

Being a Deacon at Rugby Baptist Church

This information leaflet is distributed by the Church Secretary to church members who are considering standing for the Diaconate.

What the Bible says - 1 Timothy 3:8-13 (*The Message* version) **The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it. They must be reverent before the mystery of the faith, not using their position to try to run things. Let them prove themselves first. If they show they can do it, take them on. No exceptions are to be made for women—same qualifications: serious, dependable, not sharp-tongued, not over fond of wine. Servants in the church are to be committed to their spouses, attentive to their own children, and diligent in looking after their own affairs. Those who do this servant work will come to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus-faith.**

The Bible places a high regard on the qualities required of a deacon, just as it does on the expectations of the lifestyle of any believer. There are times when all of us, whether appointed to an office or not, fall short of the standards that are set. This is because we are human. Deacons are expected to set a good example of leadership within the Church, but they are not expected to be perfect ... otherwise the task would be impossible! Like every other Christian, a deacon knows that there are times when they fail to live up to these expectations, but also knows that in recognising these shortcomings, God is there to forgive and provide the opportunity for trying to do better in the future.

What Deacons do. Deacons are appointed to look after the church, both spiritually and practically. By the church we mean both the community of believers and the physical entity of the church: its building and activities. Their role is as servants, but this also includes many of the things that the world would describe as leadership. They do not do everything themselves but are there to ensure that what is necessary for the good of the church does get done. In all this, they work closely with the Minister/s and support them and their families.

Each Deacon brings his or her own gifts to the role and thus a balance is created within the Deacons' Meeting where decisions are made, and in the organising of various tasks and activities. None of the Deacons are good at everything and part of being a Deacon is a willingness to listen to others and work together to do what is right. Deacons pray for the work of the church prior to each service of worship, and during the first part of each deacons' meeting. They also take it in turns to lead the church in a prayer of thanksgiving at the communion table, and most Deacons take a turn in leading the monthly prayer meeting and other prayer occasions during the year. Deacons also take it in turns to serve communion.

Deacons meet to discuss the work of the church monthly, on the first Tuesday of the month (except August). The meetings usually consist of a variety of topics, typically considering the future mission and direction of the church, the practical arrangements for forthcoming festivals, events and activities, and also some issues of a more practical nature concerning church organisation and finance. In legal terms, Deacons are the Trustees of the Charity known as "Rugby Baptist Church" and, as such, are responsible for ensuring that the church is carrying out its purposes for public benefit, and is complying with its constitution and the law. As individuals, Deacons are expected to have a special concern for the spiritual and practical well-being of church members and attendees, and to be alert to opportunities for service and mission to the community. Most Deacons fulfil other positions in the Church, but this is not necessary. We are always open

to new possibilities for service and ministry, over and beyond the current range of activities and church jobs.

What decisions do Deacons make? Deacons by themselves do not make large decisions affecting the work and ministry of the church. Acting collectively, they may make some day to day decisions on routine matters of detail and organisation, and ensure that appropriate arrangements are made where necessary, but all significant issues are referred to the Church Meeting for a decision, quite often with a recommendation about the way forward. The Church Meeting does not always agree! In practice, the Deacons seek God's guidance in identifying the key issues for the Church and, using their experience and other help available, develop plans for the future which they then share with others, prior to decisions being made. At the same time, they seek to put into practice the principles agreed at previous Church Meetings about the kind of church God is leading us to be.

Who can be a Deacon? The Church's Minister/s are, by virtue of their office, full members of what is called the Diaconate. There are eleven other places for Deacons on the Diaconate: the Church Secretary, the Church Treasurer and up to 9 others appointed, usually, for a three year period. Any member of Rugby Baptist Church is eligible to be nominated for the office of Deacon, although the constitution states that a majority must have been baptised as believers. Such a baptism may have taken place in this or another Baptist Church or in another Christian church. In order to serve, Deacons have to comply with the rules on child and vulnerable adult protection outlined in the Baptist Union's Safe to Grow policy and with the Charity Commission's rules on eligibility for Charity Trustees. In practice this means that all Ministers and Deacons are required to have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced Disclosure certificate. More details of these requirements are available on request.

How are Deacons appointed? Deacons are appointed by the members of the Church taking part in an election. Elections take place by secret ballot at a Church Meeting, usually the Annual General Meeting of the Church. To be valid, a nomination has to be signed by two church members and the nominee, who signs to indicate consent to being put forward for the role of deacon having read this leaflet, and to declare his or her eligibility to be appointed as a charity trustee. If there are more candidates than places available, the nominee(s) with the highest number of votes is/are elected, provided that they secure the support of at least two thirds of members present and voting. If there is the same number of candidates as places, or fewer, a nominee also has to secure the support of at least two thirds of the members voting in order to be elected. If this does not happen, the vacancy is held open. Three Diaconate positions are declared vacant each year and each position lasts for three years. If a position is filled part way through the three year term, it lasts until the conclusion of the three year period. More recently it has been agreed that, after two consecutive periods of office (i.e 6 years continuous service), a deacon will be encouraged, but not obliged, to stand down in order, it is hoped, to open the Diaconate up more to new leaders with new ideas.

How can I find out more? Please speak to a Minister, the Church Secretary or any of the current Deacons who will be happy to discuss things with you in more detail and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Revised January 2016