

Constitutional Updates

DEACON REORGANIZATION

Frequently Asked Questions

Why not just call them “volunteers” – why call them “Deacons?”

The word “Deacon” means “Servant,” thus we believe we’re reflecting the nature of the role by the choice of wording. Secondly, while we will always have volunteers operating in various roles, we see this future of creating a “commissioning” of people into specified serving roles for a period of time as both conferring an even greater sense of responsibility, commitment and also a defined term of service. Our vision for “commissioning” servant-leaders is to develop, grow, and support the maturing and spiritual development of our church body. In that sense, this direction helps support our continued journey toward being more volunteer-led and gives us a path to develop more servant-leadership within our church.

Why appoint them vs. using the public casting of lots?

There are a few reasons for this change. First, as we move from a “general board” of Deacons, to Deacons serving in very specific roles (e.g. Deacon for Benevolence, Deacon for Widows, etc.), it will be important to ensure we are matching the needs with those that have the right spiritual gifts, talents, and also time and availability to serve in that capacity. Second, we believe this model is better aligned with the biblical model, as Deacons were chosen rather than appointed by lot. Third, we believe it acknowledges and supports the role of the Elder board as the leadership body in the church. And finally, it’s important to note that the Elders may in fact still use the casting of lots to choose Deacons – in particular, where God’s will isn’t clear.

How will appointment work? Does this mean the Elders will just pick well-known members? How do we avoid appointment becoming a popularity contest?

We will have an Independent Nominating Committee responsible for sourcing, collecting and vetting candidates. The Nominating Committee will receive candidates from all sources (congregation, Staff, Deacons, Elders), and be responsible for vetting them. We’ll also enable congregational input on Deacon candidates throughout the process – directed to Elders. Because of the close coordination that will be required with Staff (Deacons will be working alongside and even in many cases for the staff, as part of their teams), Staff member will have an important role in identifying potential candidates for Deacons and weighing in on the decision process.

Will anything happen during the Annual Meeting, now that we won’t be casting lots for Deacons?

We will still be selecting Elders by the casting of lots publicly, but since Deacons will be appointed by the Elders, we will instead use the Annual Meeting as a “commissioning service,” during which we pray over the new Deacons and ask for God’s blessing on their term of service.

Will Deacons have terms? Can they be re-appointed for additional terms?

Deacons will be appointed for a 3-year term, serving in roles as God leads through the Elders. After that point, if it is clear God is leading for the Deacon to remain in their serving role for any number of reasons, the Elders may ask the Deacon if they would prayerfully consider renewing their term of service for another year. We do not have any plan for “term limits” – each year, we will prayerfully seek God’s leading on who should be serving and in which Deacon roles. It is possible a Deacon could serve in a given role for several years, if God continues to lead that way.

What will the requirements be to be a Deacon?

The same requirements as we have today for Deacon, following the Biblical qualifications in I Timothy 3:8-17 and Titus 1:6-9.

How many Deacons will there be, and in which roles?

We have not determined exactly how many Deacons there will be, and in fact the number may fluctuate over time as our serving needs change and as God leads. That said, we have initially identified roughly 20-25 Deacon roles – covering the following:

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson / Clerk
- Treasurer
- Benevolence leader plus 5-6 Benevolence Deacons
- Widows & Orphans
- Refugees
- Baptism & Communion
- Ushers
- Parking Lot / Greeters
- Choir & Orchestra
- Child Dedication
- Prayer Room

What about people who are already serving in one of these roles (e.g. Benevolence) – will they have the opportunity to become Deacons?

Many people are indeed already serving in some of these roles, faithfully, and in ways that are truly honoring to God. Many are actually acting as Deacons today, even if they don't currently hold the title of Deacon. The Elders are currently praying over these servant-leaders right now, and the Nominating committee are evaluating their qualifications to serve as Deacons. Many people in these serving roles will simply remain and be commissioned as Deacons in this new structure. The Elders' are grateful for the incredible volunteers we within our congregation and their desire is not to take anyone out of valuable serving functions. The guiding principle will be that wherever possible, and as God leads and confirms, key leaders in serving functions such as these will be asked to be Deacons.

Will women be able to serve in Deacon roles?

Yes. Just like we have both men and women staff members carrying out the work of the ministry, in the same way women and men will be able to serve as Deacons in this structure. In fact, in many of the above serving functions it will be essential to have women serving as Deacons (e.g. in Widows ministry, or in Benevolence, where the vast majority of recipients are women). The Bible supports women as Deacons. For more on this, please see calvarygr.org/womenasdeacons for more information.

Will women be operating in leadership roles over men? Is that an issue, biblically?

Women may be leading ministry areas such as those described above, and yes, may have men supporting as volunteers underneath them. This is no different than the way we operate with our staff – we have many women staff members who oversee the work of ministries and are supported by men.

Will there be any boundaries or restrictions about how men and women serve together as Deacons?

Men and women already work together in various ways in serving capacities at Calvary, and in many different ministries and on staff. We always work to foster proper boundaries and have guidelines in place for appropriate male-female relations, to ensure we maintain an environment of purity and

avoid the appearance of impropriety. We will do the same thing with men and women Deacons. For instance, we will discourage unrelated men and women (not husband-wife) to perform home visits together, or to spend significant ministry working time together alone or in private places. We do the same thing with staff members.

Will there be any Deacon roles where women cannot serve?

No. With this governance structure, we believe women can serve in any of the Deacon roles we envision, as they are all operating underneath the leadership and oversight of the Elders.

Will a husband and wife ever be asked to serve as Deacons together (e.g. where both might be commissioned as Deacons serving in a partnering capacity)?

Yes, that could happen. We are certainly not prescribing that, but we could envision scenarios where a husband-wife team could both serve together as Deacons.

How does the staff feel about these changes?

A few key staff members have been part of the Task Force working on this effort. Additionally, staff members have been briefed on this new direction. To date, we have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from Staff. They believe this direction will both help them do the work of the ministry even better and will facilitate even more effective working relationships between themselves and Deacons.

How do the Elders feel about these changes?

The Elders are unanimous in their support of this direction.

If I have questions after today, where can I go to get answers?

You can always email elders@calvarygr.org, and they will respond. You can also seek out one of us later. Additionally, we will be putting out additional communications over time, including mail and email updates as well as a section on the Calvary website where these changes will be outlined, and FAQs posted. That will be up in the coming weeks. Finally, we will be having a Town Hall meeting on May 5 – we would encourage each of you to come.