238-39.

[83]Ibid., 239.

[84]Ibid.

examples of deacon roles include, but are not limited to: caring for the physical needs of the church, managing the finances of the church, or leading administrative committees. By distinguishing deacons from the rest of the congregation, Paul was demarcating deacons as an office of leadership (1 Tim 3:8; Phil 1:1). However, the qualifications that distinguish overseers from deacons clarifies that deacons are not overseers; and should function under the leadership of overseers.

CHAPTER 3

CLARIFYING THE ROLE OF DEACONS WITHIN
SOUTHERN BAPTIST POLITY

Based on the prototypical model and character qualifications in Scripture, deacons are spiritually mature lead servants who support the pastors by caring for the church in various ways (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13). As lead servants, deacons hold an important office, but their function is different from the overseeing role of pastors. Deacons lead by exemplifying godly character, modeling selfless service, and promoting unity within the church. At times, the ministry responsibilities of pastors and deacons will overlap, but the two offices are distinct and should not be confused.[1]

Because this project focuses on training deacons within a Southern Baptist context, the purpose of this chapter is to identify trends that have contributed the confusion of deacon roles within Baptist polity. By the middle of the twentieth century, two problematic trends became prominent within Southern Baptist deacon life: (1) deacons developed into ruling-executives, operating as the church's board of directors and (2) deacons functioned as business managers, focusing solely on the financial or material matters of the church. While the former confuses the role of deacons by elevating them to the position of a pastor, the latter lowers the biblical office by limiting deacons to the non-spiritual work of the church. Subsequent literature published by Southern Baptist leaders highlight efforts to correct the confusion of deacon roles, but the residual effects are still evident within contemporary models of Baptist polity.

The thesis of this chapter is that contrary to trends within nineteenth-and

---

[1]Phil A. Newton and Matt Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2014), 67.

30

twentieth-century Baptist polity, deacons are to be exemplary lead servants who function under the leadership of pastors. Supporting this thesis are the three main parts of this chapter. In Parts 1 and 2, an ecclesiological and historical overview will clarify that the practice of ruling-deacons is inconsistent with healthy and historic applications of Baptist polity. Part 3 will address practical issue related to clarifying the role of deacons at FCBCW.

Part 1: Clarifying the Role of Deacons within Congregationalism

Most Baptist churches practice the form of church governance known as congregationalism. By definition, congregationalism denotes the exercise of church polity, which affirms the autonomy of local churches wherein the highest human authority is vested in the congregation, not the leadership.[2] Within congregationalism, pastors lead, rather than rule and deacons fulfill the role of lead servants. Because the practice of ruling-deacons is sometimes assumed to be part of the Baptist tradition, it is necessary to begin with a brief clarification of Baptist polity.

Congregationalism Reflects the Biblical Pattern of Governance

Congregationalism is commonly misconceived and placed into a negative light. Some caricature congregationalism as a structure-less form of individualism where every church member functions independent of church leaders, while others equate congregationalism to a direct democracy where every single decision concerning every issue is put to a congregational vote.[3] The main misconception being addressed in this chapter is the false notion that congregationalism is an organizational structure that

---

[2]John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005), 143.

[3]Stephen J. Wellum and Kirk Wellum, "The Biblical and Theological Case for Congregationalism," in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2015), 49.

displaces the leadership role of the pastors and negates the serving role of the deacons.[4] Abuses of congregationalism do exist, but when rightly applied, congregationalism is the form of church governance that most closely resembles the organizational structure of the early church.

The New Testament prescribes a pattern of governance where the congregation held the final earthly authority for matters of the local church. Regarding the discipline and removal of unrepentant members, the congregation served as the final court of appeal (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:2, 9-13). Likewise, the congregation held the responsibility of restoring a repentant believer back into the fellowship of the church (2 Cor 2:6). When it came to selecting the prototypical deacons, the congregation was summoned by the apostles to nominate seven godly men to care for the Hellenistic widows (Acts 6:1-6). As exemplified in these passages, the congregation played an active role in the major decisions of the early church. Not only do these passages show the importance of congregational involvement in making major decisions, they necessitate the commitment of spiritually mature church members. A biblical application of congregationalism does not place any governing responsibility into the hands of immature or unregenerate individuals. On the contrary, congregationalism reinforces the need for pastors to keep watch over the spiritual health of every church member. While the congregation serves as the governing body of the church, congregational rule does not negate the leading or overseeing-role of pastors.

**Congregationalism Supports the
Overseeing Role of Pastors**

Within a healthy form of congregational government, pastors are entrusted with a significant level of spiritual authority.[5] Based on the New Testament pattern of

---

[4]Wellum and Wellum, "The Biblical and Theological Case for Congregationalism," 49.

[5]Hammett, *Biblical Foundations,* 143.

governance shown above, congregationalism holds that pastors are to lead, rather than rule the church. Pastors lead the members of the congregation to make major decisions regarding the local church. Explaining the concept of being pastor-led, rather than pastor-ruled, leads to a set of common questions related to the issues of "elder" terminology, plurality, and distinction of pastor/deacon roles.

"Pastor" and "elder" are interchangeable titles. In Baptist circles, the title "pastor" is commonly used in reference to the biblical office of "overseer" or "elder." Throughout the New Testament, the terms "elder," "overseer," and "pastor" are used interchangeably to refer to the same office of leadership.[6] Why three terms to describe one office? While "elder" stresses the maturity of one's character, "overseer" emphasizes the role of leadership, and "pastor" focuses on the responsibility of feeding, nurturing, and protecting God's flock.[7] Therefore, the terms "elder," "overseer," and "pastor" refer to one office that is responsible for leading, feeding, and guarding God's flock against sin and false doctrine (1 Pet 5:1-3; 1 Tim 5:17; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:2; Acts 20:28).

Based on the interchangeability of titles, the practice of referring to "elders" as "pastors" is biblically acceptable. Some Baptist churches readily use the title of "elder," while others have adopted the hybrid term "pastor-elder." From an exegetical standpoint, clarifying the interchangeability of titles is helpful, but a related question may arise over the number of pastors who actually function as elders. Are churches to be led by a single senior pastor or by a plurality of pastors?

Congregations are to be led by a plurality of pastors. Regarding the number of pastors who fulfill the office of elder, the New Testament reveals that local churches are to be led by a plurality of qualified men. Unless a specific leader is being addressed,

---

[6]Newton and Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church,* 49.

[7]Ibid.

the terms "elder," "overseer," and "pastor" are consistently used in the plural (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17, 28; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1).[8] For example, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (plural) in every church (Acts 14:23). Paul addressed the Ephesian elders (plural) as a group (Acts 20:17, 28). Later, Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders (plural) in every town (Titus 1:5). Clearly, the biblical pattern for church leadership is a plurality of qualified men. Now among these men, does the New Testament leave any room for varying levels of eldership?

The New Testament does not designate a specific office for a senior or lead pastor. At the same time, neither does the New Testament prohibit the idea of setting aside one individual from among the pastors, whose primary role is teaching God's Word, or providing leadership for the team of pastors.[9] However, the authority of this individual is of a collective nature and should be exercised with the counsel of the other pastors. With this understanding, the senior pastor is one of the elders of the church.[10] Some have used the descriptive phrase "first among equals" to designate the pastor who provides leadership for the rest of the group.[11] Regardless of title, it is important to remain consistent with the New Testament practice of shared leadership among a plurality of qualified men. A natural question that follows is whether deacons are qualified to serve among the pastors as fellow elders.

Being "able to teach" distinguishes the role of pastors from deacons.
Chapter 2 explained the qualifications for deacons. Godliness and spiritual maturity sum up the character qualifications for both pastors and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13); but specific

---

[8]Newton and Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church,* 50.

[9]Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 58-59.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1995), 47-50.

to the qualification for a pastor is the ability to teach, because teaching Scripture is intrinsically connected to the leadership role of overseeing the church. Since the church submits to the authority of Scripture, those who lead the church must be able to teach sound doctrine, refute false teaching, and rebuke sin. Deacons can teach, but being "able to teach" is not a requirement for the diaconate. In this sense, pastors can perform all the functions of a deacon, but deacons cannot perform all the functions of a pastor.[12] Therefore, a healthy application of congregationalism upholds the distinction between pastors and deacons. Baptist polity is confused when deacons are elevated to a position of eldership, which is exemplified in unhealthy models of congregationalism.

**Models of Congregationalism where
Deacons function as Elders**

One of the major criticisms against congregational or Baptist polity is when deacons are elevated to a position that is equal to, over, or against the pastors. Since many Southern Baptist churches do not formally use the term "elder," the title of "deacon" is sometimes given to those who are actually operating as non-staff elders.[13] Phil Newton and Matt Schmucker describe the prevailing problem of deacons who function as overseers:

> In a congregational setting, power often resides in a board of deacons. They are usually nominated at-large, are approved by the congregation, and can serve either limited or unlimited terms. In many churches, deacons are nominated based on popularity or visibility within the church, rather than the basis of the qualifications stated in 1 Timothy 3. Moreover, the deacons—whose biblical role should be one of service to the congregation—are put into the role of ruling the church. In such circumstances, power struggles often emerge between the pastor and the deacons.[14]

Newton and Schmucker's description is an accurate depiction of the leadership dynamic

---

[12]Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon: The Church's Minister of Mercy* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1992), 78.

[13]Mark Dever, *A Display of God's Glory: Basics of Church Structure, Deacons, Elders, Congregationalism & Membership* (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 38.

[14]Newton and Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church,* 165-66.

in many Southern Baptist churches. Congregationalism becomes confused and unhealthy when deacons assume the function of an elder. Three problematic models of congregationalism will be highlighted below, where in each example the deacons are operating as elders.

A plural eldership composed of pastor(s) and deacons. Within this first model, the deacons and pastor(s) function as a plurality of elders.[15] In smaller churches with a single pastor, deacons might take on various pastoral roles such as preaching, shepherding, and exercising oversight.[16] In contexts where qualified elders are serving under the title of "deacon," the church can clarify the confusion by changing the title of these deacons to reflect their actual function as elders.[17] A change of title may require the pastor to teach on the biblical validity of having unpaid pastors/elders. Another variation of this first model is seen in churches where the pastoral staff and deacon body meet together to make decisions, thus composing a plural eldership. While this first model might simply represent a confusion of title and function, the next model exemplifies the widespread problem of the power struggle between pastors and deacons.

Deacons seeking to maintain a "balance-of-power." Within this second model, deacons operate like a secondary legislative body, providing "checks and balances" against the authority of the senior pastor or pastoral staff.[18] In practice, the pastors and deacons operate as two equal bodies of leadership that are elected by the

---

[15]Wayne Grudem, *An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 932.

[16]Phil Newton, "Moving from a Deacon-Led to an Elder-Led Church," *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 19, accessed July 10, 2015, https://9marks.org/article/moving-deacon-led-elder-led-church/.

[17]Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 932.

[18]Andrew Davis, "Practical Issues in Deacon Ministry," in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2015), 325.

congregation. Typically, the pastors are seen as the paid professionals, while the deacons are viewed as the elected officials who represent the voice of the laity. In this scenario, it is not entirely clear who actually occupies of the office of elder.

The need for effective communication and accountability between pastors and deacons is undeniable. Pastors should communicate their ministry ideas with deacons and expect trustworthy feedback. Deacons should feel comfortable speaking into the life of a pastor and vice versa. But a lack of trust is conveyed when deacons see a need to provide "checks and balances" for pastoral decisions. More importantly, the New Testament does not organize pastors and deacons into two legislative bodies designed to maintain a balance of power.[19]

Though significant progress has been made in addressing this faulty leadership structure, recent publications by Baptist leaders indicate that the "balance-of-power" model is still problematic among Baptist churches today. In 2001, when commenting on the role of the prototypical deacons in Acts 6, Mark Dever used the following illustration that gives insight into the current issue: "deacons were not a second house of legislature, through which bills needed to be passed."[20] As recently as 2015, Andrew Davis commented on the power struggle between pastors and deacons within Baptist churches:

> In mainstream Baptist polity, deacons have held a position somewhere between simple servants in the church and a power bloc acting as a "check and balance" against the authority of the senior pastor.[21]

While the "balance-of-power" structure exemplifies the two offices functioning against each other, the next example reflects deacons ruling—in authority—over the pastors.

---

[19]Matt Schmucker, "The Committee-Free, Task-Specific Deacon," *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 16, accessed July 10, 2015, https://9marks.org/article/committee-free-task-specific-deacon/.

[20]Dever, *A Display of God's Glory,* 12.

[21]Davis, "Practical Issues in Deacon Ministry," 325.

Deacons operate as the hiring board. A third model is less common, but significant enough to be listed as an organizational structure in academic surveys of church polity.[22] Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology,* refers to this model as the "corporate board" form of congregationalism.[23] Within this governing model, the senior pastor and his staff are practically employed and controlled by the deacon board. Patterned after the organizational leadership of modern corporations, the deacons serve as a board of directors, hiring a senior pastor to be the chief executive officer (CEO) of the church.[24] Being placed in an executive position, the deacons treat the pastors as hired staff, rather than the elders of the church. Similar to a secular business board, the deacons can hire and fire the senior pastor or his staff.[25] When the deacon board controls the pastoral staff, the fear of losing their jobs may prevent pastors from exercising spiritual leadership.[26]

These examples show how the leadership role of pastors and the serving role of deacons are confused when deacons are elevated to a position of eldership. But where did these problematic practices come from? A historical overview of Southern Baptist deacon life will identify and clarify the source of these problematic trends.

Part 2: Clarifying the Role of Deacons in Southern Baptist History

The confusion over deacon roles today is the result of problematic trends that became prominent during the twentieth century. Many leading voices have contributed to the historical development of Southern Baptist deacon life. Given the purpose of

---

[22]Michael J. Anthony, *Effective Church Board: A Handbook for Mentoring and Training Servant Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 106.

[23]Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 935.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Anthony, *Effective Church Board,* 106.

