

MERCY HILL

Deacon Training Manual

Last Modified: **May 30, 2021**

STEP 1

Suggestion

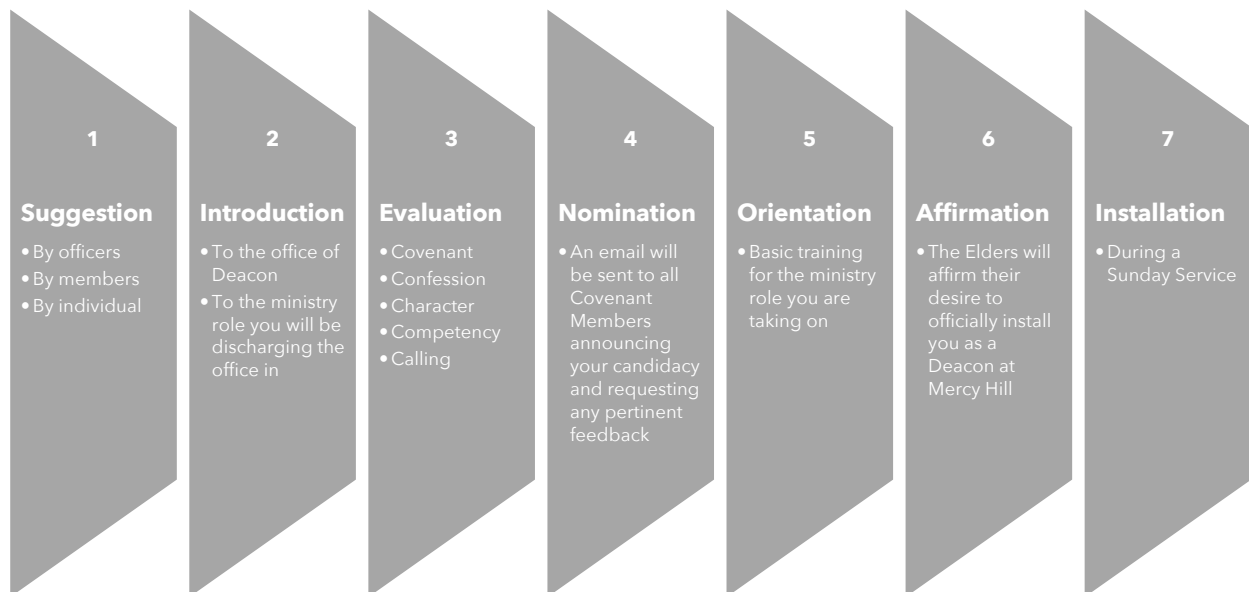
OBJECTIVE: *To congratulate you and explain the process ahead.*

Be Encouraged!

Be encouraged! Whether you initially expressed interest in this role yourself or someone else nominated you for it, we are now beginning the Deacon candidacy process with you because the current officers (Elders and Deacons) of this church believe you to be full of both the Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). We pray that your time proceeding through these steps with us will prove to be, not a burden for you, but a blessing.

Seven Steps

The process of installing a person into the office of Deacon involves seven steps outlined in the diagram that follows:



Note: Depending on the length of Orientation, for some roles steps 4 through 6 may be conflated.

Meeting Schedule

This process, while involving seven steps, will usually require around three to four meetings (though we may condense or expand where it seems appropriate depending upon the individual and the ministry role). These meetings correspond to steps two, three, and five in the process outlined above.

- **Meeting #1: Introduction Discussion**
- **Meeting #2: Evaluation Discussion**
- **Meeting #3: Orientation Discussion**

Step 1 | **Suggestion**

Note: You may be given a binder with materials at the beginning of this process. It will be important to bring this binder with you to any subsequent meetings. In addition, for some reading assignments, you will need to access the *Covenant Membership Handbook (CMHB)* and *Covenant Membership Expansion Packet (CMEP)* which can be found online.¹ You can bring your own hardcopies of these or digital versions downloaded from the link provided.

¹ <https://mercyhillchurch.org/community/covenant-membership/>

STEP 2

Introduction

OBJECTIVE: *To introduce you to the office of Deacon and to your particular ministry role.*

The Office of Deacon

Introduction

As a way of introducing the office of Deacon, let's first engage the discussion outlined below . . .

