



Handbook

For

Deacon – Widow Ministry

of

First Baptist Church – Keller, Texas

April 10, 2011

**Guidelines, suggestions and expectations
for deacons involved in a
Deacon – Widow Ministry.**

For additions or corrections to this handbook, please contact:

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(Special thanks to Ken Gardner and Tracy Sanford for their efforts to build this Handbook)

The initial description of the Deacon – Widow Ministry @ FBC Keller:

Ministry to FBCK Widows

Purpose

Minister to all the qualifying widows of FBC Keller by the Deacon Body

Method

Each widow is assigned to a deacon;
Each deacon is assigned to one or more widows



FBC Keller Deacon – Widow Ministry

Scriptural definition of a widow:

1 Timothy 5

^{1Ti 5:9} No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband,

^{1Ti 5:10} and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

Scripture Basis for the Deacon – Widow Ministry

Widow ministry – the initial purpose of the deacons

Acts 6

^{Ac 6:1} In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their **widows** were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

^{Ac 6:2} So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.

^{Ac 6:3} Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them

^{Ac 6:4} and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

^{Ac 6:5} This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

^{Ac 6:6} They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Widow ministry – one of the signs of pure religion

James 1

^{Jas 1:27} Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and **widows** in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Widow ministry – commanded for the church

1 Timothy 5

^{1Ti 5:3} Give proper recognition to those **widows** who are really in need.

From these verses we see that ministry to **widows** was the initial purpose of the deacons, is a sign of pure (true) religion, and is commanded (expected) of the church. Therefore, FBC Keller has a Deacon – Widow Ministry.

Widow Categories

Widows fall into different situations or categories that imply different ministry needs. It is the responsibility of the Deacon Widows ministry leadership and the assigned deacon to determine which category each widows fall into. The widow categories are defined based on the amount of care and assistance that may be required.

- 1. Widows living with their families**
- 2. Widows living in their own homes with family close by**

- 3. Widows living in their own homes with no family close by**
- 4. Widows living in nursing homes and/or extended-care facilities**

1. Widows living with their families

These widows in general have most needs met by their families. For example, yard care and home maintenance is the responsibility of the host family. Widows living with their families may need transportation from time to time, especially if the host husband/wife both work, to doctors appointments and drug stores. These widows will appreciate cards, phone calls, and visits during the hours when the host husband/wife are working.

2. Widows living in their own homes with family close by

Widows, who live in their own homes, but with family close by, may or may not need more care. If the family close by is attentive to and helpful to the widow, she may have most needs met. The assigned deacon will need to determine how much care is needed, based on how close by and helpful the family is. The deacon should get to know the widow's family if possible, to let them know of his availability for help, and to assess any needs the widow and family may have. Even with family close by and helpful, these widows appreciate cards, calls and visits. If the family is close by but not as helpful as necessary, the deacon may need to assist, as noted in the next category.

3. Widows living in their own homes with no family close by

This category of widow may require the most assistance. Deacons assigned to a widow in this category should understand the additional time commitment necessary. These widows may need assistance with home and lawn maintenance, financial advice, possible transportation assistance, and other needs. After storms and bad weather, the deacon should follow up to make sure the widow and her home are okay. The deacon should not feel he is obligated to perform all the required home, lawn, and auto maintenance, although some deacons may be able to do so. For these widows, it may be appropriate to enlist the help of other FBC Keller member groups, such as a Sunday School department or the Deacon Physical Services team to maintain the lawn during summer months. With no family close by, frequent communication and visiting with these widows is often critical to make sure they are okay. The deacon should learn if the widow has family in other cities/locations, and reach out to them to let them know of his availability for help. The deacon should understand the critical nature of his responsibility to a widow with no family close by as he may be one of their primary lifelines in an emergency.

4. Widows living in nursing homes and/or extended-care facilities

FBC Keller has several widows in some form of extended-care facilities, ranging from apartments to nursing homes. These widows will have little or no maintenance issues but will be greatly appreciative of the following ministry services:

- A. Visits and/or phone call. The hours in a small room are long, even with planned activities. The widows wish for a visit and/or someone to talk with. If your wife is able and willing, she might enjoy a visit with her, also.
- B. Transportation. From time-to-time, the widows will need someone to transport them to doctors visits, drug stores, etc. Usually these visits are planned far in advance and can be easily scheduled.

- C. Meals away. The food at the lodging facility may be good, but quickly can become routine. These widows would enjoy a lunch away at a restaurant, cafeteria, or even your home.

Expectations for the Deacon – Widow Ministry

The most important thing a deacon can do for his widow is to “show interest” said Mrs. Pearl Miller, who was one of our most faithful and active widows, but who has now gone to be with the Lord. The widow wants to know that her deacon cares about her.

