



elders & deacons

Roles and Duties

Elders and Deacons serve important leadership roles in our church. Elders provide oversight of ministry, and Deacons assist in the daily operation of the ministry.

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What is an Elder?

The Elders are the elected spiritual leaders of the church. The Apostle Paul in **Acts 14:23** commanded the church to appoint elders. It fulfills a need for order and provides a form of church governance.

What are the duties of First Free Elders?

The Elder Board is responsible to fulfill the biblical requirements of overseeing and shepherding on behalf of the FEFC community (**1 Peter 5:1-4**). According to our Constitution and Bylaws, the duties of the Elders are as follows:

- The management and government of the Church between congregational meetings shall be vested in the Elder Board as representatives of the Congregation, under the Lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- It shall be the duty of the Elders to exercise oversight over the Church, shepherding the flock without lording it over them, to guard the purity of doctrine, and to establish policy consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws.

- The Elders shall act for the Church in the reception, discipline, and dismissal of members. They shall minister in teaching the Word, counseling the needy, comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick, and disciplining believers.
- They may appoint committees, either standing or ad hoc, to help accomplish the work of the ministry. In addition, the ministries of all pastoral staff and the church-related ministries of the Elders are subject to the Elder Board.
- The Elders shall inform the Congregation within thirty days of major decisions affecting the Body.

What kind of character qualities should Elders exhibit?

Elder qualifications are clearly defined in several scripture passages, including **Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3**. In **Titus 1:6-9 (NIV)**, we find a character description for elders:

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

What is unique about First Free's Elders?

The Elder Board will establish an overarching vision for FEFC that is biblically sound, outwardly focused, strategic, and proactive. The Elder Board will oversee FEFC in the achievement of appropriate ministry performance. The Elder Board will shepherd collectively by taking direct responsibility to:

- A** Maintain doctrinal purity among all ministry entities directly related to FEFC and encourage sound doctrine among all attendees (**Titus 1:9**).
- B** Be servant leaders, modeling Christ-likeness to the FEFC community (**1 Peter 5:3**) and ensure that this is accomplished through mutual accountability within the Board.
- C** Pray for the FEFC community and for the healing of the sick, including anointed prayer for those who request it of the Elder Board (**James 5:14**).
- D** Review and approve membership applications from those who meet FEFC membership qualifications.
- E** Provide for continuity of leadership by prayerfully selecting those that should be presented to the membership for election as required by the By-Laws.

The Elder Board will act on discipline and conflict resolution issues in which due process has been exhausted at the staff level. Elders must be spiritually mature, at least 25 years of age, and a church member for at least one year. Elders are elected to serve a three-year term of office. They may be re-elected for a second consecutive three-year term, but they are required to sit out for at least one year before being considered for additional terms.

What is an Deacon?

In the body of Christ, Deacons are considered the helping hands. The idea of a Deacon ministry comes from a Biblical precedent found in **Acts 6**. In this passage, the disciples sought men full of the Spirit and wisdom to assist in the daily operation of the ministry. This is the only “job description” found in Scripture for this service and the word “Deacon” is not even used. Thus, it seems clear that the local church has latitude in determining what role a Deacon will fill.

What are the duties of Deacons at First Free?

The Constitution and Bylaws describe the duties of the Deacon Board in the following way:

- It shall be the duty of the Deacons to have administrative oversight of the finances of the Church, including the annual budget and an annual financial audit or review.
- The Deacons shall be responsible for secure and proper collecting and handling of the offering and shall confirm that individual giving records are kept confidential.

- The Deacons shall serve and lead in various ministry roles as directed by the Elder Board, Senior Pastor and Executive Director. Some of their ministries currently include Finance and Audit, Volunteer Ministry, Hospitality, Benevolence, Facilities and Grounds, and Stewardship.
- The Deacon Board shall sponsor, serve and provide oversight in congregational and community ministries that include the Christmas Holly Hearts Ministry, Ministry to Widows, and the Resource Center/Bookstore.

How have the Deacons' duties changed in recent years?

- With the changes made to the Constitution and Bylaws in 2007, the Deacons oversight of the Church facilities moved to an advisory role.
- The deacons are taking a greater role in teaching biblical financial principles to church members.
- The Deacon board is administering a “volunteer” ministry which helps church members understand their spiritual gifts and how to they can be used in various areas of the church.

The bylaws state that the Deacon Board reports to the Elder Board for purposes of service assignments and review. The Elder Board has delegated to the Senior Pastor and his staff the responsibility for giving direction to the Deacon Board in certain areas of ministry.

What kind of character qualities should Deacons exhibit?

In **1 Timothy 3**, we find a character description specifying spiritual qualifications for deacons.

Verses 8 -10 state:

“Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.”

What is unique about First Free’s Deacons?

First Free requires deacons to be at least 21 years old and to have been a church member for at least one year. Many women have served as Deacons at First Free. Scripture appears to support the presence of women in such a role as a Deacon. In **Romans 16:1**, Paul refers to Phoebe as a Deaconess in the church at Cenchrea.

Like elders, deacons serve three-year terms and may be re-elected for a consecutive second term. However, they must remain off the Board for one year before they can be elected for additional terms. The number of deacons shall be such as deemed necessary by the elders and deacons to carry out the responsibilities.

Know someone who is open to serving in this way?

Contact Heather Wright at 636.779.2120 or hwright@efree.org for more information.



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