Discussion

☐ Read Acts 6:1-7

→ *What do you observe? How might this scene inform our understanding of Elders and Deacons in the church? What do we learn about their qualifications and functions?*

☐ Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13

→ *Again, what do you observe? How might this text inform our understanding of Elders and Deacons in the church? What do we learn about their qualifications and functions?*

☐ Read "Our Leadership" in Section IV of the *CMHB* (pp. 33-34) and "Expansion 11: Elders and Deacons: Origin, Function, and Definition" in the *CMEP*

→ *Make note of any quotes, questions, or quarrels.*

Definition

In light of the above, at Mercy Hill Church we define the office of Deacon as follows: ***Deacons are assistants to the Elders, appointed by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to lead by serving, especially in the ministry of gospel deed.***

Function

Deacons are official leaders in the church, but they lead, in particular, by serving. They may be installed to serve in roles such as:

- Home Group Leaders
- Musical Worship Leaders
- Sunday Serve Team Leaders
- Mercy Ministry Leaders
- Pastoral Assistants
- Etc.

Installation and Uninstallation

It is important to note that the office of Deacon at Mercy Hill does not “float” on unnecessarily. It seems from the Bible that the office was tethered to a particular call to lead and serve. The proto-Deacons of Acts 6, were installed only because there was a pressing need in the community. They had a job to do. There were tables to serve.

Taking our cues from the early church here, we understand that Deacons must be “over something.” We do not install Deacons merely for the sake of having Deacons. We install them only if and when the church and the Elders have need of them. If it comes to the point where they have fulfilled their duties and the need is no longer present, we will thereafter uninstall them and celebrate all that God has accomplished through them.

This being the case, one’s nomination to the Diaconate is really a call into a particular role within a particular ministry. The process for installing a Deacon is, therefore, baked together with the process required by the particular ministry he/she will be discharging the office in.

Homework

☐ Read “Expansion 12: Women and Church Leadership” in the *CMEP*

→ *Make note of any quotes, questions, or quarrels and come prepared to discuss next time.*

Your Particular Ministry Role

At this point, there may or may not be details to discuss regarding your particular ministry role. The person walking through this process with you will likely bring up items such as a job description, ministry vision, time commitment, expectations, and so forth. Feel free to ask any questions and express any concerns you may have.

STEP 3

Evaluation

OBJECTIVE: *To ensure that the Diaconate and this particular ministry role is what's best next for you.*

Five Layers

Following Paul's instruction that Deacons "be tested first" (1 Tim 3:10), Step 3 in our process is Evaluation. There are five layers to this evaluation:

1. Covenant
2. Confession
3. Character
4. Competency
5. Calling

The details of each are expounded in what follows . . .²

1. Covenant

While there are many roles that a non-member/regular attender can fill in the church, we reserve certain positions for those who have already formally covenanted themselves into the membership of this local body. In particular, we require that any who would be a formal officer at Mercy Hill Church (i.e. an Elder or Deacon), first go through our Covenant Membership process.

Anyone who desires to lead God's people in some way should already be committed to them in love. This covenantal love and commitment provides the appropriate context for biblical servant-leadership. In Acts 6, the Apostles instruct the church to "pick out *from among you* seven men" (v. 3) for the role of serving tables. These men came "from among" the church. They were not half-in/half-out attenders. They were all-in members. It is on the precondition of this kind of commitment that they could then appropriately be raised up as leaders.

Homework

☐ Read "Expansion 2: Why 'Covenant' Membership?" in the *CMEP* and come prepared to discuss the following:

- *Why is being committed "covenantally" to a local church (its members and leaders) so important for a Deacon?*
- *How do you feel about the mission and ministry of Mercy Hill Church? What do you appreciate? What could be better?*
- *How connected do you feel to the leaders and members of Mercy Hill Church? Do you feel known and loved by others? Do others feel known and loved by you? Please explain.*

² To find and fill out all the necessary evaluation forms, follow the links listed in "Appendix 1: Deacon Evaluation Forms" at the end of this document.

2. Confession

It is possible for a person to be committed to the church (Covenant) and yet not have a solid grasp on biblical doctrine and truth (Confession). Paul states that Deacons “must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Tim 3:9). Therefore, a Deacon is to be evaluated on the basis of his/her Confession.