[26]Ibid., 107.

providing an overview of issues, the following section will highlight the most significant

trends, movements, contributors, and publications within each major time period.

**Early Baptist Deacons as Table Servants
(1600s-1700s)**

Early English Baptist confessions, such as the 1611 Short Confession of John

Smyth, described the main role of deacons as caring for the sick and poor.[27] In America,

deacons played a significant role in Baptist churches since the early seventeenth

century.[28] The 1774 Charleston Confession of Faith reveals that Baptists in early America

understood deacons to be table-servers.[29] Based on the task assigned to the prototypical

deacons in Acts 6:2, Baptist deacons served three tables.[30] First, deacons gave attention to

the table of the Lord by assisting the pastors in the Lord's Supper—they assured the

furniture (communion table) and elements were prepared.[31] Deacons also helped with the

distribution of the elements, but the pastors administered the Lord's Supper itself.[32]

Second, deacons tended to the table of the poor by providing ministries of mercy for the

needy. Third, deacons provided for the table of the minister by looking after the financial

needs of the pastor—a responsibility that would extend to managing the financial affairs

of the church.[33] In addition, early Baptist deacons assisted the pastors in matters of

---

[27]Hammett, *Biblical Foundations,* 194.

[28]Charles W. Deweese, "Ministries of Baptist Deacons in Early America," in *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service* (Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, 1990), 3.

[29]James Leo Garrett Jr., "The Congregation-Led Church: Congregational Polity," in *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity,* ed. Daniel L. Akin, Chad Brand, and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 188; Deweese, "Ministries of Baptist Deacons in Early America," 11.

[30]Hammett, *Biblical Foundations,* 194.

[31]Ibid., 194-95.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., 195.

church discipline, which included settling disputes between church members.[34] From

1770 and onward, the role of deacons began to shift beyond serving tables towards

church management and administration.[35]

From Table Servants to Business Boards
(1800s-1950s)

For the next century and a half, Baptist churches debated over two contrasting

views of deacon ministry. On one end of the spectrum, deacons continued to focus on

assisting in the Lord's Supper, caring for the poor, and supporting the pastor; while on

the other end, deacons began evolving into a board of directors or business managers of

the church.[36] A dichotomy was being drawn between the spiritual ministry of pastors and

the material (church business) management of deacons.

Deacons operated as an executive board. How did the board of directors and

business manager concepts emerge? During the nineteenth century, business decisions

were often discussed over meals that were served on a wooden or board table.[37] Soon the

term "board" began to define groups that met for the purpose of decision-making.[38]

Because deacons met to discuss the financial matters of the church, the popular "board"

concept was transferred to them.[39] Deacons began to take on the description of being a

"deacon board" as early as the 1840s.[40] While many advocated the board of directors

---

[34]Charles W. Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1979), 42. See also, Deweese, "Ministries of Baptist Deacons in Early America," 3.

[35]Deweese, "Ministries of Baptist Deacons in Early America," 12.

[36]John Loftis, "The Emerging Identity of Deacons, 1800-1950," in *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service* (Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, 1990), 15.

[37]Howard B. Foshee, *The Ministry of the Deacon* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1968), 32.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., 32-33.

[40]Deweese, *Emerging Role of Deacons,* 41.

model, two Southern Baptist leaders published works that accentuated the trend: R. B. C. Howell and J. M. Pendleton.

In 1846, R. B. C. Howell wrote *The Deaconship*—a work that shaped the trajectory of Baptist deacons towards the board of directors model.[41] Coming from among the first class of urban ministerial professionals, Howell's understanding of deacon ministry was consistent with the professional managerial model emerging during the middle of the nineteenth century.[42] These urban ministers often emulated their professional peers in education, salaries, and positions in community organizations.[43] While surveying the role of deacons within the various denominations of his era, Howell described deacons in Baptist churches as a board of directors, taking charge over the "secular affairs in the kingdom of Christ."[44] Howell then prescribed his own view of deacons, which clearly included the executive board concept:

> Deacons, in their own peculiar department are, as we have said, a board of officers, or the executive board of the church, for her temporal department, it is necessary that they hold stated and frequent meetings of their own body in that capacity, prepare to prosecute their duties in concert, and with the best advice.[45]

In 1851, Howell became the second president of the Southern Baptist Convention, making his view on deacons pervasive throughout the nineteenth century.[46]

In 1867, J. M. Pendleton published his widely circulated *Baptist Church Manual,* where he emphasized the service of deacons as committee members, treasurers and trustees of local churches.[47] Based on Acts 6:3-4, Pendleton drew a dividing line

---

[41]Foshee, *Ministry of the Deacon,* 35.

[42]Loftis, "Emerging Identity," 16.

[43]Ibid.

[44]R. B. C. Howell, *The Deaconship* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1846), 17-18.

[45]Howell, *Deaconship,* 122-23.

[46]Loftis, "Emerging Identity," 16.

[47]Deweese, *Emerging Role of Deacons,* 44; J. M. Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual,* rev. ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), 35, 39-40.

between the spiritual role of pastors and the business role of deacons.[48] As an important

leader of the Landmark movement, Pendleton's manual made a significant impact on

Southern Baptist life.[49] By the end of the nineteenth century, the work of deacons shifted

heavily towards business management.

Deacons served on business boards and as financial managers. Leading

into the twentieth century, management of business and financial affairs defined the

ministry of most Baptist deacons.[50] With the board of directors concept popularized, the

distinction between pastors and deacons became confused and many deacon boards

practiced something close to elder rule.[51]

In 1929, P. E. Burroughs, wrote *Honoring the Deaconship,* where he followed

the basic philosophy of Howell and Pendleton. Though Burroughs wrote against deacons

serving as ruling-elders, he assigned deacons to the business affairs of the church and

consequently reinforced the executive board concept.[52] Describing the role of deacons,

Burroughs wrote, "The business of the church and its finances constitutes the special and

distinct assignment of the deacons."[53] More specifically, Burroughs relegated the role of

a deacon to managing the church property, parsonage, and other material holdings of the

church.[54] Whereas Pendleton drew the dividing line between the spiritual work of pastors

and the material work of deacons, Burroughs solidified this unhealthy dichotomy.[55] For

---

[48]Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual,* 31.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Hammett, *Biblical Foundations,* 196.

[51]Ibid., 196-97.

[52]P. E. Burroughs, *Honoring the Deaconship* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929), 23; Foshee, *Ministry of the Deacon,* 35.

[53]Burroughs, *Honoring the Deaconship,* 69.

[54]Ibid., 21.

[55]Ibid.

the next twenty-seven years (1929-1956), *Honoring the Deaconship* became the standard work for deacons within Baptist churches.[56]

Surely, the ideas of Howell, Pendleton, and Burroughs did not go unchallenged. As early as the late 1800s, prominent Baptists were already opposing both the executive board concept, as well as the practice of confining deacons to the secular affairs of the church.[57] Yet a significant shift did not occur until the 1950s.

Away from Management Toward Ministry (1950s-1990s)

Beginning in the 1950s, several Southern Baptist leaders published important works, calling deacons to move away from management towards ministry.[58] The first of these was the work of Robert Naylor, which was largely transitional in viewing deacons as both managers and ministers.

Deacons-in-transition served as managers and ministers. In 1955, Robert Naylor wrote *The Baptist Deacon,* where he called deacons to involve themselves in servant ministries such as caring for the poor. Commenting on the confusion over the role of deacons within Baptist circles of his time, Naylor stated, "In many places the office and service of deacons is ill defined and little understood. The average Baptist would have the haziest kind of idea about what a deacon ought to do."[59] Specific to the problem of deacons operating as an executive board, Naylor wrote the following:

> There are churches where deacons have appropriated to themselves authority which is contrary to New Testament teaching. It may have gone so far that "bossism" has

---

[56]Robert Sheffield, *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons,* ed. Gary Hardin (Nashville: Convention Press, 1990), 23.

[57]Deweese, *Emerging Role of Deacons,* 47.

[58]Bill Stancil, "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends in Deacon Life," in *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service* (Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, 1990), 22.

[59]Robert Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), 2.

developed. There is a "board" complex and a general feeling that deacons are "directors" of the church. Nothing could be farther from the Baptist genius or the New Testament plan.[60]

Despite speaking against the board of directors model, Naylor's book was transitional as he continued to maintain the management/ministry tension.[61] Positively, by refocusing on servant ministries, Naylor pointed deacons in the right direction. Negatively, he continued to describe deacons as business managers. While discussing the importance of deacons, Naylor affirmed that deacons should have certain secular qualifications, representing the best of human leadership—even alluding to the prototypical deacons in Acts 6 as "businessmen."[62] In explaining the benefits of placing the business affairs of the church in the hands of deacons, Naylor mentioned the following:

> Within the deacons, churches usually have their most able men in financial and business judgment. Here are many men who themselves are owners of property or are familiar with economic conditions. By the nature of their lives, they are peculiarly equipped to care for the church business.[63]

The benefits of including—among spiritually qualified deacons—those with a good sense for business, finance, or secular management is undeniable. Spiritually qualified deacons may include successful businessmen, but not all successful businessmen are spiritually qualified to be deacons. Given the trend Naylor was trying to reverse, his employment of business terminology and his emphasis on business qualifications sent mixed signals to his readers.[64] Subsequent Southern Baptist authors would break the management/ministry tension, shifting the focus of deacons towards servant ministry.[65]

---

[60]Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon,* 3.

[61]Stancil, "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends," 22.

[62]Naylor, *The Baptist Deacon,* 20.

[63]Ibid.*,* 89.

[64]Henry Webb, *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church,* updated ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 67.

[65]Stancil, "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends," 22.

Deacons served along side of pastors as ministry partners. In 1968, Howard

Foshee published *The Ministry of the Deacon*, which made a significant impact on

recovering the biblical role of deacons as servants.[66] Not only did Foshee challenge the

executive board concept, he argued against defining deacons as the business managers of

the church.[67] To identify whether deacons are operating as a board of directors, Foshee

listed three indicators that are paraphrased here: (1) when all major recommendations

from various committees are screened by the deacons before being presented to the

congregation, (2) when the pastoral staff members are directly accountable to the deacons

rather than the congregation, and (3) when the use of major church resources, facilities,

and finances require approval by the deacons.[68] As to whether deacons are operating as

business managers, Foshee provided four indicators that are paraphrased as follows: (1)

when deacon responsibilities are defined by business matters alone, (2) when deacons

approach church work as a business operation, (3) when deacons are viewed as the

decision makers in the secular affairs, and (4) when business efficiency becomes the

defining factor for a deacon's work.[69] In contrast, Foshee interpreted the biblical work of

a deacon to include: proclaiming the gospel, caring for the members of the church and

community, and leading the church towards achieving its mission.[70]

In 1972, following Foshee's *The Ministry of a Deacon*, the Sunday School

Board of the Southern Baptist Convention introduced the Deacon Family Ministry Plan.[71]

The plan divided church members into family units, with each deacon assigned to care

---

[66]Webb, *Deacons,* 67.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Foshee, *Ministry of the Deacon,* 34.

[69]Ibid*.,* 35-36.

[70]Ibid*.,* 40.

[71]Deweese, *Emerging Role of Deacons,* 55-56; Howard B. Foshee, *The Deacon Family Ministry Plan Resource Book* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1969).

for a certain number of families.[72] Additionally, the plan helped deacons develop a visitation ministry, where deacons would share the gospel with each family, care for them, help them fulfill their role as church members, and guide each family towards cultivating community relationships.[73] Research done in 1990 showed that one-third of Southern Baptist churches had adopted the Deacon Family Ministry Plan.[74]

Deacons fulfilled various roles as model servants. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the writings of Charles Deweese, Henry Webb, and Robert Sheffield continued to drive the momentum of Southern Baptist deacon life towards servant-ministry. Deacons began to expand their roles to meet various ministry needs, serving in a variety of non-ruling roles as model servants for the church.

In 1979, Charles Deweese wrote *The Emerging Role of Deacons,* in which, after surveying deacon history, Deweese expanded the role of deacons to include many possible areas of ministry. Examples of potential ministries included visitation, counseling, organization, administration, assisting in the Lord's Supper, teaching, and meeting the basic needs of the pastors.[75] By listing such a wide variety of ministries, Deweese has been criticized for blurring the distinct purpose of the diaconate.[76] However, when read against the backdrop of Deweese's historical survey, it seems his purpose was to avoid limiting the role of deacons to financial management or secular affairs. For in freeing up pastors to focus on the ministry of the Word, deacons would naturally tend to a wider scope of non-ruling ministries.

In 1980, Henry Webb wrote *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church.*

---

[72]Deweese, *Emerging Role of Deacons,* 56.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Hammett, *Biblical Foundations,* 197.

[75]Deweese, *Emerging Role of Deacons,* 62.

[76]Strauch, *New Testament Deacon,* 10.

Reflective of its title, Webb continued to champion the recovery of deacons as lead servants.[77] Later works note the effectiveness of Webb's contribution to recovering the ministry-oriented role for deacons.[78] Updated in 2001 and still in print today, Webb's book has served as a helpful resource for training deacons in Southern Baptist churches.

A decade later, in 1990, Robert Sheffield wrote *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons*. Purposed to serve as the updated replacement of Foshee's earlier work—*The Ministry of a Deacon*—Sheffield gave attention to the significant changes that developed over the course of two decades.[79] By the early 1990s, Southern Baptist deacon life had taken a new shape. Rather than serving exclusively in areas of business management, or becoming assistants to fulfill meaningless tasks, deacons saw themselves as ministry partners.[80] In healthier churches, deacons did not replace or displace the role of pastors, but rather co-labored with the pastors in spiritual ministry.[81] The management/ministry tension had improved significantly among Southern Baptist deacon life. However, at several points, Sheffield alluded to the ongoing problem of deacons functioning under the executive board paradigm, even into the late twentieth century.[82] In this sense, Sheffield's work exhibited the residual effects of earlier trends that had been ingrained within the tradition of many Southern Baptist churches.

