

DEACON ORDINATION

In Southern Baptist churches, according to the Baptist Faith and Message by Hershel H. Hobbs, “The officers in a local New Testament church are pastors and deacons (Philippians 1:1). The same office is variously called bishop, elder, or pastor.”¹ These two officers are generally placed in their respected offices by the local congregation through a service of ordination. The model for this service is found in Acts 6:1-7. The term ordination is the setting aside of an individual for a particular purpose. In Acts 6, the Greek word for appoint in verse 3, is *kathistemi*, pronounced *kat-is'-tay-mee*. It comes from the combination of the Greek word “*kata*” which means down, or over against. This is combined with the word, “*histemi*” meaning to cause to stand, to set. Combined it is translated “to ordain” or in the case of Acts 6:3, to Appoint.

The purpose then of ordination for the individual is the signifying of the sense of calling by God and their committing of their life to a particular ministry. For the local congregation it is the acknowledgement, approval and authorization for the individual to serve the church in ministry.

In the New Testament there is no prescribed procedure for the service of ordination other than what is depicted in Acts 6. It was something the congregation was called upon to do, rather than an appointment by an individual or group. The church was charged with selecting men whose walk with the Lord was respected, wise and demonstrated by lifestyle that they were full of the Holy Spirit. The one particular thing that stands out ceremonially is the laying on of hands. This was frequently used in the New Testament as a public and formal act of setting aside for ministry individuals (Acts 6:6, 13:3, 1 Timothy 4:14 and 5:22, and 2 Timothy 1:6).

Ordination is (1) a function of the local church, (2) It is an open and public service, (3) Consists of the laying on of hands, and (4) It is for deacons and ministers of the gospel. Beyond these four things, we must develop our own services of ordination. Traditionally, the ordination service consists of two parts, the coming together of the ordaining council and the Ordination service. This is true for the ordination of deacons and ministers. The difference between the two services is whether the local congregation chooses to make the deacon ordination service local or inviting others to participate. Another difference is that there may be multiple individuals ordained in a deacon ordination, as opposed to only one in a ministry ordination.

ORDINATION OF DEACONS

The Deacon Ordaining Council:

Based upon the desires of the church, the ordaining council is composed of ordained deacons and possibly ministers from various churches, which convene for the purpose of ordaining an individual to the gospel ministry or individual or individuals to the deacon ministry. The council will convene prior to the service of ordination. The first order of business is the election of officers for the ordaining council. This should include a moderator, who will preside over the council and the service of ordination; a questioner or interrogator, who will examine the candidate; and a secretary or clerk, who will record and report during the service the actions of the ordaining council.

After the election of the ordaining council officers, the moderator will instruct the candidate to take the chair in front of the council to be examined concerning their qualifications. The examiner/interrogator will be in charge of the questioning. The questions are to determine the candidate's spiritual maturity and understanding of basic beliefs. Questions should include:

1. Tell your conversion experience.
2. What is the role and responsibilities of the deacon?
3. What do you believe about the Bible?
4. What is the mission of the Church?
5. What do you believe about salvation and personal witnessing?
6. Tell an experience you had of leading a person to Christ?
7. Where does the church receive its support for ministry?
8. What does the Bible say about stewardship?
9. How does your wife feel about the ministry of the deacon?
10. If this council should choose to not ordain you, how would that affect you?

Questions from the council are then welcomed. When the council is satisfied the candidate should be excused while the council prepares their recommendation. A Certificate of Ordination should be signed by each participant of the Ordaining council.

Sample Ordination Service for Deacons:

Hymn or Song of Dedication

Prayer

Welcome and Introductions

Introduction of the Candidate(s):

Testimony by each candidate:

Recommendation of the Ordaining Council:

Vote by the Church on the recommendation to ordain:

Special Music

Charge to the Candidate and Challenge to the Church:

Laying on of Hands

Prayer of Dedication

Presentation of signed Ordination Certificate

Hand of Fellowship

Reception Honoring Deacon(s) and family