

The Ministry and the Responsibility of Our Deacons

It is good to recall the ministry and the responsibilities of our Deacons here at Blue River.

The role of the Deacon in the local congregation goes back to the very first ones chosen by the church at Jerusalem in Acts 6:1-7. At that point, the great growth of the Jerusalem church was putting a strain on the Twelve Apostles, who had been bearing all of the responsibilities of that congregation. "It is not desirable," they then said to the church, "that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:2-4). The church then elected seven men, mostly with a Greek-speaking background, to share the load of leadership duties.

The Brethren adopted the model of the early church to have Elders (the highest degree of preaching ministry), Ministers (also preachers), and Deacons. All were ordained to their particular calling in the church. When the plural ministry was still in practice, the Ministers took on the spiritual responsibilities and the Deacons, more of the physical care and "nuts and bolts" aspects of the church's ministry. In more recent years, with the adoption of the pastoral model of the church, the Deacons have taken on spiritual duties in assisting the Pastor in his work. Together, the Ministers and Deacons (the ordained *officials* of the congregation) make up the Official Board at Blue River.

At Blue River, it has been amazing to see how God has provided for the care of both the spiritual and physical areas in our Deacons. With our seven active Deacons, and the five emeritus Deacons (having reached age 65 or 70, though still very active), we have an array of skills, talents, spiritual gifts, and wisdom that are hard to match elsewhere. And lest some be tempted to think that our Deacons aren't very involved, we want to look at what they are doing for the blessing of the Church and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Deacons take an active role in the leadership of the Church on a constant basis. Monthly they meet together as the Official Board. When a man hears the call of the church in the special Council, one thing he commits to is that on the first Monday of most months, he

will be in prayer, discussion, and decision-making for our body. Our Deacons take this ongoing responsibility quite seriously. They, with their corporately (that is, as a body) accumulated wisdom, give counsel and suggestions to the other officers of the church.

Our Deacons, while serving on the Official Board as the most serious duty, also take on roles on other church committees, among them the Christian Education Committee, the Ministerial Committee, the Missions Committee, the Trustees, and the Youth Steering Committee. In these committees, our deacons help develop the ongoing program our church.

Our Deacons teach Sunday School classes (at least four at the present time). They assist with the Chain O'Lakes Ministry. They teach the Adult Bible Study on occasion, and have been doing most of the leading and assisting of the youth ministry for many years.

Our Deacons visit in the church, ministering encouragement and blessing to our shut-ins, nursing home members, and others as the need arises. They often share counsel and Biblical wisdom with those in spiritual and physical need. They carefully and prayerfully assess the needs of members who might be going through a "rough patch" in their lives.

Our Deacons help lead worship, tell the childrens' stories, share in special music, and host meals for Sunday visitors and for our evangelists. They share in the leadership of the Undershepherd Flock groups. They are key persons in our media ministry.

Our Deacons work at church-wide work days, and also at times when it may not be as obvious, doing little things that are hardly noticed yet are necessary for the benefit of the church grounds.

Our Deacons share in the administering of the ordinances—assisting with baptisms, anointings, and the laying on of hands. They care for the provisions for the Love Feast and Communion services. They are regular in their attendance at the services of the Church.

Our Deacons put together their respective, individual spiritual gifts—which include the majority of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament—and their talents, that range from accounting, business leadership, organizational skill, people skills, and mechanical abilities. All these they use for the good of the Church and the glory of God.

Our Deacons represent the congregation in other places, at conferences, and in broader church meetings.

We must not forget the work of our Deacons' wives in assisting their husbands to carry on the spiritual work. They, too, add a strong component to every aspect of the Deacons' work at Blue River. Oftentimes they bear greater burden when their husbands are attending meetings, visiting, or sharing in one of the ministries of the church.

God has been so gracious to Blue River to give us this unique set of men who love Jesus and who love His Church. These men are highly aware of the example that they set in serving Christ. Blue River's Deacons are the "men of *good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.*"

Remember that it is the Church—our congregation—that has called our Deacons to their weighty roles. As the Word says, "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Hebrews 13:7). Would you pray for, and encourage them in their work?

Pastor Craig Alan Myers