For widows in categories 1, 2, and 4, which are

Widows living with their families

Widows living in their own homes with family close by

Widows living in nursing homes and/or extended-care facilities

The following are expectations for the deacon to minister to his assigned widow:

Monthly: Phone contact – check for needs & express interest
And/OR
Card contact – express concerns

Quarterly: Personal visit to widow’s home
1 Check for needs
2 Express interest
3 OPTIONAL: Invite out, if health permits

Yearly: Invite and take to Deacon/Widow’s Banquet
Offer to take her on a “special” outing, such as
1 Church function, if health permits
2 Meal at your home or restaurant, if health permits
3 Trip to look at flowers

Special Occasions:

Send cards on special occasions, such as:

- Birthday
- Christmas
- Valentines Day
- Mother’s Day

For widows in category 3 (with no family close by) the need for regular weekly or possibly even bi-weekly contact may be needed depending on the widow’s personal situation and health.

Widows falling into this category must be faithfully looked after since they may have no other resource close by for help.

Resources for the Deacon – Widow Ministry

Deacon Buddies

One concern the deacon might have is how to care for his assigned widow if he is out of town for a time. A good suggestion is to partner with a fellow deacon in the widows ministry. Share with your deacon buddy the name of your widow, her contact information, and what your widow's needs are. That way, if the deacon is traveling or for any reason unable to care for his widow, the deacon buddy can step in to help. Rather than be assigned, deacons can arrange deacon buddies on your own, and then inform the widow's ministry leadership of your deacon buddy.

Deacon Services Ministry

The deacons have a services team headed in 2011 by Ed McKay 817.656.8268 who can provide help such as home maintenance, lawn care, etc. If your widow needs the type assistance that is beyond your ability to provide, contact Ed to see if his team is capable of helping.

Spiritual Needs

If your widow has spiritual needs beyond your ability, you may contact Ted Eaton, FBC Keller Minister to Senior Adults. He visits the seniors on a regular basis and will be available to assist with prayer.

Prayer Needs

If your widow needs the church to pray for her, you have two resources.

1. For deacon prayer, post the situation on the FBCKeller.org web site under Deacon Ministries, or via the "OntheCity" page for deacons.
2. For church-wide prayer, call Johnnie, Pastor's Assistant, and she will list the need on the weekly Prayer Guide.

General Questions

For questions on the Deacon – Widow Ministry, contact the deacon team leader Kreg Bryant @ 214.354.8092.

8 Tips for Ministry to Widows - Written by Richard E. Dodge
The following article was written by a deacon from another church.

Can you change a light bulb? Can you mow a lawn? Can you give someone a listening ear? If you can answer yes to these questions, then you are ready to minister to one of the unseen groups in your church: widows.

Deacons often are assigned several families if their church uses the Deacon Family Ministry Plan, a well-know process of assuring that all families in the church receive ministry, particularly in times of special need. But widows may need a little extra ministry. Women whose husbands have passed away represent a growing percentage of many churches today, and therefore represent a significant ministry need in every church. Here are some special ways to address the needs of widows.

1. Assign not only a deacon and wife but also enlist a younger couple to develop a personal friendship with each widow to maintain social contact with these persons. Too often the greatest needs widows face are emotional in nature. They often face isolation and separation from friends. This often is especially important the first year after losing a spouse. The widow should be contacted at least once a month by both couples.
2. Suggest to the deacon body that cards be sent to each widow on special dates by a deacon other than the assigned deacon.
3. Be sure that the widow is not alone on the evening of the anniversary of the death of her spouse.
4. Remind teachers of widows' Sunday School classes that the class should develop regular fellowship activities that help these ladies remain connected to the rest of the church family.
5. Create a support network of widows who can help women facing or going through the grief of losing a spouse during the first year following the death of a spouse. Help these ladies meet weekly or monthly so they can talk about their feelings and needs.
6. Create a committee of men who can handle minor needs around the home for widows. Address things from leaky bathroom plumbing to gutters to leaves in the fall and other things that people in your church can do for these ladies. If necessary, create a deacon fund that could be an emergency repair fund for widows who have unexpected major repair expenses. This could be an anonymous kind of resource when needed.
7. Some older women cannot drive. They would need help getting groceries or getting to doctors' appointments. Create a transportation network involving others in the church who can help widows with transportation needs.
8. Help widows find ways to use their skills and talents in ministry opportunities in and through the church. Give them a sense of purpose by helping them meet needs.

Ministry is at the heart of the work God has placed in the hands of deacons. Touching lives and meetings needs can be accomplished better when deacons are trained and equipped with tools that can help them accomplish their tasks.

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