When training deacon candidates in a traditional Southern Baptist church, the historical overview clarifies that the executive board and management paradigms, often caricatured of Baptist deacons, are not inline with early Baptist tradition. Rather, the

---

[77]Webb, *Deacons,* 67.

[78]Howard B. Foshee, foreword to *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons,* by Robert Sheffield, ed. Gary Hardin (Nashville: Convention Press, 1990), 5; Sheffield, *Ministry of Baptist Deacons,* 7, 24.

[79]Foshee, foreword to *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons,* 4-5.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Sheffield, *Ministry of Baptist Deacons,* 12, 16, 26-27, 29.

confusion over deacon roles resulted from problematic trends that subsequent generations have tried to correct. Now Part 3 will focus on the practical issues related to clarifying the role of deacons at FCBCW.

Part 3: Clarifying the Role of Deacons at FCBCW

For successful Baptist church polity, deacons must be exemplary lead servants who function under the leadership of pastors. As FCBCW seeks to train deacon candidates, three factors relate to the role of deacons. First, the process of formally recognizing the functional diaconate is one step in the right direction. Second, including female deacons in the future will further clarify that deacons are not elders. Third, transitioning the existing deacons to a pure diaconal role must be done with sensitivity, along with the emphasis that deacons are still leaders of a different kind.

Formally Recognizing the Functional
Diaconate at FCBCW

Many churches have lead servants who function as deacons without the formal diaconal title. As mentioned in chapter 1, each language congregation at FCBCW has a core team of six to eight lead servants, known as "church officers." These officers are responsible for coordinating the weekly ministries of music, ushering, hospitality, outreach, education, small groups, and other services. Not only do they organize their respective areas of ministry, they also care for the volunteers who serve in their department. Church officers are recommended by the pastors and affirmed by congregational vote on an annual basis. Because the church officers are not recognized as deacons, it is easy for the congregation to view the six ordained deacons as standing one tier above the officers on the volunteer ladder. Thus, the failure to formally recognize the functional diaconate with their proper title only perpetuates the view that deacons are lay elders.

Some of the qualified male officers were easily identified as deacon

48

candidates, beginning the process of formally recognizing the functional diaconate at
FCBCW. Among the church officers are faithful women who fulfill the role of a
deaconess. However, opposition to female deacons remains a barrier to officially
including women among the diaconate. Each time FCBCW ordains a new set of deacons,
the pastors can teach on the biblical warrant for female deacons. If FCBCW can
successfully establish the office of deacon to include female lead servants, this alone will
maintain the distinction that deacons are not elders.

Including Females Deacons Distinguishes
Deacons from Elders

Biblical support for female deacons was presented in chapter 2, where it was
argued that in 1 Timothy 3:11, Paul was contextually referring to "women" deacons,
rather than the "wives" of deacons; and in Romans 16:1, Paul was addressing Phoebe's
office as a deacon, rather than making a general commendation of her service. Two
reasons support the inclusion of female deacons—for the purpose of maintaining the
distinction that deacons are not elders. First, the diaconate is a non-ruling, service-
oriented office. Second, female deacons have existed throughout Southern Baptist
history.

The diaconate is a non-ruling, service-oriented office. Based on a biblical
understanding of eldership, most Southern Baptist churches will not ordain women to the
office of elder. With the biblical clarity that the pastors represent the plural eldership of
the church, one way to maintain the clear distinction between elders and deacons—as
already stated—is to include female deacons. If men and women are equal within the
diaconate, then the mere existence of female lead servants serves as a distinguishing
marker between the two offices. Opposition to female deacons is understandable in
churches where deacons continue to operate as a board of directors or as business
managers. But with the proper understanding that deacons are not elders, along with the

49

clarification that deacons are not to rule the church, it is difficult to see why qualified women should be prohibited from holding the service-oriented office of deacon.

Female deacons have existed throughout Baptist history. Similar to the false assumption that ruling-deacons are part of Baptist tradition, some assume that Baptist churches allow for only male deacons. Though controversial, female deacons have existed throughout Baptist history. In 1609, John Smyth called for the ordination of deacons both men and women.[83] Thomas Helwys, who authored the first English Baptist confession of faith in 1611, wrote in the confession that church officers should include "deacons men, and women."[84] Throughout Southern Baptist history, churches made a distinction between "women deacons" and "deaconesses."[85] Whereas "women deacons" were mostly ordained and viewed as being equal to male deacons in their privileges and responsibilities, "deaconesses" were typically not ordained, viewed as subordinates to male deacons, and ministered primarily to women and children.[86] The greater controversy has less to do with title and more to do with whether women should be ordained to an office of the church.[87]

Since the 1950s, more churches began to ordain female deacons, whether they were called "deaconesses" or simply "deacons." Several factors can be accounted for this change: the emphasis on gender equality in society at large, the shift from the board-management paradigm to the service-oriented role of deacons, and the existence of female deacons in other evangelical denominations.[88] Today, whether ordained or not,

---

[83]Charles W. Deweese, "Baptist Women Deacons and Deaconesses: Key Developments and Trends, 1609-2005," *Baptist History And Heritage* 40, no. 3 (September 2005): 69.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid., 68.

[86]Stancil, "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends," 25; Deweese, "Baptist Women Deacons and Deaconesses," 68; Deweese, *Emerging Role of Deacons,* 58.

[87]Deweese, "Baptist Women Deacons and Deaconesses," 75-77.

[88]Ibid.

women are more readily included among deacon bodies, because churches recognize the incredible array of gifts and insight that women bring to the service-oriented role of a deacon.[89]

For FCBCW, the future hope is to include females among the diaconate, regardless of whether they are called deacons or deaconesses. Whether FCBCW will ever be open to the ordination of female deacons remains a sensitive issue for the indefinite future. For now, the more immediate issue relates to the process of transitioning the role of the six current deacons, who have held their positions for decades. Once the male deacon candidates are ordained, the challenge will be transitioning these existing deacons into a pure diaconal role.

Transitioning the Existing Deacons to a Pure Diaconal Role

As stated in chapter 1, the deacons at FCBCW are not elders, but many in the congregation view their function as that of lay elders. The deacons do not exercise rule against or over the pastors, but with only six deacons, they are often included when discussing major decisions regarding finances, building plans, the calling of staff, or changes to church policy. Naturally, this leadership dynamic will quickly change as the number of deacons increase over time. Hypothetically, if all of the church officers were immediately identified as members of the diaconate, FCBCW would have approximately thirty deacons. It would be difficult for the six current deacons to continue meeting with the pastors—to discuss major decisions—without creating two tiers of deacons. Being left out of the decision-making process, the existing deacons may feel as if they have been demoted. Transitioning the current deacons into a pure diaconal role will require sensitivity and the emphasis that deacons are still leaders.

---

[89]Deweese, "Baptist Women Deacons and Deaconesses," 67, 78.

Emphasize the importance of deacons as a type of leader. Over the course of Southern Baptist history, some have overreacted to the board of directors model by demoting deacons to positions of little or no importance. Whereas some churches elevated deacons to the position of executive board members, others have reduced deacons to building managers, glorified janitors, or sanctified grounds keepers.[90] One writer notes that in the shift from management to ministry, the important role of deacons as leaders may have been neglected.[91]

How does a church seemingly lower the position of a deacon, if the executive board concept is deeply ingrained into the leadership culture of that church? When deacons are accustomed to operating as the decision-making board of a church, transitioning to a servant role of leadership can be a difficult paradigm shift. The existing deacons may mentally concede to the biblical passages concerning their role, yet feel as if they are vacating a prominent position of leadership. Efforts to recover the biblical distinction between pastors and deacons must be pursued without demeaning the office of deacon.

Deacons are by virtue of their office spiritual leaders of the church.[92] Pastors desiring to transition deacons towards service-oriented leadership must continually emphasize the important, distinct, and indispensable role that God ordained for deacons. One tangible way to display the important role of deacons is to involve them in the distribution of communion elements. Thabiti Anyabwile describes the indispensable nature of deacons, including their role in the Lord's Supper and their contribution to the advancement of the gospel:

The Lord has not established the office of deacon as an extra to the church. The

---

[90]Strauch, *New Testament Deacon,* 10.

[91]Stancil, "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends," 24.

[92]Gerald P. Cowan, *Who Rules The Church? Examining Congregational Leadership and Church Government* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 116.

office does not exist as some obsolete appendage. Rather, deacons serve the table of the Lord in order to facilitate the advance of the gospel, the health of the body, and the rejoicing of the saints. Deacons are indispensable in the Christian church.[93]

For FCBCW, the important role of a lead servant must be emphasized in such a way that the six current deacons, who have been recognized as spiritual leaders for more than two-decades, will not feel like they are being asked to vacate a seat of honor. In order to achieve a healthy transition, the current deacons should provide mentorship and support for future deacon candidates. With this emphasis, the current deacons are still upheld as leaders, but they will exercise a mentoring form of leadership. Not only is it important to emphasize the role of deacons as a type of leader, but also to clarify the style of leadership deacons are to exercise.

Clarify the style of leadership that deacons exercise. Deacons are a type of leader, but the style of leadership they exercise is different from the overseeing role of pastors. Rather than leading the church through preaching, teaching, or church-wide oversight, deacons lead by organizing the service-oriented ministries of the church. For deacons, their value to the local church is in their service.[94] Leadership is commonly conceived as being positioned over or ahead of others. But servant-leadership is exemplified by lowering one's position to serve, coming along side of others to support, or putting others ahead by standing behind them. Therefore, the service-oriented office of deacon is no less important than the office of pastor. To remain healthy and vibrant, local churches and their pastors need faithful deacons.

Conclusion

To summarize, an unhealthy application of congregational polity has confused the role of deacons in many Southern Baptist churches. Early Baptist deacons functioned

---

[93]Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Finiding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 43.

[94]Cowan, *Who Rules the Church?,* 116.

closer to the biblical model. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the executive board paradigm was transferred into Southern Baptist churches, resulting in deacons operating like board of ruling-executives.[95] Consequently, the leadership role of the pastors and the serving role of deacons were blurred.[96] By the middle of the twentieth century, the board of directors model became prominent within Southern Baptist churches. Another trend that became problematic in the twentieth century was limiting deacons solely to the management of church finances. A survey of later twentieth-century literature highlights various attempts to correct both the board of directors and the business manager paradigms. But only in the past fifty years has there been a shift in the role of deacons—moving away from management and towards ministry.

Conclusively, the Baptist caricature of deacons functioning as a board of directors or business managers is not aligned with healthy Baptist polity. When training deacons in churches where the biblical roles have been confused, the historical overview supports the biblical foundations by showing that these practices are not inline with early Baptist polity. Many of the contemporary board-models of deacon leadership display the residual effects of the earlier trends—making the recovery the biblical diaconate a continual issue among Southern Baptists.

For successful Baptist polity, deacons must not be elevated to a position that is equal to, against, or over the leading role of pastors. At the same time, it should be emphasized that deacons are important and dignified lead servants. Therefore, contrary to trends within nineteenth-and twentieth-century Baptist polity, deacons must be lead servants who function under the leadership of pastors.

For FCBCW, the first steps towards recovering the biblical diaconate will be training deacon candidates according to their biblical qualifications and roles. Formally

---

[95]Foshee, *Ministry of the Deacon,* 33.

[96]Hammett, *Biblical Foundations,* 196.

recognizing the male church officers—who are already functioning as deacons—is merely the beginning. Through patient preaching and teaching, the future hope of including female deacons will be driven by the need to maintain the clear distinction that deacons are not elders. Finally, transitioning the existing deacons to a purely diaconal role must be done with sensitivity and the emphasis that deacons are still leaders, but their style of leadership is different from the overseeing role of pastors.

CHAPTER 4

THE DEACON TRAINING PROJECT

Having laid the foundation for training deacons in the first three chapters, this current chapter describes the preparation, implementation, and follow-up periods where twelve deacon candidates were formally trained for ministry. A seven-week preparation period involved the assessment of each candidate, curriculum development, and approval of the curriculum by an expert panel. At the heart of the project was the implementation period that followed, where the approved curriculum was delivered through a five-week training series. Then a three-week follow-up period consisted of analyzing the data from the pre and post-series surveys, as well as developing a deacon candidacy plan for FCBCW. In total, the entire project took place over the course of fifteen weeks.

Preparation for Deacon Training (Weeks 1-7)

In spring 2017, a total of twelve candidates from the English congregation were trained for deacon ministry. Though the candidate selection process took place prior to the start of this project, the rationale for selecting specific candidates will be mentioned in brief below.

Selecting Deacon Candidates

By summer 2015, FCBCW's pastors identified eleven invitees to be assessed and trained for the office of deacon: four from the English congregation, three from the Mandarin congregation, and four from the Cantonese congregation. All eleven invitees were selected on the general consensus of their spiritual maturity and prior evidence of faithful service. Thereafter, each invitee was asked to prayerfully consider the high calling of being examined for the office of deacon. While the four from the English

congregation agreed to pursue deacon candidacy, those from the Mandarin and Cantonese congregations asked for one of two things: some requested more time to pray, others expressed the interest to candidate in the future.

Increasing the sample size. Now March 2017, nearly two years later, the Mandarin and Cantonese invitees were still unready to begin deacon candidacy. Cultural and situational reasons for their hesitation are explained in chapter 5, where I address the weaknesses of this project. Having only four candidates, I consulted with my senior pastor, the pastoral staff, and current deacons, and I emailed my project supervisor, searching for ways to increase the sample size. With their support, eight new individuals—from the English congregation—were invited to join the training project, bringing the official sample size to twelve candidates. All eight invitees accepted, but the training series was now limited to the English congregation.