Homework

- ☐ Read or revisit “Section III: Our Faith: How We Know and Love the Lord” in the *CMHB*
- ☐ Read or revisit “Appendix 3: Our Core Confession” in the *CMHB*
- ☐ For “Teaching” Deacons: Read or revisit “Expansions 5, 6, 7 (if interested), 8” in the *CMEP*
- ☐ Fill out the Confession Evaluation Form³

→ Come prepared to discuss the reading, the Confession Evaluation Form, and any reflections.

3. Character

It is possible for a person to be committed to the church (Covenant), have a solid grasp on biblical doctrine and truth (Confession), and yet not be bearing the fruit of Christian maturity in his/her life (Character). It is interesting to note that in Paul’s list of qualifications for the diaconate, the lion’s share is clearly given to those concerning the individual’s character. Therefore, a Deacon is to be evaluated on the basis of his/her Character.

Homework

- ☐ Fill out the Character Evaluation Form⁴

→ Come prepared to discuss the Character Evaluation Form and any reflections.

4. Competency

It is possible for a person to be committed to the church (Covenant), have a solid grasp on biblical doctrine and truth (Confession), be bearing the fruit of Christian maturity in his/her life (Character), and yet not have the particular gifts and skills required for the ministry (Competency). When the Apostles are in need of help from the proto-diaconate in Acts 6, they ask the church to pick out from among them men “of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3; cf. Exo 35:31). Deacons need

³ See “Appendix 1: Deacon Evaluation Forms.”

⁴ See “Appendix 1: Deacon Evaluation Forms.”

Step 3 | Evaluation

not just character but gifting and skill for the task at hand. Therefore, a Deacon is to be evaluated on the basis of his/her Competency.

Homework

☐ Fill out the Competency Evaluation Form⁵

→ Come prepared to discuss the Competency Evaluation Form and any reflections.

5. Calling

It is possible for a person to be committed to the church (Covenant), have a solid grasp on biblical doctrine and truth (Confession), be bearing the fruit of Christian maturity in his/her life (Character), have the particular gifts and skills required for the ministry (Competency), and yet not feel personally called by God to take such a ministry on (Calling). At the end of the day, we are not looking to fill a need merely, we are looking to answer a call. We want discernment like Jesus in these matters. While on the earth, though He could have aptly done countless things, He only did that which the Father actually gave Him to do (John 17:4; cf. 5:19, 30).

Use the Orientation step in this process as a period of discernment. Ask God to confirm His calling of you to this ministry. We don't expect His will for us to be written in the clouds, but we do expect He can give us direction through His word, His Spirit, His people, His providence, etc. Your ministry will require a lot of you. A sense of His calling will help you endure in times of trial.

What's Next?

Congratulations on making it this far! Thank you for all your hard work in reading, discussing, writing, etc. We know that this has required a lot of you. Having finished steps 1 (Suggestion), 2 (Introduction), and 3 (Evaluation), we are now ready to proceed towards step 5: Orientation. Here is where we will provide basic training for the ministry role that you are taking on.

Before we proceed, you should know that we will be notifying all current Covenant Members of your present status in this process and asking them for any initial feedback (step 4: Nomination). While we don't anticipate any issues here, we believe God wants us to solicit the collective wisdom of His people when laying hands on anyone for official leadership (cf. Acts 6:2-3). Doing so at this stage in the process helps to ensure you don't go through all the remaining training only to hit some road block at the end. Thanks for your humble participation in all of this. We trust that God will be glorified and His people (including you) blessed!

⁵ See "Appendix 1: Deacon Evaluation Forms."

STEP 4

Nomination

OBJECTIVE: *To announce the Elders' positive evaluation of you and confirm that the rest of the church body feels the same.*

What to Expect

As has already been mentioned, at this point in the process we will email the current Covenant Members of Mercy Hill to let them know of your official nomination and solicit any feedback. To give you a better sense of what this entails, below is a sample email template we've used in the past . . .

To the current Covenant Members of Mercy Hill Church,

After introducing _____ to the role of Deacon and evaluating him/her especially according to the qualifications for Deacons outlined by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, the Elders would now like to formally nominate him/her for the office. Deacons are official leaders in the church, but they lead, in particular, by serving. They may be installed to serve in roles such as:

- *Home Group Leaders*
- *Musical Worship Team Leaders*
- *Sunday Serve Team Leaders*
- *Mercy Ministry Leaders*
- *Pastoral Assistants*
- *Etc.*

In _____'s case, he/she will be trained and released to serve as a _____.

