

“Charge to Candidates ”

Our passage this morning details the calling of seven people to serve in the very first church. For a long time, I recognized this passage as detailing the calling of the first deacons, yet the word 'deacon' is not used in this passage. As a matter of fact, the noun *deacon* never appears in the Book of Acts. Instead these people were simply called “the seven.” It is believed that the office of deacon has evolved over time and that these seven were the *forerunners* for the office of deacon.

Etymologies, the root forms of words, sometime provide greater insight. The etymology of the word "deacon" actually means, "dirty foot washer," so we know that deacons were intended to be servants. The base of the Greek word for 'deacon' occurs in verse one, "the Hellenistic widows were overlooked in the daily “deacon-service” or administration"; in verse two, "that it was not pleasing for them to "deaconize" or "serve” tables"; and in verse four, their call for people whom they might set over this "deacon-service.” Certainly these seven were servants of the church. These seven were set apart for a specific purpose: to distribute food and money to the congregation's most needy, which happened to be the Greek-speaking widows.

Today, *we* are ordaining seven. The primary characteristics found in Acts 6 were to be of good reputations, to be full of the Holy Spirit, and to be wise. These seven were to serve and fill ministry needs. These same requests are also being made of our seven today.

While our church has had plenty of father-son combinations as Deacons, and I can think of some mother-son combinations, I'm not sure if the church has ever had a mother and daughter serving simultaneously as Deacon.

Alystra, I call you “Songbird,” because when I hear you sing, my soul eases. We all benefit from your enthusiasm for preschool and children’s ministry. Your positive attitude and zealous work-ethic are a nice combination for deacon service.

Jon, I appreciate your methodical manner. I know when you *accept* an assignment that you will *complete* that assignment. Your dependability and administrative skill coupled with your tender heart combine in making you a great Deacon.

Lynne, as a children’s worker, a parent, and as someone who lives outside of Hampton, your perspective for Reaching Hampton Families is critical. Your service as a conscientious leader and as a hard worker will prove to be foundational in your role as Deacon.

Billy, you may be the most generous person I know. Your life experiences continue to mold you, and I appreciate how you relate to today’s youth. Your sense of humor and gregariousness are contagious. Your propensity to do the right thing and your ability to work with different kinds of people will make you a great Deacon.

Bob, with your experience in business and as a problem-solver, you regularly weigh the facts and make decisions. Your fresh, objective perspective as a relatively new-comer and your interest in making sound decisions will be welcomed.

Dot, you have had your hands in many pies during your time here at HBC. When you and Lit made a deliberate decision to retire here, you wanted your girls to have a place where they were loved and accepted. Thank you for being a leader in so many areas of church-life to make HBC a better place.

Carole, your gentle faithfulness was proven in your first term as a Deacon. Unable to be ordained then because of a prior work commitment, your request for ordination for this term indicates your desire to receive the blessing of your church. We do so with gladness.

The Charge to the Candidates that I'd like to give is this, “Do what is best for our church.” Sometimes your opinion may be in the minority, and on some church issues, there certainly are disagreements, but I hope you act with wisdom in seeking what the Holy Spirit says is best for our

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church. Being a “dirty-foot washer” will require you to place service above self. Your calling as a Deacon is to use your God-given gifts to serve, and to be whom God created *you* to be, not to try to be someone else.

The blessing offered to the seven in Acts 6 becomes the blessing we as a church offer to you: be of good reputation; be filled with the Spirit; be wise. As a result of the service of the seven in Acts 6, the Jerusalem Church prospered with greater numbers becoming disciples of Jesus. I pray that your service to God through Hampton Baptist as a Deacon will help provide the same result. I am excited about serving alongside you.