Assessment Process (Week 1)

Week 1 of the project officially began after the twelve candidates agreed to be examined for deacon candidacy. During week 1, I administered the BDQRS to assess their pre-series knowledge regarding the biblical qualifications and role of deacons.[1] The pre-series survey results confirmed the suspected confusion over the role of deacons at FCBCW. When asked to select responsibilities that belong to deacons, five out of twelve candidates included "critically examine all pastoral decisions" and "sit on the ruling council of the church." Interestingly, while only two candidates included "preaching and teaching God's Word" under the role of deacons, six out of twelve candidates selected "able to preach and teach God's Word" as a qualification for deacons. These results informed my development of the curriculum. Aside from the biblical qualifications and responsibilities, clarifying the distinction between pastors and deacons became my aim.

---

[1]See appendix 1.

**Curriculum Development and Approval
(Weeks 2-7)**

During weeks 2 to 7, I prepared the deacon training curriculum and received

approval from an expert panel. A five-session curriculum was designed to increase each

candidate's knowledge regarding the biblical definition, qualifications, and role of

deacons. The classes were scheduled for Sunday mornings, before worship service,

during the usual time slot for adult Sunday school. Each one and a half-hour session

included an interactive discussion over selected reading assignments, followed by

teaching on biblical passages relevant to deacons and matters of ecclesiology.

Preparing the main curriculum. From chapter 2 above, I gathered the

information needed to teach on the biblical and theological foundations for deacons. Acts

6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 provided the New Testament basis for deacon qualifications

and responsibilities. Four main passages would support pastor-led congregationalism as

the New Testament pattern for church governance (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:2, 9-12; 2 Cor

2:6; Acts 6:1-6). To clarify the point that Baptist deacons are not elders, I included a brief

historical survey of Southern Baptist deacon life. Further detail regarding the content of

each session will be given later in this chapter.

Selecting the reading assignments. With the biblical, theological, and

historical materials set in place, the next task was selecting accessible reading

assignments to supplement the content of each session. Mark Dever's *A Display of God's

Glory* served as the main textbook because (1) the chapters on deacons, elders, and

congregationalism were applicable to Baptist churches and (2) a Chinese edition of the

booklet is available.[2] In search of additional Baptist-friendly material, the *9Marks

Journal* published an edition that focused on deacons, where several articles alluded to

---

[2]Mark Dever, *A Display of God's Glory: Basics of Church Structure, Deacons, Elders, Congregationalism & Membership* (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 5-43.

the blurred roles of pastors and deacons in Baptist circles.[3] In addition, two online articles written by Timothy Keller were extremely helpful. Keller's article "The Centrality of the Gospel" gave shape and application to the meaning of "holding the mystery of faith with a clear conscience."[4] The second article by Keller, entitled "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics," applied directly to the tri-lingual and tri-congregational context of FCBCW.[5] Finally, to supplement the material on congregationalism, I condensed the historical survey of Southern Baptist deacon life, taken from chapter 3, and put it into the form of an article. The purpose of including the brief historical survey was to help clarify (1) when the confusion over Baptist deacons emerged and (2) how subsequent generations of Baptist leaders sought to reverse the problem.

Getting approval for the curriculum. With the reading list determined and the lesson plans written, I distributed a draft of the training curriculum for the pastors and deacons to review and approve. During week 7, an expert panel composed of FCBCW's pastors and deacons reviewed and approved the training curriculum using an evaluation rubric.[6] Details of the curriculum evaluation results are analyzed in chapter 5, where I review the goals for this project. After the curriculum was approved, it was time for implementation.

Implementation of Deacon Training (Weeks 8-12)

During weeks 8 to 12, the five-week training curriculum was implemented in a classroom setting. This section will provide a detailed summary of the curriculum content

---

[3]*9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 5-24, accessed July 10, 2015, https://www.9marks.org/article/deacons-shock-absorbers-and-servants/.

[4]Timothy Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel," 2000, 1-14, accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.gospelinlife.com/the-centrality-of-the-gospel-9249.

[5]Timothy Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics," 2006, 1-15, accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.gospelinlife.com/leadership-and-church-size-dynamics.

[6]See appendix 3.

and training implementation, including the objective and results of each session.

Session 1 (Week 8)

On week 8, I taught session 1, entitled "The Biblical Foundations for Deacon Ministry." Reflective of its title, the objective of session 1 was to understand the New Testament basis for deacons. During this first session, I began by introducing the training schedule, previewing future reading assignments, and explaining the goal of the training series, which was to increase each candidate's knowledge of the biblical qualifications and role of deacons.

Following the introductory remarks, we discussed two pre-session reading assignments. The first was a chapter from *A Display of God's Glory,* where Mark Dever capsulizes the definition, historical background, biblical basis, and qualifications for deacons.[7] A second reading assignment featured a short article from the *9Marks Journal* written by Jamie Dunlop, entitled "Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servants."[8] Dunlop's article gave a brief introduction to the definition of deacons as servants. A number of the candidates gave positive feedback as to how the first two reading assignments brought initial clarity to their confusion over deacons.

Transitioning to the biblical basis, I taught from Acts 6:1-6 regarding the prototypical model for deacon ministry. Not only does Acts 6:1-6 prescribe the prototype for what would later evolve into the formal office of deacon, but the passage reveals the prototypical requirements and responsibilities for deacons, as well as, the prototypical model for selecting deacons within congregational polity. Much of my content was drawn from chapter 2 above.

---

[7]Dever, *A Display of God's Glory,* 5-14.

[8]Jamie Dunlop, "Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servants," *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 5-7, accessed July 10, 2015, https://www.9marks.org/article/deacons-shock-absorbers-and-servants/.

After giving an overview of the problem and resolution in Acts 6:1-6, I asked the candidates the following question: how does the selection of seven Hellenists apply specifically to the tri-lingual and tri-congregational context of FCBCW? Immediately, the candidates compared the cultural challenges of ministering to both Hebraic and Hellenistic widows as a parallel to the barriers of language and culture at FCBCW. Some candidates observed that in Acts 6, a team of culturally sensitive and language-specific servants preserved the unity between the Hebraic and Hellenistic church members. Similarly, each congregation at FCBCW needs pastors and deacons who could speak their language and comprehend the nuances of their respective culture. Other candidates expressed their understanding as to why deacons need to be spiritually mature in order to navigate through the cultural challenges of a tri-lingual church.

To conclude the teaching from Acts 6, I made the following four conclusions concerning the biblical basis for deacons. First, deacons are lead servants who love and serve the church, allowing the pastors to focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer. Second, deacons are selected on the grounds of godly character, spiritual maturity, and faithful service. Third, deacons help to promote unity and love among the church. Fourth, deacons give themselves to the ministries of mercy and care, which include the administration and distribution of funds and resources.

Moving into direct application for FCBCW, I listed the following examples of diaconal ministries that exist at FCBCW: administration, finances, mercy and care, building and facilities, human resources/personnel, ushering, hospitality, distributing the Lord's Supper, small group leaders, and fellowship leaders. By the end of session 1, not only did the candidates express greater clarity regarding the role of deacons, they also began to identify the church officers as the body of servants who were fulfilling the role of deacons. With the foundation for deacon ministry set, the candidates were ready to read and discuss matters regarding the qualifications for deacons.

Session 2 (Week 9)

During week 9, I taught session 2 of the series, entitled "The Qualifications for Deacons." As a direct reflection of the title, the objective of session 2 was to understand the biblical qualifications for deacons, including what it means to have a clear grasp of the gospel.

A short article from the *9Marks Journal* written by Benjamin Merkle, entitled "The Biblical Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons," served as a discussion starter to introduce the subject of deacon qualifications.[9] First Timothy 3:8-13 served as the primary Scripture passage. After noting that the topic of women deacons and the qualification of "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" would be discussed later in the session, I began explaining each character qualification. In response, a question was raised regarding the meaning of "tested and proven blameless" (1 Tim 3:10). After clarifying that the testing is not so much an exam, but observation over time, I followed by explaining what it means to be above reproach. To the candidates, blamelessness seemed impossible to achieve, which led me to explain the importance of striving for Christ-likeness, not perfection. Taking the opportunity to encourage the candidates, I shared why they were invited to pursue deacon candidacy. The church leaders have observed their faith and character over time.

From explaining each qualification, I addressed the debated interpretation over the rendering of "wives" or "women" (1 Tim 3:11). As detailed in chapter 2, I defended the interpretation of "women" and taught on the biblical warrant for female deacons. Knowing that the topic of female deacons would lead to an interesting discussion, what happened next was deeply encouraging. The candidates began identifying female church officers, who have faithfully fulfilled the function of a deacon for years, only without any

---

[9]Benjamin L. Merkle, "The Biblical Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons," *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 8-11, accessed July 10, 2015, https://www.9marks.org/article/the-biblical-qualifications-and-responsibilities-of-deacons/.

formal diaconal title. Though FCBCW may not ordain female deacons in the near future, this discussion brought a glimmer of hope for future generations.

After briefly discussing Paul's encouragement for deacons (1 Tim 3:13), the remainder of the session turned to the critical matter of understanding what it means to "hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience" (1 Tim 3:9). Since half of the candidates wrongly identified "being able to teach" as a qualification for deacons, it was critical to distinguish the difference between teaching and refuting, as compared to having a clear and confident grasp of the gospel. Knowing that the subject matter of being "able to teach" would be covered the following week during session 3 (week 10), I simply focused on how to apply the gospel to every arena of life.

Beginning with a review of the essential contents of the gospel, a fruitful discussion of Keller's article "The Centrality of the Gospel" ensued.[10] Keller's explanation was helpful by practically distilling what it means to hold to the power and sufficiency of the gospel in every day life. The candidates appreciated having this particular article as a resource they could turn to, not only for their own application, but when ministering to individuals in the future. With greater clarity concerning the qualifications for deacons, the candidates were now ready to discuss the role of deacons in relation to pastors.

Session 3 (Week 10)

On week 10, I taught session 3, entitled "The Role of Deacons in Relation to Pastors. " The objective of this session was to understand the role distinction between the offices of pastor and deacon.

Session 3 began with the discussion of three pre-session reading assignments. The first reading assignment was another chapter from *A Display of God's Glory,* where

---

[10]Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel," 1-9.

Dever presents the definition, history, biblical basis, qualifications, distinctions, and authority for elders.[11] Following Dever's chapter were two brief articles from the *9Marks Journal,* both written by Matt Schmucker, entitled "The Committee-Free, Task-Specific Deacon" and "How to Separate Deacon Work from Elder Work."[12] When discussing the reading assignments, the candidates affirmed that though the work of pastors and deacons may overlap at times, the distinction between the two offices must be maintained for healthy church polity.

As we began to examine the biblical terminology for elders, the candidates naturally questioned why FCBCW refrains from using the title of "elder," which led me to explain the interchangeability between the terms "pastor" and "elder" in the New Testament. Thereafter, we transitioned into the biblical teaching that congregations are to be led, not ruled, by a plurality of pastors.

The remainder of the session focused on the qualifications for pastors listed in Paul's letter to Timothy (1 Tim 3:1-7). Since the character qualifications for pastors overlap with those given for deacons, we were able to focus on the distinguishing qualifications between the two offices. Aside from "not being a recent convert," being "able to teach" clearly emerged in our discussion as the main qualification that distinguishes pastors from deacons. Because many of the current deacons teach or have taught Sunday school at some point in their tenure, the candidates assumed that teaching was a primary qualification and responsibility for deacons. In response, I emphasized that while deacons can and may be able to teach, pastors must be able to teach. Since pastoral leadership is grounded on God's Word, the ability to teach and give sound instruction

---

[11]Dever, *A Display of God's Glory,* 17-28

[12]Matt Schmucker, "The Committee-Free, Task-Specific Deacon," *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 15-17, accessed July 10, 2015, https://9marks.org/article/committee-free-task-specific-deacon/. Also, Schmucker, "How to Separate Deacon Work and Elder Work," *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 22-24, accessed July 10, 2015, https://9marks.org/article/how-to-separate-deacon-work-and-elder-work/.

from Scripture is imperative—especially when it comes to refuting false teaching.

After clarifying the qualification and role of teaching, it was critical to emphasize that deacons are still spiritual leaders, but they exercise a type of leadership that is different from the overseeing role of a pastor. Rather than sitting on a board that governs the local church, deacons exercise leadership over specific service-oriented ministries. All of the candidates resonated with the non-ruling role of a deacon, because as it turns out, none of the candidates aspire to carry the burden of making decisions for the entire church.

What transpired towards the end of session 3 was a healthy discussion over the giftedness of the six ordained deacons. In commenting on the spiritual gifts and passions of the six current deacons, we discussed how each of them excelled in the diaconal ministries of service, administration, and care. The candidates were able to distinguish the gifting of the deacons from that of the pastors. For the candidates, the biblical teaching on deacons was now clear. But the question remained, why has there been so much confusion over the role of deacons within Baptist churches? With this question, the candidates were eager to read and discuss a deacon's role in relation to congregationalism.

Session 4 (Week 11)

During week 11, I taught session 4, entitled "The Role of Deacons within Congregationalism." Reflective of its title, the objective of this session was to understand the role of deacons within congregational or Baptist polity.

We began by discussing Dever's chapter on congregationalism from *A Display of God's Glory.*[13] The candidates expressed that prior to reading Dever's chapter, their perception of congregationalism was simply a blur. Some expressed the great value of

---

[13]Dever, *A Display of God's Glory,* 31-43.

being able to vote when hiring new pastors. Most of the candidates viewed congregationalism as burdensome, equating Baptist polity to voting in church business meetings, where the faithful members endure the process of approving financial budgets, while sitting through tedious, and at times contentious, open forums.

To dispel the false caricatures, I explained that congregationalism denotes the exercise of church governance, which affirms the autonomy of local churches wherein the highest human authority is vested in the congregation, not the leadership.[14] Within congregationalism, pastors lead, rather than rule and deacons fulfill the role of lead servants. From a formal definition, we moved into a short study of Scripture. A survey of four passages showed how congregationalism reflects the pattern of governance seen in the New Testament (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:2, 9-13; 2 Cor 2:6; Acts 6:1-6).