*Because of our understanding of the membership's role in affirming and installing individuals to positions of official leadership in the church (cf. Acts 6:3; 14:23; Titus 1:5), before formally installing _____ as a Deacon we would ask that you please let the Elders know if you have any **serious** concerns regarding: (1) his/her relationship with Jesus and the church, (2) his/her life and doctrine, or (3) his/her ability and gifting to lead.*

Remember, the emphasis here is on that word "serious." We are not inviting you to nitpick, gossip, or mudsling. We merely want to be made aware if some glaring issue has escaped our notice. We are all—members and leaders alike—sinners slowly growing towards godliness. A leader is simply one who, in at least small measure, stands out as a person with notable spiritual understanding and character. He/she may be a step or two ahead and able to help others along the way. Read the qualifications Paul gives Timothy as mentioned above. Let that list be your guide.

If we do not hear of any serious concerns from you, we will assume your silence to be confirmation in favor of this motion and will proceed with next steps. Please join us in praying for _____—that he/she may be full of the Spirit and of wisdom, and that God's will may be accomplished in his/her life!

With affection for you all in Christ,

nick (on behalf of the Elders)

STEP 5

Orientation

OBJECTIVE: *To set you up for success in your particular ministry role.*

Let's Get Started!

Well this is exciting! At this point, you are ready to dive into that training which is particularly related to the ministry role you will be taking on. Obviously, some roles will require you to spend more time on this step than others. The person walking through this process with you will likely here provide you with additional material to engage with. We hope you find it helpful. Remember, our goal is not to burden you but to equip you and set you up for success!

Now, before you break off from this manual into whatever additional materials your training requires, there is something we want every Deacon (and Elder for that matter) regardless of ministry role to become familiar with. We call them the “fundamentals” and we begin every officer’s Orientation step with them. Read on to learn more!

The Fundamentals

1. Gospel Centrality

At Mercy Hill our mission is to restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel—this good news of what Christ has done for us in His life, death, and resurrection—is everything. The gospel is not merely the starting line of a much longer race. It’s more like the hub of a wheel. Without the gospel always at the center, nothing in the Christian life turns. Everything stalls out. You go nowhere. As Tim Keller has said: “The gospel is not just the A-B-C’s but the A-Z of Christianity.”⁶ So the place to begin any orientation for any ministry role in the church is with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Consider a few texts that lie underneath our conviction on this point:

- “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by *hearing with faith* . . . ?” (Gal 3:1-5).
- “I decided to know nothing among you except *Jesus Christ and him crucified*” (1 Cor 2:2).
- “I delivered to you as of *first importance* what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4).
- “And now I commend you to God and to the *word of his grace*, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).
- “Now to him who is able to strengthen you *according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ*, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has

⁶ Tim Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel,” http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Centrality_of_the_Gospel-Keller.pdf (accessed May, 20, 2020).

Step 5 | Orientation

now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Rom 16:25-27).

Discussion

In your own words, what is the gospel? Why do you think it is not merely the starting point of the Christian life but the enduring center of it? How have you personally experienced the truth of this?

Homework

☐ Listen to “What Is Gospel-Centered Ministry” by Tim Keller

(https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/gospel-centered-ministry/)

→ Identify one thing from this message that spoke to you personally. How will you attempt to keep the gospel central in your own ministry? What sorts of things could potentially derail this goal?⁷

2. Gospel Humility

Take a moment and read Mark 10:32-45:

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know

⁷ For more on this, consider reading “The Centrality of the Gospel” by Tim Keller (http://download.redeemer.com/pdf/learn/resources/Centrality_of_the_Gospel-Keller.pdf).

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that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Did you notice? When Jesus defines leadership for His disciples here, He does so in light of His own work on the cross (vv. 32-34, 45). With this He turns the world’s understanding of leadership on its head. Leaders before they are anything else, must be servants—self-sacrificing, people-loving, God-exalting . . . servants. They lead from down low.

All official leaders at Mercy Hill, therefore, must be understood as “servant-leaders”. If you recall, we even tried to embed that notion into our very definitions. Elders “serve by leading.” Deacons “lead by serving.” Both, then, are servant-leaders—humbled together at the foot of the cross.