Moving into practical and contemporary applications of congregationalism, I highlighted three models of congregationalism that blur the role of pastors and deacons: (1) a plural eldership composed of pastor(s) and deacons, (2) the "balance of power" model, (3) the "hiring board" model. These three models were described earlier in chapter 3. Subsequently, I explained where these confusing practices came from by giving a historical overview of Southern Baptist deacon life. Starting with the earliest Baptist deacons (1600s-1700s), we traced the transition where deacons morphed from table servants into business boards and managers (1800s-1950s). Then we highlighted the positive trend, where deacons moved away from management and back towards ministry (1950s-1990s). Much of the discussion revolved around the short article I composed from the historical section of my earlier work in chapter 3. In response, the candidates shared how the historical survey helped to clarify previous points of confusion they held regarding Baptist deacons.

---

[14]John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005), 143.

By the end of session 4, the candidates shared a renewed hope in congregationalism, while recognizing the challenges of trying to apply its biblical form against the culturally ingrained practices of some churches. With all of the essential content regarding deacons covered, it was time to focus on the application of diaconal ministry within the complexities of FCBCW.

Session 5 (Week 12)

On week 12, I taught session 5, entitled "The Role of Deacons within the Vision, Distinctive, and Cultural Context of FCBCW." With the guidance and support of my senior pastor, the final session was prepared with direct application for FCBCW. The objective of session 5 was to understand the role of deacons within a tri-congregational and tri-lingual church context, as lead servants who model godliness and cultivate a healthy culture among church officers.

We began by discussing Keller's article entitled "Leadership and Church Size Dynamic."[15] According to Keller, with eleven hundred in weekly attendance, FCBCW should fall under the category of "The Very Large Church." But in actuality, with three language-congregations, FCBCW presents the complexities of three "Medium-Sized" churches—with very distinct cultures—trying to coexist on one campus. The candidates expressed their appreciation for how the article effectively captures the challenges faced by churches of various sizes. Observing how FCBCW's pastors are divided among three congregations, the candidates saw an even greater need for more deacons.

Afterwards, we reviewed the vision, distinctive qualities, and desired culture of FCBCW. The vision of FCBCW is to be a vibrant church, driven by a passion for God's Word, God's family, and God's world that reproduces vibrant churches locally and globally. FCBCW desires to be distinctively biblical, intergenerational, and missional.

---

[15]Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics," 1-15.

Seven values capture the culture we desire for every member to embody: (1) a high view of God and Scripture, (2) a kingdom mindset, (3) integrity of character, (4) joy in ministry, (5) invest in people, (6) strive for excellence, and (7) lead by example.

Moving into direct application, I focused on giving concrete definition to the role of deacons at FCBCW. On a cross-congregational level, deacons are to be co-laborers in the gospel-ministry by supporting the pastors, and being an intergenerational, intercultural, tri-congregational ambassador. Not every ministry volunteer will deal with the complexities of ministering cross-congregationally, but the deacons must. Reflective of Acts 6, deacons at FCBCW must promote communication and unity among the three congregations and worship services. As for language-specific responsibilities, deacons are expected to assist in care, counseling, and mercy ministries within each deacon's respective language congregation. Some will administer or lead other service-oriented ministry teams according to their spiritual gifts.

Finally, I explained what it means to be a lead servant. As models of servant-hood and faithful ministry, deacons at FCBCW play the role of a lead officer, where they strive to cultivate a healthy culture among other church officers and ministry team leaders. A critical component of being a lead officer is mentorship. The discussion regarding mentorship created an avenue to address questions regarding how the current deacons would adjust to having more deacons, thus changing the leadership dynamic that they currently experience. Reflective of what I wrote in chapter 3, the six current deacons, being older in age and seasoned in ministry, will serve as mentors for new and future deacons. Mentorship is far from a demotion and will not lead to silencing their voices, nor their influence. In fact, mentorship is the key to investing in the future of the church. In this sense, the current deacons play a monumental role in influencing the next generation. To be a mentor, especially within Asian culture, conveys a certain degree of honor. Ending on a note of encouragement, I reiterated the indispensible need for the office of deacon.

At the end of session 5, the candidates took the BDQRS for a second time as a post-series survey. The results of the survey are found in chapter 5, where I evaluate the goals for this project.

Follow-Up to Deacon Training

In weeks 13 to 15, I compared the pre and post-series surveys and developed a strategic plan for training and incorporating future deacons, as well as improving the deacon candidacy process at FCBCW.

Post-Series Analysis (Week 13)

During week 13, I utilized a t-test for dependent samples to compare the pre and post-series surveys. The t-test yielded a positive statistically significant difference between the pre and post-survey scores.[16] More details can be found in chapter 5.

Deacon Candidacy Plan (Week 14)

During week 14, I worked with my senior pastor to develop a strategic plan that entails an improved deacon candidacy process for FCBCW.[17] The plan unfolds a twenty-four month (two year) process that begins with an invitation to consider deacon candidacy and ends with being formally ordained in a church-wide ordination service.

Candidate identification and invitation. During the pre-candidacy stage, the pastors will identify potential candidates on the grounds of faithful character and service. Each invitee will be asked to prayerfully consider deacon candidacy. Once the invitee expresses their readiness, an interview will be scheduled with the pastors.

---

[16]See appendix 4.

[17]See appendix 5 for an outline of the deacon candidacy plan for FCBCW.

Interview, assessment, and training series. During months 1-2, the pastors will interview the candidate (and spouse if applicable). Afterwards, each candidate will take the BDQRS to measure their pre-series (pre-training) knowledge of the biblical qualifications and role for deacons. Then the candidate will attend the deacon-training series that was developed in this project. After the training series, the BDQRS will be re-administered a second time as a post-series survey. Using the post-series scores, a pastor will meet with the candidate to discuss their results.

Mentorship and ministry assignments. During months 3-20, the candidate will be assigned a mentor-deacon, be presented to the congregation as an official deacon candidate, and be given ministry assignments. Mentor deacons will measure the candidate's spiritual growth according the qualifications listed in Scripture (1 Tim 3:8-13). The mentor deacons can also use the self-assessment section of the post-survey to highlight specific areas for development.

In addition to mentorship, the candidate will be assigned two major ministry assignments. First, the candidate will assist the current deacons with the preparation and distribution of the communion elements. Second, the candidate will minister as a service-team leader. Examples of service-oriented leadership roles include serving as a fellowship administrator, small groups coordinator, care team leader, ushering team leader, hospitality team leader, finance team leader, building team leader, or personnel team leader. Ministry assignments allow the church to further observe the candidate's character and practice in service-oriented ministry.

Final assessment and ordination service. In months 21-24, the pastors and the candidate's mentor-deacon will provide a final assessment to determine the candidate's readiness for ordination. As part of the final assessment process, the senior pastor will meet with the mentor-deacon to gather verbal feedback regarding the candidate's readiness for ordination. Feedback from other ordained deacons and church

members would be considered. Most importantly, feedback from the candidate's spouse will be weighed heavily. Thereafter, all appropriate feedback will be given to the deacon candidate. Since the grounds for readiness are the character qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, in the rare case that the candidate becomes disqualified during the candidacy process, the candidate will not be ordained for the office of deacon. Typically, these qualifying discussions would have already taken place prior to identifying the candidate for deacon candidacy. After passing the final assessment, the candidate will be ordained to the office of deacon in a formal church-wide ordination service.

Plan Analysis and Approval (Week 15)

During week 15, an expert panel composed of FCBCW's seven pastors and the six current deacons utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, training elements, and actions steps.[18] This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. The plan was approved.

Conclusion

The completion of the training series was a significant first step towards clarifying the role of deacons at FCBCW. As a result of the training series, all twelve candidates increased their knowledge of the biblical qualifications and role of deacons. Having a deacon candidacy plan provides a clear pathway for integrating future deacon candidates. Moving into the final chapter, the focus now shifts to the important work of evaluation. As with all ministry projects, there is plenty of room for improvement.

---

[18]See appendix 6.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Completing this project came with a few roadblocks, but concluded with great promise for the journey towards becoming a healthier church. The difficulty of securing a sufficient sample size revealed cultural challenges of ministering in a tri-lingual and tri-congregational church, but paved a path for the steps ahead. Training deacon candidates is a task that does not end with this project. Instead, FCBCW can celebrate the training of twelve candidates from the English congregation as one step towards a larger goal. With a curriculum that can be translated into Chinese and a deacon candidacy plan approved, the foundation has been laid for a promising future. This chapter will evaluate some of these challenges and rewards, beginning with the project's purpose.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train deacon candidates for ministry at FCBCW. Though the project did not meet the original intent to train deacon candidates from all three congregations, twelve English candidates were successfully trained for deacon ministry. Therefore, the purpose of training deacon candidates to minister within FCBCW was effectively achieved. Now the next step is moving these candidates through the deacon candidacy process and towards ordination—a process that began with the completion of four goals.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Four goals were determined at the outset of the project: assess the knowledge of deacon candidates, develop curriculum, increase knowledge by teaching the curriculum, and develop a strategic (deacon candidacy) plan.

Assess Knowledge

The first goal was to assess a group of deacon candidates regarding their current knowledge of the qualifications and practice of deacon ministry. After overcoming the initial challenge of securing an adequate sample size, a group of twelve candidates were eventually assessed. This goal was measured by administering the BDQRS to the candidates. The goal was considered successfully met when twelve candidates from the English congregation completed and returned their surveys for pre-series analysis.

Develop Curriculum

The second goal was to develop curriculum in order to train deacon candidates. A five-week curriculum was designed to increase the understanding of the biblical definition, qualifications, and practice of deacons. Additionally, the following topics were covered: the distinction between pastors and deacons, congregational polity, and the role of deacons within the tri-lingual and tri-congregational context of FCBCW.[1] To measure this goal, an expert panel composed of FCBCW's seven pastors and six current deacons utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.[2]

Table 1 on the next page shows the average scores for the sum of each session, as evaluated by the expert panel.[3]

---

[1]See appendix 2 for the reading lists and an outline of the lesson plans curriculum.

[2]See appendix 3.

[3]See appendix 3 for the summative scores from each evaluator.

Table 1. Curriculum evaluation results

Category	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Entire Curriculum	Percentage Meeting Sufficient Level
Average Score	30.6	30.5	30.5	30.3	30.7	152.8	100
Highest Score	32	32	32	32	32	160	100
Lowest Score	26	24	24	24	27	125	100

This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. To meet the sufficiency level, each numbered criterion had to score a numerical value of three, out of a maximum of four. All criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level of three. For the sum of each lesson, the sufficient level needed to be twenty-four out of a maximum score of 32. The sufficient level for the entire curriculum 120 out of a maximum of 160.

Increase Knowledge

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the deacon candidates by using the curriculum that was developed for the training series. This goal was measured by administering the BDQRS a second time—as a post-series survey, which was used to measure the change in content knowledge. This goal was successfully met when the t-test of dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference between the pre and post-series scores. Two sections of the BDQRS focused purely on content knowledge. Using multiple-choice questions, the BDQRS assessed each candidate's knowledge of the qualifications and role of deacons. These questions also measured each candidate's awareness of the distinction between pastors and deacons. Candidates were asked to select qualifications and responsibilities that applied to deacons versus those that apply mainly to pastors. The maximum score for these two sections was 28.

Table 2 shows an increase in the average scores for content knowledge. Indicated by the t-test, the teaching of the biblical qualifications and role of deacons to twelve candidates made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge ($t_{(11)} = 5.251$, $p < .001$).[4]

Table 2. Average scores for content knowledge

Category	Pre-Series BDQRS	Post-Series BDQRS	Percentage of Increase
Average Score	20.75	26.5	21
Lowest Score	14	23	32
Highest Score	26	28	7

Outside of content knowledge, the BDQRS included sections where each candidate provided a self-assessment of their character and practice of spiritual disciplines.

Self-assessment for spiritual maturity. A six-point Likert scale was used to see how the candidates viewed themselves in the areas of spiritual maturity and character. Knowing that self-assessments can render subjective results, the purpose of this section was to simply observe any changes in the candidate's response as a result of participating in the training series. One positive result from the pre and post-series survey was that none of the candidates chose any negative marks of "strongly disagree," "disagree," or "disagree somewhat" for any of the questions. The self-assessment would also serve as a tool for the pastors and mentor-deacons to encourage the candidates in areas of personal growth. Out of a maximum of 78 points, I noted the percentage of increase or decrease between the pre and post-series scores.

---

[4]See appendix 4 for more details concerning the t-test results.

Table 3 shows that while five candidates revealed no negative or positive changes, seven of the candidates showed a positive increase in their self-assessment. Based on post-series interviews, the two candidates showing the highest percentage of increase shared an encouraging indicator. Learning about the character qualifications for deacons lifted their self-confidence into a proper perspective. They were willing to give themselves a more positive assessment—changing their answers from "agree" to "strongly agree"—because with a spirit of humility, they could confidently affirm their strong commitment to Christ-like growth.

Table 3. Self-assessment of character results

Participant (Candidate)	Pre-Series	Post-Series	Increase (Percentage)
1	65/78	70/78	7
2	66/78	70/78	5
3	69/78	72/78	4
4	67/78	67/78	0
5	67/78	67/78	0
6	73/78	73/78	0
7	71/78	71/78	0
8	63/78	67/78	5
9	62/78	66/78	6
10	73/78	73/28	0
11	61/78	74/78	17
12	64/78	72/78	10

Self-assessment for spiritual disciplines. In the final section of the BDQRS, the candidates answered four multiple-choice questions regarding their practice of basic spiritual disciplines, including Scripture reading, Scripture memory, and prayer. This section helped to indicate whether participating in the training series had any impact on each candidate's practice of spiritual disciplines. While none of the candidates decreased in their practice of spiritual disciplines, six candidates increased their frequency of reading Scripture and five candidates increased their frequency of memorizing Scripture.

One candidate increased their frequency in daily prayer.

Develop Strategic Plan

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan for training and incorporating future deacons, as well as improving the structures of deacon candidacy at FCBCW.[5] Details of the plan were included in chapter 4. Prior to being reviewed by an expert panel, the plan was presented twice: first during a pastors meeting, then a second time at a deacons meeting. To measure this goal, a panel composed of FCBCW's seven pastors and six current deacons utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, training elements, and actions steps.[6] This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. To meet the sufficiency level, each numbered criterion had to score a numerical value of three out of a maximum of four. For the entire plan, the sufficiency level had to score a numerical value of 24 out of a maximum of 32. Results of the evaluation are detailed in table 4.[7]

Table 4. Deacon candidacy plan evaluation results

Category	Criterion Number									
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	Entire Plan	Percentage Meeting Sufficient Level
Average Score	4	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.6	4	3.9	3.8	30.9	100
Highest Score	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32	100
Lowest Score	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	28	100

---

[5]See appendix 5 for an outline of the deacon candidacy plan for FCBCW.

[6]See appendix 6.

[7]See appendix 6 for the scores from each evaluator.

With the completion of these four goals, this project was considered successful though strengths and weaknesses emerged along the way.

Strengths of the Project

Five strengths stood out from this project that brought great encouragement and hope for the future of FCBCW. First, by implementing the training curriculum, the confusion over the qualifications and role of deacons was clarified for the twelve candidates. Not only did the candidates benefit from increasing their knowledge, the self-assessment sections of the BDQRS allowed for deeper introspection, challenging them to grow in Christ-like character. Explaining the project to the core team of church officers from the English congregation, some who became deacon candidates, gave me the opportunity to address questions they had about the role of a deacon.

Second, evaluating the curriculum and deacon candidacy plan reinforced, for the current deacons, the importance of their role as lead servants. Like the candidates, they too were exhorted to continue striving for godly character, which qualifies them to serve with excellence. Also, the current deacons were encouraged by the fact that more deacons will be ordained in the future, bringing more co-laborers to share the work of ministry.

Third, the project successfully trained multiple generations of lead servants. The twelve English candidates that participated in this project were under the age of fifty, reflecting the current need of FCBCW. As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, FCBCW has six ordained deacons for a church of eleven hundred people. With the average age of the current deacons being fifty-eight years old, the need was not only for more deacons, but younger deacons to represent multiple generations of adults. Table 5 on the next page shows the demography of the twelve participating candidates.

Table 5. Demography of deacon candidates

Candidate	Age	Married	Children under 18 at Home	Years as Christian	Years as FCBCW Member
1	36	Yes	Yes	18	8
2	33	Yes	Yes	28	11
3	47	Yes	Yes	20	20
4	44	Yes	Yes	26	19
5	36	Yes	Yes	17	4
6	34	Yes	Yes	20	19
7	25	No	No	13	4
8	35	Yes	Yes	23	18
9	32	Yes	Yes	14	12
10	28	No	No	15	13
11	23	No	No	15	10
12	29	Yes	Yes	20	13

Reflective of FCBCW's demography, the twelve candidates represent ages ranging from the early twenties into the late forties. While the majority of the candidates are married with children living at home, three of the younger candidates remain unmarried. When it comes to spiritual maturity, all of the candidates have had a personal relationship with Christ for at least a decade. With the exception of three, the majority of the candidates have been members of FCBCW for over a decade. Thus, the observation of their character and effectiveness of service have proven the test of time.

Fourth, the approval of the deacon candidacy plan reinforced the importance of mentorship. Though the full implementation of the plan has yet to occur, the existing deacons agreed to be mentors for the younger deacon candidates. As a result, when the plan is set into motion, intergenerational discipleship will take place among recognized lead servants, setting a healthy example for the rest of the church.

Fifth, because the deacon candidates were selected from among church officers, this project successfully took the first step towards formally recognizing qualified lead servants who have been practicing diaconal ministry.

Weaknesses of the Project

Two weaknesses emerged over the course of this project. One weakness was the one and a half-hour time limit for each training session. While some sessions ended on time, others went overtime due to extended discussions. Naturally, the candidates had more questions to ask near the beginning of the series, making the first two sessions go longer than planned. In hindsight, it makes sense that more questions would arise at the beginning of the series, when clarity over the role of deacons was yet to be achieved. As the series progressed, greater clarity ensued and the sessions ended closer to the target end-time. A simple solution would be extending the series for an additional week, making it a six-week series. An additional week would supply enough time to deliver the content and discuss topics that arise from questions and answers.

A second weakness of the project was the unsuccessful attempt to train deacon candidates for the Mandarin and Cantonese congregations. Upon being invited, candidates from the English congregation were eager to be trained for deacon ministry. When asked why they were selected, I answered with three clarifying points: (1) deacons are not elders, (2) attending the training series would clarify the distinction between the offices, and (3) as current or former church officers, they were already viewed as qualified and fulfilling the role of a deacon.

Due to cultural and situational reasons, the seven candidates from the Mandarin and Cantonese congregations were not ready to start the candidacy process in time for this project. While some of these invited-candidates viewed the diaconate as an elevated position reserved for the spiritually elite, others expressed their inability to commit to the office at this time, due to familial or career obligations. Those who held an overinflated view of the diaconate were impacted by cultural factors of hierarchy prevalent in Chinese churches. These factors include feeling too young, inexperienced, or fearful of bearing spiritual authority. Even after the Mandarin and Cantonese pastors stated the purpose of the training series—explaining that their concerns would be

80

clarified by attending the sessions—the pastors were still unable to convince the Mandarin and Cantonese invitees to become deacon candidates. Assisting the Mandarin and Cantonese pastors in conducting a pre-project preaching series on the role of pastors and deacons would have clarified some of the misconceptions, leaving the training-series to further solidify the candidate's understanding of the diaconate. Taking the steps to address this second weakness is an example of what I would have done differently.

What I Would Do Differently

Related to the weaknesses of this project, I would have done two things differently. The first adjustment is minor. As mentioned above under "weaknesses," I would have extended the training series by one additional week. Specifically, I would have divided the lesson plan for session 2—"The Qualifications for Deacons"—into separate sessions. While one week could be used to address character qualifications, a second week could focus on two topics: (1) women deacons and (2) having a clear grasp of the gospel. These two topics garnered more discussion, and we found ourselves pressed for time. The candidates would have benefited from an extended study on practical ways to apply the gospel to various arenas of life.

The second and more complicated change has to do with securing a sufficient sample size for the project. Several pre-proposal steps would have allowed for a timelier implementation of the training project. To secure enough deacon candidates for the project, I would have limited the scope of my project to training deacon candidates for the English congregation from the outset. After securing the desired number of candidates, I would have extended the invitation to any qualified Mandarin or Cantonese individuals to maintain a sense of church-wide unity. Those who desired to begin deacon candidacy could join the training. To strengthen the reception to the invitation, as mentioned above, I would have worked with the Chinese-speaking pastors to craft a mini-sermon series aimed at clarifying the distinction between elders and deacons. A sermon

81

series does not guarantee a different response from the invitees, but it would have made a greater effort towards clarifying the biblical teaching on deacons.

At its conclusion, training deacon candidates helped to strengthen FCBCW's alignment with biblical ecclesiology. A few theological reflections will help capture the blessings of striving to become a healthier church.

Theological Reflections

Reflecting upon the theological ramifications for this project, training deacon candidates brought encouragement in three specific ways. First, deacons fall under the ecclesiological sub-category of church governance. By studying the various perspectives on church government and the history of Southern Baptist deacon life, I was encouraged by the beauty of healthy and historical congregationalism. Sure, congregationalism has its abuses, as documented throughout Baptist history. But when rightly applied, congregationalism stands in the face of consumerism, because it demands a commitment to discipleship and church membership. True congregationalism encourages pastors to faithfully disciple and train committed church members, who are then entrusted with an appropriate degree of corporate authority over matters related to the local church. In this sense, congregationalism encourages me to deeply invest in the maturity of God's people, shepherding them to be active contributors to the work of God's kingdom.

Second, God's people responded to the clear teaching of God's Word. Paul taught the Ephesians that Christ sanctifies his bride with his Word (Eph 5:26). The power of Scripture was put on display when observing how the current pastors, deacons, and candidates responded to the biblical teaching concerning pastors and deacons. All parties were receptive to the servant-oriented role of deacons, particularly the biblical teaching that deacons are not to function as elders. While maintaining the distinction between the responsibilities given to the two offices, the high calling and importance of the diaconate were emphasized. The positive reception to the training series encouraged me to remain

82

faithful to God's Word through any ecclesiological challenge by trusting in Scripture's sufficiency, perspicuity, efficacy, and power.

Third, it was encouraging to reflect upon the faithfulness of various church officers who have fulfilled the role of a deacon—for years—without any formal recognition. The inability to ordain all of the qualified church officers, as deacons, brings a simple reminder. Neither title, nor office qualifies God's servant, rather it is the character of God's servant that qualifies him for the office of leadership. Some at FCBCW will be given the title of pastor or deacon, while others will serve without the recognition of any formal office. Regardless of title, God examines the character and inner life of each individual. A few personal reflections will further elaborate on the impact this project made in relation to my own spiritual growth.

Personal Reflections

As for personal reflections, God allowed me to experience two areas of growth from completing this project. First, training deacon candidates encouraged me to grow in my love for the FCBCW. Fearing that I would not secure a sufficient sample size, I was discouraged by the inability to recruit deacon candidates from the Mandarin and Cantonese congregations. At times I wondered whether the project could be completed in time. In those moments, my desire to complete the task of training deacons overshadowed my love for God's people. Loving the church means being patient with the various challenges within the body of Christ. Through the process of recruiting eight additional candidates, God taught me patience. While preparing the curriculum for the training series, I was quickly reminded of the qualities that motivate true diaconal ministry—one of them being love for God's people. As I grew in my love for the church, my heart was being prepared for the unfinished task of training deacon candidates from the Mandarin and Cantonese congregations in the future. Recovering the biblical diaconate at FCBCW is an ongoing work that will require not only love and patience, but

also continual teaching and shepherding from God's Word.

Second, studying the qualifications for pastors and deacons encouraged me to ground my identity in Christ, not public perception. Being publically examined for an office of leadership can easily lead to being driven by performance or fear of man. For spiritual leaders, it matters how people perceive our inner and outer life. Though we tell ourselves what matters most is who we are in the sight of God, our identities can be easily shaped by what we do in the sight of man. Yet, God looks at who we are becoming in Christ. By studying the biblical qualifications, I was reminded that Christ is the only person who can fulfill each qualification with the mark of perfection. My own pursuit of godliness will not be achieved apart from my union with Christ. The profound doctrine of our union with Christ enabled me to encourage the deacon candidates, especially those who questioned whether they were "good enough" to be a deacon. Throughout the series, I encouraged them to aspire to be dignified and faithful in all things, but to remember that our value as servants is set in Christ, not in our performance.

Conclusion

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul referred to spiritual maturity as the goal for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:12-16). To this end, training deacon candidates contributed to the spiritual maturation of FCBCW as a whole. By preparing the next generation of faithful lead servants, the congregation will be further encouraged to grow in Christ. The twelve candidates, who were trained as deacons, serve as examples of faith and godliness both for the present congregation and subsequent generations faithful servants.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL DEACON QUALIFICATIONS AND ROLES
SURVEY (BDQRS)

Each deacon candidate used the following instrument to provide their basic demographic information, pre and post-series knowledge of the biblical qualifications and roles of a deacon, and a self-assessment of their character, spiritual health, and spiritual disciplines.

Biblical Deacon Qualifications and Roles Survey (BDQRS)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current understanding of deacon qualifications and roles of the participant. Hanley Liu is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

[ ] I agree to participate personal ID#_____
[ ] I do not agree to participate

Section I

The first section of the BDQRS will obtain some demographic information about the individuals taking this survey.

Directions: Answer the following questions by filling in the blank space provided.

1. What is your current age? _____

2. How long have you been a born again Christian? _____

3. How long have you been a member of FCBCW? _____

4. Are you married?
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

5. Do you have any children age 18 or younger living in the home?
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

Section II

The second section of the BDQRS will assess your knowledge of the biblical qualifications for deacons.

6. Which of the following constitute as biblical qualifications for deacons?
Check all that apply:

___ A. Be well respected and not deceitful

___ B. Not a heavy drinker

___ C. Able to preach and teach God's Word

___ D. Good steward of personal finances

___ E. Not greedy for money, power, or prestige

___ F. Able to refute false teaching

___ G. Hold firm to the gospel and sound doctrine

___ H. Tested in enduring faith before assuming the office of deacon

___ I. Not a brand new believer

___ J. Faithful in marriage—prioritizing one's marriage

___ K. Manage your children/household well—prioritizing family life

___ L. Spouse must likewise be of good/reputable character

Section III
The third part of the BDQRS deals with your knowledge of the biblical role of deacons.

7. Which of the following apply to the *primary* role of a deacon? Check all that apply:

___ A. Critically examine all pastoral decisions

___ B. Hospital visitations

___ C. Manage church finances

___ D. Share the gospel with confidence

___ E. Disciple new believers

___ F. Sit on the ruling council of the church

___ G. Preach and teach God's Word

___ H. Manage the building program

8. Which of the following apply to the *primary* role of a pastor? Check all that apply:

___ A. Lead the congregation

___ B. Preach God's Word

___ C. Care for the spiritual needs of church members

___ D. Serve as part of the ruling council of the church

___ E. Manage the finances of the church

___ F. Care for the physical needs of the church

___ G. Manage the building program

___ H. Refute false teaching

Section IV
The fourth section of the BDQRS is a self-assessment of your character—as it pertains to the qualifications for deacon.