Homework

☐ Listen to “Greatness, Humility, Servanthood” by John Piper

(<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/greatness-humility-servanthood>)

→ *Identify one thing from this sermon that spoke to you personally. How do you hope this will affect your leadership at Mercy Hill? How has this been tested in the past?*⁸

The Particulars

With these fundamentals in place, you are now ready to move towards the particulars with regard to the ministry role you will be taking on. The person coaching you through this process will now provide you with whatever additional materials this may involve.

⁸ For more on this, consider reading *Humility* by CJ Mahaney.

STEP 6

Affirmation

OBJECTIVE: *To give space for the Elders to pray and affirm their desire to officially install you as a Deacon at Mercy Hill.*

What to Expect

After all previous steps have been successfully completed, the Elders will take time to pray and confirm their sense that God's calling you to be a Deacon at Mercy Hill. A formal vote will be taken among the Council requiring at least a supermajority (2/3) to pass.

STEP 7

Installation

OBJECTIVE: *To tangibly represent our sense that God has laid His hands on you for this office by laying our hands on you as a church.*

What to Expect

The Bible speaks of the church laying hands on and praying for those who have been set apart by God for some special role and task (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22). At Mercy Hill, we do this during our Sunday Service, particularly when installing new Elders and Deacons. We want everyone to pray for God's blessing upon you and celebrate the good work He's already begun!

A Few More Things . . .

Here are a few more things to be aware of:

- **Our Leadership Page:** We want our church to know who you are (your face and your story). Please submit the following to info@mercyhillchurch.org: (1) A quality profile picture that will work well when cropped as a square; (2) A little 1-3 paragraph bio highlighting things such as: where you're from; how you got to the Bay Area; how you came to know the Lord; what you do for work, fun, etc.; your thoughts about ministry at Mercy Hill; etc. Make it your own. Don't feel like you have to hit all of these. The list is just to give you some sense of direction. If it helps, you can check out the page to get a sense of what we are looking for.⁹
- **Elder Assignment:** Upon installation as a Deacon, you will be assigned to an Elder. This Elder will be responsible for overseeing your work in the church. He is expected to connect with you on a regular basis to ensure that you are doing well in the Lord both personally and ministerially. He will also serve as your point of contact. Feel free to reach out to him if you need help in any way.
- **Leader Meetings:** From time to time we may feel the need to call a special meeting for Mercy Hill Leaders to pray, plan, etc. As a Deacon of Mercy Hill Church, we would ask that you prioritize these and do all that you can to be there.
- **Prayer Requests:** We often receive prayer requests via the Connection Card or other means. We forward these requests to our leaders in particular. As a Deacon, you will now be added to that list. It is such a privilege to be made aware of the prayer needs of our people. Please commit to interceding for them and feel free to reach out in love and concern where it seems appropriate to do so.

Congratulations!

That's it! We are so excited to have you on board as a Deacon of Mercy Hill Church! May He anoint you and use you for His glory and the good of His people!

⁹ <https://mercyhillchurch.org/about/our-leadership/>

Appendix 1:

Deacon Evaluation Forms

Due to the fact that these forms cannot be saved and then returned to later, they have been broken up into smaller parts. To avoid losing any of your responses, you can either: (1) take notes in a separate document and then paste them in when ready to submit; or (2) write straight into the form, but just be sure to finish whichever part you are on and submit before moving on to something else (refreshing the webpage may cause you to lose whatever you'd written to that point).

You'll notice there are a total of seven links here. You might consider attempting one per day. Let them be a part of your devotions this week. This isn't mere homework. This is an opportunity to engage with God!

Confession Evaluation Form

- Part 1: <https://mercyhillchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/211357>
- Part 2: <https://mercyhillchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/211367>

Character Evaluation Form

- Part 1: <https://mercyhillchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/211368>
- Part 2: <https://mercyhillchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/211370>
- Part 3: <https://mercyhillchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/211371>
- Part 4: <https://mercyhillchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/211372>

Competency Evaluation Form

- <https://mercyhillchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/211376>

Note: You do not need to worry about trying to save your responses somewhere. Whenever we receive a submission from you, we will soon send you back a copy of it for your records. You will want this to reference when you meet for discussion with the Elder who's taking you through this process.