Directions: The questions in this section ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

Using the following scale, please write the number that best corresponds to your feelings in response to the following statements:

9.   I consider myself to be a spiritual leader in my speech.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10.   I consider myself to be a spiritual leader through my actions.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11.   I consider myself to be well thought of by other church members.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12.   I consider myself to be a faithful servant towards others.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13.   I consider myself free from addiction to substance abuse.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14.   I consider myself to be a good steward of my finances.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15.   I consider myself to be generous towards others.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16.   If asked, I could articulate the gospel with confidence.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17.   I consider myself to be grounded in sound doctrine.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18.   My marriage impacts my ability to lead spiritually (if applicable).
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19.   My parenting impacts my ability to lead spiritually (if applicable).
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20.   My spiritual health directly impacts my ability to lead spiritually.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21.   I am willing to have my life publically examined for the office of deacon.
                SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Section V
The fifth section of the BDQRS is a self-assessment of your practice of the basic spiritual disciplines.

22.   I read my Bible (check only one)
___ A. more than once per day
___ B. once per day
___ C. several times per week
___ D. once per week
___ E. several times per month
___ F. Never

23.   I attempt to memorize Scripture (check only one)
___ A. more than once per day
___ B. once per day
___ C. several times per week
___ D. once per week
___ E. several times per month
___ F. Never

24. I pray (check only one)
___ A. more than once per day
___ B. once per day
___ C. several times per week
___ D. once per week
___ E. several times per month
___ F. Never

25. I have a specific time set aside for prayer.
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

APPENDIX 2

DEACON SERIES CURRICULUM

The following packet contains the curriculum developed for training deacon candidates. Included are the reading list and lesson plans for the five-week deacon series. The actual reading material is not included here.

Deacon Series Reading List

1. Mark Dever, *A Display of God's Glory,* chapter 1: Deacons

2. Jamie Dunlop, "Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servants"

3. Benjamin Merkle, "The Biblical Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons"

4. Tim Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel"

5. Mark Dever, *A Display of God's Glory,* chapter 2: Elders

6. Matt Schmucker, "The Committee-Free, Task-Specific Deacon"

7. Matt Schmucker, "How to Separate Deacon Work from Elder Work"

8. Mark Dever, *A Display of God's Glory,* chapter 3: Congregationalism

9. Hanley Liu, "Clarifying the Role of Deacons in Southern Baptist History"

10. Tim Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics"

Deacon Training Session #1

The Biblical Foundations for Deacon Ministry

Objective: To understand the New Testament basis for deacon ministry.

1. Introduction to the Deacon Training Series

    a. Welcome!

    b. Go over training schedule

    c. Preview reading assignments

    d. Explain goal of training series

2. Discuss assigned (pre-session) reading

    a. Mark Dever, *A Display of His Glory,* chapter 1: Deacons

        i. How did this chapter inform or change your view of deacon ministry?

        ii. How did this chapter shape your understanding of who qualifies to be a deacon?

    b. Jamie Dunlop, *"Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servants"*

        i. How did this article inform or change your view of deacon ministry?

        ii. Why does Dunlop refer to deacons as "shock-absorbers?"

3. What is a Deacon?

    a. Acts 6:1-7 provides the prototypical model for deacon ministry.

        i. The prototype for deacons

        ii. The prototypical deacon requirements and responsibilities

        iii. The prototypical model for selecting deacons within congregational polity

    b. Overview of Acts 6:1-7

        i. What was the problem in Acts 6:1-2?

        ii. What was the resolution in Acts 6:3-6?

        iii. Who were the Seven?

        iv. How does the selection of seven Hellenists—to meet the needs of the

Hellenistic widows—apply to the tri-lingual/tri-congregational context of FCBCW?

    c. What do we learn from Acts 6 regarding the character and responsibilities of deacons?

        i. Deacons are lead servants who love and serve the church, allowing the pastors to focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer.

        ii. Deacons are selected on the grounds of godly character, spiritual maturity, and faithful service.

        iii. Deacons help promote unity and love among church members.

        iv. Deacons gave themselves to the ministries of mercy and care, which include the administration and distribution of funds and resources.

4. Practical examples of deacon ministry include, but are not limited to:

    a. Administration

    b. Finances

    c. Mercy and Care

    d. Building and Facilities

    e. Human Resources/Personnel

    f. Ushering

    g. Hospitality

    h. Distributing the Lord's Supper

    i. Small Group Leaders

    j. Fellowship Leaders

5. What are some topics that you want to discuss or gain clarity about?

Deacon Training Session #2

The Qualifications for Deacons

Objective: To understand the biblical qualifications for deacons, including a clear grasp of the gospel.

1. Discuss assigned reading

    a. Ben Merkle, "The Biblical Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons"

        i. How did this article sharpen your understanding on the qualifications and responsibilities of deacons?

2. What are the biblical qualifications for a deacon?

    a. 1 Timothy 3:8-13 provides a list of biblical qualifications for the office of deacon.

        i. Dignified (3:8)

        ii. Not double tongued (3:8)

        iii. Not addicted to wine (3:8)

        iv. Not greedy for dishonest gain (3:8)

        v. Holding the mystery of faith with a clear conscience (3:9)

        vi. Tested first and proven blameless (3:10)

        vii. Faithful in marriage and family life (3:12)

    b. Qualifications for Female Deacons (3:11)

        i. "Wives" or "Women?"

    c. Encouragement for Deacons (3:13)

3. What does it mean to hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience?

    a. What is the gospel?

        i. God

        ii. Man

        iii. Christ

        iv. Response

4. Why is it important for deacons to have a clear and confident grasp of the gospel?

5. What are some common objections to the gospel and how do you respond?

6. Discuss assigned reading

    a. Tim Keller "The Centrality of the Gospel"

        i. What does it mean to hold to the power of the gospel?

        ii. What does it mean to hold to the sufficiency of the gospel?

        iii. What are the two thieves of the gospel?

        iv. Keller helps us to see how the gospel addresses our approach to various aspects of life. How might this article be resourceful for deacons as they minister to people with various struggles?

Deacon Training Session #3

The Role of Deacons in Relation to the Pastors

Objective: To understand role distinction between the offices of pastor (elder) and deacon.

1. Discuss assigned reading

    a. Mark Dever, *A Display of His Glory,"* chapter 2: Elders

    b. Matt Schmucker, "The Committee-Free, Task-Specific Deacon"

    c. Matt Schmucker, "How to Separate Deacon Work from Elder Work"

        i. How did the assigned reading help you distinguish between the offices and roles of pastors and deacons?

        ii. Why is it important to maintain the distinction between pastors and deacons?

        iii. How might the work of pastors and deacons overlap?

2. FCBCW is pastor-led, deacon served, and congregationally governed.

    a. "Pastor" and "Elder" are interchangeable titles.

    b. Congregations are to be led by a *plurality* of pastors (team ministry).

    c. Congregations are *to be led, not ruled* by a plurality of pastors.

3. What are the biblical qualifications for pastors/elders?

    a. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 prescribes the qualifications for pastors.

    b. "Being able to teach" distinguishes the role of pastors from deacons.

        i. Deacons *can* teach and may be able to teach, but pastors *must be able* to teach. Since spiritual leadership is grounded on God's Word, pastors must be able to give sound instructions from Scripture.

        ii. Deacons are leaders, but they exercise a different type of leadership than the overseeing role of a pastor.

4. In your opinion, how do you think people at FCBCW understand the topic of pastors/elders and deacons, and the distinction between the two offices?

Deacon Training Session #4

The Role of Deacons within Congregationalism

Objective: To understand the role of deacons within the context of

Congregational/Baptist Polity

1. Discuss assigned reading

    a. Mark Dever, *A Display of His Glory,* chapter 3: Congregationalism

        i. How did this chapter help sharpen, clarify, or inform your

        understanding of congregationalism?

2. What is congregationalism?

    a. By definition, congregationalism denotes the exercise of church polity, which

    affirms the autonomy of local churches wherein the highest human authority

    is vested in the congregation, not the leadership.[1] Within congregationalism,

    pastors lead, rather than rule and deacons fulfill the role of lead servants.

3. Congregationalism reflects the pattern of governance seen in the New Testament

    (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:2, 9-13; 2 Cor 2:6; Acts 6:1-6).

4. Models of congregationalism that blur the role of pastors and deacons:

    a. A plural eldership composed of the pastor(s) and deacons

    b. The "balance of power" model

    c. The "hiring board" model

    d. Where did these confusing practices come from?

5. Discuss assigned reading: Hanley Liu, "Clarifying the Role of Deacons in Southern

    Baptist History"

    a. How did this chapter clarify or inform your understanding of deacon roles

    within Southern Baptist churches?

---

[1]John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005), 143.

6. Historical Overview of Southern Baptist Deacon Life

    a. Early Baptist Deacons (1600s-1700s)

        i. What "three tables" did early Baptist deacons devote themselves to?

    b. From Table Servants to Business Boards and Managers (1800s-1950s)

        i. How and why did the "board of directors" paradigm make its way into Baptist churches?

        ii. How did the "business manager" paradigm make its way into Baptist churches?

        iii. How did these two paradigms confuse the biblical role of pastors and deacons?

    c. Movement Away from Management and towards Ministry (1950s-1990s)

        i. How do the writings of Naylor, Foshee, Deweese, Webb, and Sheffield reveal the efforts of SBC leaders to transition deacons back to the biblical role of lead servants?

7. Discussion

    a. What do you see here at FCBCW regarding the role of deacons and regarding how the congregation views the role of deacons?

    b. What are some of the fears people might have had that led to some of these trends?

Deacon Training Session #5

The Role of Deacons within the Vision, Distinctive, and Cultural Context of FCBCW

Objective: To understand the role of deacons within a tri-congregational and tri-lingual church context, as lead servants who model godliness and cultivate a healthy culture among church officers.

1. Discuss assigned reading

    a. Tim Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics"

        i.   How did this article inform your understanding of leadership and church size?

        ii. Where is FCBCW in regards to size?

        iii. Where is your respective congregation in regards to size?

        iv. What is the leadership culture of FCBCW?

        v.   What is the leadership culture within your respective congregation?

        vi. What style of leadership is practical here at FCBCW or within your congregation?

2. What is the vision of FCBCW?

    a. To glorify God by being a vibrant church, driven by a passion for God's Word, God's family and God's world that reproduces vibrant churches locally and globally.

3. What are the desired distinctive(s) of FCBCW?

    a. Biblical

    b. Intergenerational

    c. Missional

4. What is the desired culture of FCBCW?

    a. *High view of God & Scripture:* We strive to honor God in all things—in the home, in the church and the world.

    b. *Kingdom mindset:* We have a passion for God's kingdom here and willingly

invest beyond FCBC Walnut.

   c. *Integrity of character:* We believe that "being" precedes "doing."

   d. *Joy in ministry*: We believe that serving God is an honor and privilege, which should be manifested by a joyful spirit.

   e. *Invest in people:* We choose to prioritize our resources and efforts in building up people for His Kingdom.

   f. *Strive for excellence:* We will optimize our efforts in order to give God our best.

   g. *Lead by example:* Followers generally will only go as far as the leaders.

5. What is the role of a deacon within the context of FCBCW?

   a. The office of deacon is essential for the health and growth of FCBCW.

   b. Co-laborer in the gospel-ministry

      i. Support the pastors by being an intergenerational, intercultural, and tri-congregational ambassador (not every officer will operate on a church wide interface, but FCBCW deacons must).

      ii. Promote communication and unity among the three congregations and worship services.

      iii. Assist in care, counseling, and mercy ministries within your respective language congregation.

      iv. Administer and lead in areas that are more sensitive for pastors to oversee (i.e.—finance, personnel committee, etc.)

   c. Lead Officer

      i. Cultivate a healthy culture among church officers.

      ii. Cultivate FCBCW's vision, distinctive, culture.

      iii. Be a mentor for new/future officers.

   d. Lead Servant

      i. Model of servant-hood

       ii. Model of faithful ministry

6. Discussion

    a. What are the outstanding questions you still have regarding the qualifications and role of deacons within FCBCW?

    b. How has this training series been helpful for you and in what ways can the training series be improved upon?

APPENDIX 3

CURRICULUM EVALUATION
RUBRIC AND RESULTS

An expert panel composed of FCBCW's seven pastors and six current deacons used the following rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the deacon series curriculum. Table A1 shows the summative scores for each evaluator.

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1. The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on deacons *(biblical faithfulness)*.					
2. The material is theologically sound *(biblical faithfulness)*					
3. The objective of the lesson is clearly stated *(teaching methodology and scope)*.					
4. The points of the lesson clearly support the objective *(teaching methodology)*.					
5. Overall, the lesson is clearly presented *(teaching methodology)*.					
6. The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material *(scope)*.					
7. The lesson is clearly relevant to the issues of deacon ministry *(scope and applicability)*.					
8. The lesson contains points of practical application *(applicability)*.					

Table A1. Summative scores for each curriculum evaluator

Evaluator	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Total
Pastor 1	32	32	32	32	32	160
Pastor 2	32	32	32	29	32	157
Pastor 3	30	30	30	30	30	150
Pastor 4	31	31	31	31	31	155
Pastor 5	31	31	31	31	31	155
Pastor 6	32	32	32	32	32	160
Pastor 7	32	32	32	32	32	160
Deacon 1	32	32	32	32	32	160
Deacon 2	30	30	30	30	30	150
Deacon 3	27	27	27	27	27	135
Deacon 4	26	24	24	24	27	125
Deacon 5	32	32	32	32	32	160
Deacon 6	32	32	32	32	32	160
Average	30.69	30.53	30.53	30.3	30.76	152.84

APPENDIX 4

T-TEST RESULTS

Figure A1 contains the data analysis for the t-test for dependent samples. Table A2 details the change in pre and post-series scores. The t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistical change in the candidate's knowledge of the biblical qualifications and role for deacons.

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	20.75	26.5
Variance	14.02272727	1.545454545
Observations	12	12
Pearson Correlation	0.126933516	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	11	
t Stat	-5.251494935	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000135979	
t Critical one-tail	1.795884819	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000271959	
t Critical two-tail	2.20098516	

Figure A1. T-test analysis

Table A2. T-test results for content knowledge

Participant (Candidate)	Pre-Series	Post-Series	Increase (Percentage)
1	18/28	27/28	32
2	19/28	23/28	14
3	26/28	26/28	0
4	24/28	26/28	7
5	22/28	27/28	17
6	25/28	27/28	7
7	20/28	27/28	25
8	18/28	27/28	32
9	21/28	27/28	21
10	14/28	27/28	46
11	17/28	26/28	32
12	25/28	28/28	11

APPENDIX 5

DEACON CANDIDACY PLAN FOR FCBCW

The following is a strategic plan for the deacon candidacy process at FCBCW. This plan was presented to an expert panel of FCBCW's seven pastors and six current deacons to be evaluated.

TWO-YEAR (TWENTY-FOUR MONTH) DEACON CANDIDACY PLAN

PRE-CANDIDACY

Candidate Identification and Invitation:

1. The pastors will identify potential candidates on the grounds of faithful character and service.

2. The pastors will invite each potential candidate to prayerfully consider deacon candidacy.

MONTHS 1-2

Interview and Assessment:

1. The pastors will interview the candidate (and spouse if applicable).

2. The candidate (and spouse if applicable) will take a pre-assessment survey to measure their knowledge of the biblical qualifications and role for deacons.

Attend Deacon Training Series:

1. The candidate (and spouse if applicable) will attend a five-session training series.

2. The course is designed to increase the candidate's knowledge of the biblical qualifications and role for deacons.

3. Upon completion of the training series, the candidate will take a post-assessment survey to measure their knowledge of the biblical qualifications and role for deacons.

MONTHS 3-20

Mentorship:

1. Each candidate will be assigned to one of FCBCW's ordained deacons—to be mentored for personal growth and deacon ministry.

2. The criteria or standard for examining/measuring the candidate's spiritual growth is the list of character qualifications for deacons, which is found in 1 Tim 3:8-13.

3. The mentor-deacon will utilize the self-assessment section of the post-survey as a discussion point to discern and observe the candidate's character.

4. The mentorship arrangement will begin immediately after the candidate completes the training course and passes the post-assessment survey.

5. The mentorship arrangement will continue until the date of ordination.

Ministry Assignments to Observe the Candidate's Character and Service:

1. Candidate presented to the congregation

2. Assist with the preparation and distribution of communion elements

3. Serve in a diaconal role as a service-team leader

    a. Examples of diaconal roles at FCBCW:

        i. Fellowship Administrator/Coordinator

        ii. Small Groups Administrator/Coordinator

        iii. Care team leader

        iv. Ushering team leader

        v. Hospitality team leader

        vi. Finance team leader

        vii. Building team leader

        viii. Personnel/Human Resources team leader

    b. The ministry assignments allow the church to further observe the candidate's character and practice in servant-oriented ministry.

MONTHS 21-24

Final Assessment:

1. The pastors and the candidate's mentor deacon will provide a final assessment to determine the candidate's readiness for ordination.

    a. The senior pastor will meet with the mentor-deacon to gather verbal feedback regarding the candidate's readiness for ordination.

2. Feedback from other ordained deacons and church members would be factored in—as applicable.

    a. Verbal feedback from other ordained deacons will be obtained during a regular pastors and deacons meeting.

    b. Verbal feedback from church members includes any issues or "red flags" that emerge or are observed—in general—during the entire candidacy process.

3. Feedback from the candidate's spouse will be weighed heavily as part of the final assessment.

4. Any appropriate feedback will be given to the deacon candidate.

5. Since the grounds for readiness are the character qualifications provided in Scripture (1 Tim 3:8-13), in the rare case that the candidate is found unqualified during the candidacy process, the candidate will not be ordained for the office of deacon.

    a. Typically, these discussions would have already taken place prior to identifying the candidate for deacon candidacy.

Ordination Service:

1. The candidate will be ordained to the office of deacon in a formal church-wide ordination service.

APPENDIX 6

DEACON CANDIDACY PLAN EVALUATION
RUBRIC AND RESULTS

An expert panel composed of FCBCW's seven pastors and six current deacons

used the following rubric to evaluate the strategic plan for deacon candidacy. Table A3

shows the summative scores for each evaluator.

Deacon Candidacy Plan: Evaluation Tool					
Plan Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1. The (deacon candidacy) plan is clearly stated and easy to understand.					
2. The plan is easy to implement.					
3. The plan includes the element of mentorship.					
4. The ministry assignments accurately reflect the biblical role of deacons.					
5. Successful completion of the ministry assignments help to indicate the candidate's readiness for ordination.					
6. The plan provides steps towards deacon ordination.					
7. This plan improves the current deacon candidacy process at FCBCW.					
8. Future deacon candidates can be easily incorporated into this plan.					

Table A3. Summative scores for each plan evaluator

	Criterion Number								
Evaluator	*C1*	*C2*	*C3*	*C4*	*C5*	*C6*	*C7*	*C8*	*Total*
Pastor 1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Pastor 2	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	30
Pastor 3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	30
Pastor 4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	31
Pastor 5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Pastor 6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Pastor 7	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Deacon 1	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	29
Deacon 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Deacon 3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	28
Deacon 4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	30
Deacon 5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Deacon 6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	32
Average	4	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.6	4	3.9	3.8	30.9

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akin, Daniel L., Chad Brand, and R. Stanton Norman. *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004.

Anthony, Michael J. *Effective Church Board: A Handbook for Mentoring and Training Servant Leaders*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993.

Anyabwile, Thabiti. *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Bruce, F. F. *The Book of the Acts*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988.

Burroughs, P. E. *Honoring the Deaconship.* Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929.

Cowen, Gerald P. *Who Rules the Church? Examining Congregational Leadership and Church Government.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.

Cranfield, C. E. B. *Romans 9-16*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979

Culy, Martin M., and Mikeal C. Parsons. *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003.

Dever, Mark. *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2012.

_____. *A Display of God's Glory: Basics of Church Structure, Deacons, Elders, Congregationalism & Membership.* Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001.

_____. *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.

Deweese, Charles W. *The Emerging Role of Deacons.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1979.

Dibelius, Martin, and Hans Conzelmann. *The Pastoral Epistles; A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.

Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel, eds. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988.

Elwell, Walter A., and Philip Wesley Comfort, eds. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Tyndale Reference Library. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001.

Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians.* New International Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995.

Fernando, Ajith. *Acts*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Acts of the Apostles*: *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries. New York: Double Day, 1998.

Foshee, Howard B. *The Ministry of the Deacon.* Nashville: Convention Press, 1968.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005.

Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Philippians.* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 34. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.

Howell, R. B. C. *The Deaconship.* Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1846.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries. New York: Double Day, 2001.

Keener, Craig S. *Acts 3:1-14:28: An Exegetical Commentary.* Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

Keller, Timothy J. *Resources for Deacons: Love Expressed through Mercy Ministries.* Atlanta: Christian Education and Publications of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1985.

Knight, George W., III. *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing; Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1992.

Laniak, Timothy, S. *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible.* Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006.

Lea, Thomas D. and Hayne P. Griffin. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. New American Commentary, vol. 34. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

Liefeld, Walter L. *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus.* NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Marshall, I. Howard. *Acts*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press Academic, 2008.

_____. *Pastoral Epistles.* International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.

Merkle, Benjamin L. *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2008.

Merkle, Benjamin L., and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds. *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2014.

Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles.* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000.

Naylor, Robert. *The Baptist Deacon.* Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955.

Newton, Phil A., and Matt Schmucker. *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2014.

O'Brien, Peter T. *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text.* New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991.

Parsons, Mikeal C. *Acts.* Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Pendleton, J. M. *Baptist Church Manual.* Rev. ed. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966.

Pervo, Richard I. *Acts: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible.* Hermenia. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2009.

Peterson, David G. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009.

Polhill, John B. *Acts.* New American Commentary, vol. 26. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Reference, 1992.

Salkind, Neil J. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008.

Schnabel, Eckhard. *Acts.* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Schreiner, Thomas. *Romans,* Baker Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998.

Sheffield, Robert. *Deacons As Leaders.* Nashville: Convention Press, 1991.

_____. *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons.* Nashville: Convention Press, 1990.

Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership.* Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1995.

_____. *The New Testament Deacon: The Church's Minister of Mercy.* Colorado Springs, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1992.

Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006.

Webb, Henry. *Deacons: Servant Models in the Church.* Updated ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.

Witherington, Ben, III. *Acts: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.

Articles

Breidenthal, Thomas E. "Exodus from Privilege: Reflections on the Diaconate in Acts." *Anglican Theological Review* 95, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 275-92.

Cranfield, C. E. B. "Diakonia in the New Testament." In *The Bible and Christian Life: A Collection of Essays,* edited by C. E. B. Cranfield, 69-87. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985.

Davis, Andrew. "Practical Issues in Deacon Ministry." In *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, 325-29. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2015.

Dever, Mark. "Elders and Deacons in History." In *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, 229-42. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2015.

Deweese, Charles W. "Baptist Women Deacons and Deaconesses: Key Developments and Trends, 1609-2005." *Baptist History and Heritage* 40, no. 3 (September 2005): 65-79.

_____. "Ministries of Baptist Deacons in Early America." In *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service*. Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, (1990): 3-14.

Dunlop, Jamie. "Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servants." *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 5-7. Accessed July 10, 2015. https://www.9marks.org/article/deacons-shock-absorbers-and-servants/.

Foshee, Howard B. Foreword to *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons,* by Robert Sheffield, edited by Gary Hardin*,* 4-6. Nashville: Convention Press, 1990.

Garrett, James Leo, Jr. "The Congregation-Led Church: Congregational Polity." In *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity,* edited by Daniel L. Akin, Chad Brand, and R. Stanton Norman, 157-94. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004.

Haykin, Michael A. G. "Some Historical Roots of Congregationalism." In *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, 27-45. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2015.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. "Behind the Word 'Deacon': A New Testament Study." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140, no. 558 (April 1983): 151-62.

Keller, Timothy. "The Centrality of the Gospel" (2000), 1-9. Accessed March 8, 2017. http://www.gospelinlife.com/the-centrality-of-the-gospel-9249.

_____. "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics" (2006), 1-15. Accessed March 8, 2017. http://www.gospelinlife.com/leadership-and-church-size-dynamics.

Knight, George W., III. "Two Offices (Elders/Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching/Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders): A New Testament Study." *Presbyterion* 11, no. 1 (1985): 1-12.

Loftis, John. "The Emerging Identity of Deacons, 1800-1950." In *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service*. Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, 1990, 15-21.

Marks, Patricia. "Holy and Unholy Deacons in Late Nineteenth-Century Popular Verse." *Christianity And Literature* (January 2012), 241-52.

Merkle, Benjamin L. "The Biblical Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons." *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 8-11. Accessed July 10, 2015. https://www.9marks.org/article/the-biblical-qualifications-and-responsibilities-of-deacons/.

_____. "The Office of Deacon." In *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, 311-24. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2015.

Newton, Phil. "Moving from a Deacon-Led to an Elder-Led Church." *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 19-21. Accessed July 10, 2015. https://9marks.org/article/moving-deacon-led-elder-led-church/.

9Marks. *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010). Accessed July 10, 2015. https://9marks.org/journal/deacons/.

Perry, Greg. "Phoebe of Cenchreae and 'Women' of Ephesus: 'Deacons' in the Earliest Churches." *Presbyterion* 36, no. 1 (2010): 9-36.

Schmucker, Matt. "The Committee-Free, Task-Specific Deacon." *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 15-17. Accessed July 10, 2015. https://9marks.org/article/committee-free-task-specific-deacon/.

_____. "How to Separate Deacon Work and Elder Work." *9Marks Journal: Deacons Are Shock Absorbers* (May-June 2010): 22-24. Accessed July 10, 2015. https://9marks.org/article/how-to-separate-deacon-work-and-elder-work/.

Selby, Andrew M. "Bishops, Elders, and Deacons in the Philippian Church: Evidence of Plurality from Paul and Polycarp." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 39, no. 1 (2012): 79-94.

Southern Baptist Historical Society, and Southern Baptist Convention. *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service*. Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, 1990.

Stancil, Bill. "Recent Patterns and Contemporary Trends in Deacon Life." In *Baptist Deacons: A Story of Service.* Nashville: Historical Commission, SBC and Southern Baptist Historical Society, 1990, 22-30.

Ware, Bruce. "Putting It All Together: A Theology of Church Leadership." In *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond,* edited by Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas Schreiner, 283-307. Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2014.

Wellum, Stephen J., and Kirk Wellum, "The Biblical and Theological Case for Congregationalism." In *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, 47-78. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2015.

ABSTRACT

TRAINING DEACON CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRY
AT FIRST CHINESE BAPTIST CHURCH
OF WALNUT, CALIFORNIA

Hanley Liu, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert K. Cheong

This project is designed to train deacon candidates for ministry at First Chinese Baptist Church of Walnut, California (FCBCW). The training process involves assessing and increasing the knowledge of deacon candidates in regard to the biblical qualifications and practice of deacon ministry. Included at the end of the initial training process, is a strategic plan for incorporating future deacons, as well as improving the structures of the candidacy process at FCBCW.

Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context of FCBCW, along with the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, definitions, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for deacon ministry. Foundational to the design of the training curriculum are two biblical passages: Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Together, these passages serve as the basis for the qualifications and roles of deacons in the local church. Chapter 3 addresses the practice of deacons in light of Baptist church polity. Contrary to trends within nineteenth-and twentieth-century Baptist polity, deacons are to be exemplary servant leaders who function under the leadership of pastors. Chapter 4 details the curriculum and lesson plans. Chapter 5 concludes with an overall evaluation of the project, and suggestions for improvement and further development.

VITA

Hanley Liu

EDUCATION
        B.A., Biola University, 2003
        M.Div., Talbot School of Theology, 2006

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT
        High School Intern, First Baptist Church, Alhambra, California, 2001-2002
        Pastoral Intern, First Chinese Baptist Church, Walnut, California, 2003-2006
        Youth Minister, First Chinese Baptist Church, Walnut, California, 2006-2011
        English Pastor, First Chinese Baptist Church, Walnut, California, 2011-